

Variation of English business e-mails in Asian countries

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Abstract

The overall aim of this paper is to detect whether there is language variation in a setting such as international business communication, in which interaction is expected to be precise and concise. In order to achieve this, the research aims of this paper are, first, to detect whether there is variation in the internal organization of e-mails; second, to analyse the moves and steps in the e-mails (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993) and the changes in the organization patterns; and, third, to establish whether the variation in the internal organization and the moves of the e-mails interfered with the exchange of ideas. The corpus used in this study was made up of authentic texts, consisting of one hundred e-mails, written by business managers from India and China, who communicate in English with their counterparts in order to report business issues at their offices, which are subsidiaries of an international company specialising in the manufacture of machinery. Firstly, we analysed the moves of the corpus taking into consideration the standard structure of e-mails, following the proposal made by Bhatia (1993). Secondly, we detailed the steps used in Moves 5 and 6 as the non-native speakers of English varied the structure of these moves. Thirdly, we contrasted the results obtained in the analysis of the moves and steps in the e-mails and discussed whether move variation in international business communication is due to the influence of the cultural or linguistic background of the writer. The conclusions show that the influence of the mother tongue of the speakers of English as an international language is changing the use of English in Asian countries.

Keywords: business English, e-mails, variation, moves, steps.

Resumen

La variación del inglés en los correos electrónicos de los países asiáticos

El objetivo principal de este artículo es detectar si existe variación en el lenguaje en la comunicación de los negocios internacional, en la cual se espera que exista

una interacción precisa y concisa. Para poder responder este objetivo general, las cuestiones que se abordan en este artículo son, primero, detectar si existe variación en la organización interna de los correos electrónicos; segundo, analizar los movimientos y pasos que se siguen en los correos electrónicos (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993) y los cambios en los patrones de organización; y, tercero, establecer si la variación en la organización interna y los movimientos de los correos electrónicos interfieren en el intercambio de ideas. El corpus utilizado en este estudio está compuesto por textos reales y consiste en cien correos electrónicos escritos por empresarios de India y China, que se comunican con sus socios para informar sobre temas de negocios en sus oficinas, sedes de una empresa internacional que está especializada en la fabricación de maquinaria. En primer lugar, analizamos los movimientos del corpus considerando la estructura estándar de los correos electrónicos, siguiendo la propuesta de Bhatia (1993). En segundo lugar, detallamos los pasos que se utilizaron en los Movimientos 5 y 6 ya que hallamos variación en esos dos movimientos. En tercer lugar, comparamos los resultados obtenidos en el análisis de los movimientos y los pasos en los correos electrónicos y comentamos si la variación de los movimientos en el inglés de los negocios se debe a la influencia de la cultura o los antecedentes culturales del escritor. Las conclusiones demuestran que la influencia de la lengua materna está influyendo en el uso de una lengua franca como es el inglés en los países asiáticos.

Palabras clave: inglés de los negocios, correos electrónicos, variación, movimientos, pasos.

Introduction

In recent years, the economies of Asian countries have undergone significant development and, as a consequence, many business transactions are carried out between speakers of radically different languages and cultures. They have to use an international language to communicate; and, in most cases, English is the language chosen. The effects of the communicative role played by English in these Asian countries are well established in the literature (Scollon, 2000; Kachru, 2005 & 2011; Adamson, 2006a & 2006b; Chen, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Sailaja, 2009). These effects include changes in vocabulary and structures, reflecting some traits of the mother tongues. As a result, the use of English as a lingua franca in heterogeneous settings has led to the incorporation into discourse of characteristics that are not typical of Anglo-Saxon culture. The English language is undergoing change, with new ways to communicate being developed in countries with different cultural and social backgrounds.

Business communication provides clear examples of this. As an example, specific attention to business interaction and the rhetorical features used in business letters has been paid by researchers such as Louhiala-Salminen (1996), Okamura and Shaw (2000), Pinto dos Santos (2002), Palmer-Silveira (2004), Ruiz Garrido (2004), Nickerson (2005), Flowerdew and Wan (2010), Bremner (2008), Palmer-Silveira, Ruiz-Garrido and Fortanet-Gómez (2008), Carrió Pastor and Muñiz Calderón (2010a & 2010b) or Muñiz Calderón (2012). Taking into account that English is used as a *lingua franca* in business interactions between companies that offer their products all over the world, it is not surprising that different speakers may vary the way they transmit information depending on their mother tongue and their cultural background. In this way, intercultural differences in settings such as international business communication are relevant and should be considered when interpreting discourse (Gimenez, 2001; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005; Van Dijk, 2008 & 2009; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, this volume). The occasions where intercultural divergence causes discursal differences are referred to as language variation in this paper. In a sense, this is the reason why studies of intercultural communication are so important to understand language change (Pan, Scollon & Scollon, 2002; Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012; Carrió-Pastor, 2013; Carrió Pastor & Candel Mora, 2013). Language does not express the thoughts of human beings in a straightforward manner. The way discourse is arranged, the reasons why we choose particular vocabulary and the way we express our ideas vary depending on the social context, the culture and the intention of the speaker. We are all unique in the way we communicate.

This is the main hypothesis of this paper; that is, each speaker communicates in a different way and, just as each person's physical appearance is unique, so language is also arranged and expressed by every human being in a unique way. In order to provide evidence for this hypothesis, we selected a field of study in which linguistic conventions should be static to guarantee effective communication. The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Is there variation in the internal structure of business e-mails written in English by speakers of other languages?
2. Can we detect changes in the organizational patterns (moves and steps) of international business e-mails taking into account the importance of clarity in this field of study?

3. Does variation in the internal organization of e-mails written by speakers of different cultural backgrounds interfere with the exchange of ideas in international business communication?

Moves and e-mails

Swales (1990) introduced the CARS model, which consists of three moves that describe how research paper introductions are structured by native English speakers (that is, establishing a territory; establishing a niche; and occupying the niche). A further proposal was made by Dudley-Evans (1994), in which the moves are the following: information move, statement of result, finding, expected outcome, reference to previous research, explanation, claim, limitation and recommendation. With regards to business communication, Bhatia (1993) also identified several moves: establishing credentials, introducing the offer, offering incentives, enclosing documents, soliciting response, using pressure tactics and ending politely. Further studies on moves have used these classifications of moves or added others, depending on the medium of communication or genre (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998; Henry & Roseberry, 2001; Peacock, 2002; Sun, 2004; Biber, Connor & Upton, 2007).

In this study, we have based the analysis of the e-mails on the classification proposed by Bhatia (1993), as the moves he proposes reflect more precisely the characteristics of the corpus analysed. As indicated above, we focus on the variation that can be detected in the moves of e-mails. Despite its obvious importance in an era of globalisation and an increasing number of multinational companies, little empirical research has been carried out in this field of study. In this sense, we would like to raise non-native English speakers' (NNES) awareness on cross-cultural differences in the structuring of business e-mails and to help them compete with native speakers for jobs with multinational companies.

Some of the patterns followed in the structure of e-mails have already been identified by Crystal (2001), but we consider that these patterns should be updated given the impact of e-mails on language development, as Gimenez (2006) stated. More specifically, the language used in business e-mails has been analysed by many researchers, such as Barson, Frommer and Schwartz (1993), Warshauer (1995), Barron (2000, 2002 & 2003), Vries and Meij (2003), Biesenbach-Lucas (2005), Gimenez (2000 & 2006), Carrió-Pastor

and Muñiz Calderón (2012a), and Carrió-Pastor and Muñiz Calderón (2012b). All of them highlight in their research that the typical communicative patterns to communicate vary when we compare speakers with different cultural backgrounds. Regarding the structures of e-mails, Gimenez (2006), Jensen (2009) and Ho (2009) analysed the use of specific discourse strategies in e-mail communication, although these focused on the relations between the participants. More recently, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) also analysed the type of supportive moves, but centred her research on lexical/phrasal modifiers used by students.

In this paper, we consider it useful to think of a field of research as consisting of a series of established moves, and yet different ways of communicating (that is, variation) should be taken into account. Nowadays, e-mails play an important role in the exchange of information and this is why it is important to detect language changes in order to identify new linguistic traits and incorporate these into language learning strategies. As Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011: 3193) explains:

(...) there are as yet no established conventions for linguistic behaviour in e-mail communication (...) most academic syllabi lack explicit instruction in e-mail writing. As a result, both native and non-native speakers are often faced with uncertainties regarding style and politeness strategies in e-mail interaction.

We agree with this author and this is why this paper focuses on the identification of the different moves employed in e-mails and the cultural influences in their structure when written by NNES.

The study

Material

We have analysed a corpus of one hundred business e-mails sent or received by the Sales Department of an international exporting company based in Spain. These e-mails were written during a period of two years, from 2009 to 2011, by NNES from India and China. English is the lingua franca used for all business interactions in this company and the most usual medium of communication inside and outside the offices is e-mail, using laptops or smartphones. The use of English is compulsory even between staff who share another language as their mother tongue, so that all employees can understand other colleagues and be understood by them.

The English language proficiency of the employees is high (C1 or C2 level of the Common European Framework), as this is a compulsory condition of employment at the company. It is necessary to take into account for the interpretation of the results of the corpus analysis that countries such as India and Pakistan were formerly British colonies and belong to the outer circle of English (Kachru, 2005); however, China belongs to the expanding circle of English (Kachru, 2005).

The corpus made up of one hundred e-mails was selected from a larger corpus of one hundred and forty e-mails. Fifty e-mails from the corpus had been written by fifty Indian employees and fifty e-mails had been written by fifty Chinese employees. We did not include in the corpus the e-mails with less than two hundred words. The total amount of words included in the body of the e-mails was 34,708 words. The e-mails written by Indian businessmen included a total of 17,424 words and the e-mails written by Chinese businessmen a total of 17,284 words.

The topic of the e-mails largely concerned the weekly reports by the company employees reporting their counterparts about different issues of importance.

Method

The analysis was carried out manually because our main purpose was to detect variations in the internal organization of e-mails and we were unable to find any computer tool that could filter the data we were interested in. The analysis was carried out in several stages. Firstly, all the e-mails were carefully read and classified according to the two different nationalities of the writers: Chinese and Indian. Secondly, the e-mails were classified according to the moves they included. In order to carry out the analysis, we drew up an initial framework adapted from Bhatia (1993) and shown in Table 1, to identify the moves in the e-mails.

Moves
M.1 Referencing
M.2 Greeting/establishing credentials
M.3 Introducing the offer
M.4 Offering incentives
M.5 Using pressure tactics
M.6 Enclosing documents
M.7 Soliciting response
M.8 Ending politely

Table 1. Initial classification of moves in e-mails following Bhatia (1993).

Thirdly, the managers informed us that the company provided some guidance in order to facilitate communication and ensure that the information of interest was supplied, with the company being conscious of the need for some guidelines due to the different linguistic backgrounds of their employees. The moves proposed by the company for these e-mails are shown in Table 2:

Moves
M.1C Reporting about the client/company visited
M.2C Reporting about the participants (customers)
M.3C Reporting about the agent participant
M.4C Reporting about the X company representative
M.5C Establishing the negotiation/description
M.6C Summarizing/concluding the outcome of the negotiation (Follow up)

Table 2. Moves in e-mails as suggested by the company.

As we can see, the company suggested two moves less than those in the initial proposal for this study (see Table 1). After reflecting on both classifications, we decided to use both frameworks, in order to classify and contrast the moves and variation found in the business e-mails in more detail.

Finally, the moves detected in the corpus were classified with a code denoting the move employed (for instance, M.1 is the code for the first move in Bhatia’s proposal and M.1C is the code for the first move in the company model) and the results analysed. The results found in the steps of Moves 5C and 6C are further discussed in the Results section as variation in the writing of e-mails was found. Several examples were also extracted from the corpus to comment our findings.

The occurrences found in the moves were counted and the percentages and statistical data were also detailed in order to identify the results which were significant for the analysis. In order to calculate whether the results extracted from our corpus were significant, the software SPSS was used. We based our analysis on the indications provided by Herrera Soler, Martínez Arias and Amengual (2011) and the standard error of the difference between independent proportions was estimated. The variations considered significant were analysed in depth and finally, the conclusions of this study were then drawn.

Results and discussion

In the first part of the analysis, the corpus was scrutinized for the moves proposed in Table 1. We used this classification of moves for the first round of the analysis of the e-mails, as it included more detailed aspects than the classification proposed by the company. In this study we considered whether the cultural or linguistic background produced variation in the structure or moves of business e-mails, interfering with their comprehension. The results obtained in this initial analysis can be observed in Table 3, the percentage shown in brackets refers to the total of fifty e-mails analysed from each group.

Moves	Indian group		Chinese group	
	Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%
M.1 Referencing	50	100	50	100
M.2 Greeting/establishing credentials	50	100	50	100
M.3 Introducing the offer	16	32	26	52
M.4 Offering incentives	12	24	20	40
M.5 Using pressure tactics	0	0	0	0
M.6 Enclosing documents	0	0	0	0
M.7 Soliciting a response	40	80	30	60
M.8 Ending politely	50	100	50	100

Table 3. Analysis of the moves in the e-mails from India and China based on Bhatia (1993).

We can see that all the e-mails analysed contain Moves 1, 2, and 8, and that none of them include Moves 5 or 6. It would seem that the latter moves are not used by either group of writers because the e-mails in question are sent as reports to other members of the company; thus, the use of pressure tactics or the enclosing of documents seems to be unnecessary given that the purpose is merely to provide internal information. Bhatia (1993) suggested these moves for letters presenting products and for self-promotion in business settings, but these were not the aims of the e-mails analysed. These results demonstrate that the purpose for which the e-mails are written must be taken into account when analysing the moves followed by the writers. Finally, differences between the Indian and Chinese writers can be seen in the frequency of the use of Moves 3, 4 and 7. Chinese writers prefer to use Moves 3 and 4 (introducing the offer and offering incentives), whereas Indian writers prefer Move 7 (soliciting a response from their counterparts).

In summary, most of the e-mails in both groups include the moves described by Bhatia (1993). Examples 1 and 2 display the analysis of two e-mails from the corpus.

Example 1: Moves followed by writers from India.

- M.1:** Durgeshwari Garments pvt Ltd. Ghaziabad Delhi :
- M.2:** Participants Client: Mr. Roshan (owner)
 Participants Agent: ravchem-delhi
 Participants GFK: Sai/Pavan
- M.3:** Mr.Roshan had come to our demo-centre in Bangalore this week. They are looking to invest in LASER & G-2 technology. They make 3000 jeans per day & market demand in B segment in Delhi is growing. We were quite surprised to see customers in this segment looking to invest in LASER/G-2.
- M.4:** They are keen to set up this in the laundry in TRONICA-GHAZIABAD town. We have given laser machine demonstration & G.2 machine samples were explained in detail. Main concern for laser & g-2 was running this equipment well. They regularly visit THAILAND & GUANGHOU will be happy to see machines even in this market in running/production facility. We did suggest customer to buy LASER only-they are keen to invest in both.
- M.7:** Please, send them conditions
- M.8:** Best,
 Sai with MrRoshan

Example 2: Moves followed by writers from China:

- M.1:** NingBo Youngor Group
- M.2:** Dear Jose,
- M.3:** Back from NingBo Youngor Group, feeling good since learn more about G2 and our customer. Youngor plan to purchase more G2 if is workable. Meanwhile, they interesting on Bigmac, which we need to discuss later.
- Meet Ngai Shing Mr Yu. He told me that Yujia bought the domestic one and will inform me when they visit Yujia next times.
- M. 4:** Aware the domestic one from company Jing YiDa in Panyu China. Will visit there to check more in detail on their machine and come back Vicente. Shall send them machine samples.
- Golden Win Group factory has postponed to June 04.

M.7: Let me know your opinion

M.8: Best regards

Channal - Jeanologia SL

In the second part of the analysis, we classified the moves of the e-mails according to the recommendations given by the company (see Table 2) in order to establish whether the writers followed the instructions of the company or if there was variation in the moves in the e-mails. The results of the analysis of the e-mails from India and China with regard to these six moves are shown in Table 4. The percentage refers to the total of fifty e-mails from each group. The results of both groups show that the writers followed the instructions of the company in the first four moves and included all the information required. Therefore, no variation has been found in the first four moves. However, variation has been found in the use of Moves 5C and 6C, as can be seen in Table 4.

Moves	Indian group		Chinese group	
	Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%
M.1C Reporting about the company visited	50	100	50	100
M.2C Reporting about the participants in the meeting	50	100	50	100
M.3C Reporting about the local agent	50	100	50	100
M.4C Reporting about the representative of the X company in the meeting	50	100	50	100
M.5C Establishing the negotiation description	42	84	28	56
M.6C Summarising/ concluding the outcome of the negotiation (Follow up)	50	100	36	72

Table 4. Results of the moves proposed by the company in the e-mails from India and China.

Examples 3 and 4 display e-mails which follow the moves established by the company. We can observe that the purpose of these moves is just to report about the company, the participants, the local agent and the representative of the company, but the e-mails include all the information that should be reported to other offices and the description of the process in Move 5C and Move 6C. Moves 1C, 2C, 3C and 4C are merely informative.

Example 3: Moves 1C, 2C, 3C and 4C employed by Indian writers:

M.1C: This week was mainly in KINGPIN DELHI SHOW & BANGALORE visit with Mr Enrique.

Arvind Exports Mysore Road Bangalore

- M.2C:** Participants Customers: Mr. Hemanna T (consultant)
Mr Shrinivas Naik (laundry Head)
- M.3C:** Participants Agent: Vijay-Ravchem
- M.4C:** Participants X Co: Sai

Example 4: Moves 1C, 2C, 3C and 4C employed by Chinese writers:

- M.1C:** Yuja garment finishing Limited
- M.2C:** Participants Client: Mr Tommy
- M.3C:** Participants Ngai Shing: Mr. Chen Ka Ki
- M.4C:** Participants X Co.: Rafa / Channa

Move 5C and 6C were analysed in more detail as we observed variation in their use. As most of the e-mails followed different strategies in establishing the description of the negotiation and in summarising and concluding the negotiation, we listed the steps followed in the e-mails in order to compare the results and the structures used. Table 5 displays the steps and occurrences found in Move 5C, confirming the hypothesis of this study; this is to say, there is variation in the structural organisation of texts produced by writers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Move 5C was proposed by the company with regard to establishing the description of the negotiation and in the analysis of the corpus we identified ten different communicative sequences or steps.

M.5C Establishing the description of the negotiation	Indian group		Chinese group	
	Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%
S.1 Establishing the objective of the visit/meeting	2	4	28	56
S.2 Establishing the description of the negotiation	12	24	28	56
S.3 Providing information about the customer	34	68	0	0
S.4 Providing information about the context (industrial sector, country, etc.)	8	16	6	12
S.5 Setting forth the client's plans and intentions	42	84	6	12
S.6 Setting forth the client's demands	16	32	0	0
S.7 Providing information about the client's reaction	16	32	2	4
S.8 Providing information about the decisions made	4	8	4	8
S.9 Providing information about problems	4	8	0	0
S.10 Giving a personal opinion	24	48	4	0

Table 5. Steps (S.) followed for Move 5C in the e-mails from India and China.

It can be seen that in the e-mails from India, Step 5, setting forth the client's plans and intentions, was the most commonly used step in Move 5C. Step 3, providing information about the client, was also widely used, being the second most common step (68%). The third most frequently used step was Step 10, in which the writer gives a personal opinion. However, it is noteworthy that Steps 4, 8 and 9 were rarely included in the structure of the move. Only a few writers considered it important to provide information about the decisions made, the context or any problems.

In the Chinese group, Steps 1 and 2, establishing the objective of the visit or meeting and the description of the negotiation, were the most common. It is worth noting that Chinese writers did not employ most of the steps in Move 5C. The Chinese writers did not provide as much information as the Indian writers with regard to the description of the negotiation. Communication was more concise in the Chinese e-mails, as can be seen in Examples 5 and 6.

Example 5: Steps followed in Move 5C in the e-mails from India.

- S.1:** Met Mr. Bakshi for business prospects. We had a meeting for G-2 plus machine.
- S.2:** Made them see LASER & G-2 technologies. We made detailed presentation on water-less denim & tricast with Laser
- S.3:** They make 3000 jeans per day & market demand in B segment in Delhi is growing. We were quite surprised to see customers in this segment looking to invest in LASER/G-2. We were shocked to hear that for wholesale price of RS 400(approx. 8.8 USD) JEANS, They are able to command RS 100(2.2 USD approx.) FOR wash/dry process!!!!. Labour is getting expensive & cannot find even if they are ready to pay. Next two to four years horizon many customers will be forced to invest in technology. Final selling price to wholesale market is between rs 300 to rs 400 per jeans.
- S.4:** URBAN-OUTFITTERS main brand has moved out 40% production out of India. Business gain has flown to VIETNAM market. The area has many labour problems & getting dry process staff is not easy situation.
- S.5:** They are keen to see the machine in Bangalore in week-12 in our demo-centre. MAY-2011 want to go to Spain to visit our head office. Customer is very interested to this in our demo-centre & also develop samples. They have plans to think about Laser technology for new laundry.

- S.6:** Immediately they want to see the equipment in running condition. In addition they would like to send some samples make it in G”, then get convinced on savings before final decision to purchase!
- S.7:** They were quite impressed with G-2 samples shown. They have liked the samples presented in laser. They are quite interested in laser technology.
- S.8:** MR SHABIR has asked for G-2 plus machine offer. They have agreed for LASER machine AMC.
- S.9:** Claim to have used the machine well-but production manager issues in production.
- S.10:** If denim Project comes then we have chance for investment. Happy to see they get an order for 1.2 lakhs pcs from LEVIS EUROPE. This customer to change mindset– is going to take lot of effort/time for usage G-2 usage.

Example 6: Steps followed in Move 5C in the e-mails from China.

- S.1:** This trip is by requested from customer to review the CDS in bulk production. This trip major purpose to understand the market in Hanoi and get chance to meet customer through their New Product Introduction Exhibition and Technical Seminar for Garment Industry.
- S.2:** None.
- S.3:** Tung Shing Sewing Machine Company Limited has established in Vietnam around 19 years already, and they are well known company, currently they are work as agent for many foreign brand. This company is factory with sewing + Laundry in same district and this model becomes more and more in Vietnam. They have 400 workers for factory. Their major customer are Tommy/ Burberry/ Justis /A&F/ Core/ White House/ So Denim (Korea)/ JC Penny. Monthly production is 150,000 pcs denim per month, Plus 100,000 to 150,000 pcs per month for knit and others.
- S.4:** During visiting, “Next” brand is approaching them and taking factory audit. Philips explicit his point of view on garment market status, many factories will turn to build up in-house laundry, although currently many laundries still using illegal way to avoid water treatment issue.
- S.5:** But, they plan to build a new laundry which 3 times bigger than existing, in order to improve their capability. They would like to place

future orders keeping Vietnam situation prospects. Mr. Allen clearly explicit that company will not interest to purchase G2.

- S.6: None.
- S.7: For this meeting customer focus on develop small laundry by using Ngai Shing washing / Dryer machines, although like, before close the meeting, have brought up CDS dyestuff for this customer and looking forward to visit them after Chinese to develop more on CDS. I met their technical manager, and they are not really interest in our technology indeed.
- S.8: Billion horse confirmed will import the G2 and Laser through Ngai Shing, and also purchase an extra process such as ventilation system.
- S.9: None.
- S.10: If Tung Shing becomes our agent in Vietnam. That makes double win-win situation for all of us.

The statistical analysis revealed important differences between the two groups of speakers. Specifically, differences were found in the use of the steps establishing the objective and the description of the negotiation, providing information about the client, setting forth the client’s plans and intentions, providing information about the client’s reaction and giving a personal opinion. This indicates that the use of these steps varied according to the cultural background of the non-native speakers of English. The analysis indicated that Indian writers employed Steps 3, 5, 6, 7 and 10 significantly more frequently, whereas Chinese writers used Steps 1 and 2 significantly more frequently while using fewer discourse strategies than Indian writers. The level for statistical significance was taken as $p \leq 0.05$ for both cases.

Finally, Table 6 shows the results of the analysis of the variation found in use of the steps of Move 6C, which concerns summarizing and concluding the negotiation. We detected five steps in this Move in both groups of e-mails.

M.6C Summarising and concluding the negotiation (Follow up)	Indian group		Chinese group	
	Occurrences	%	Occurrences	%
S.1 Establishing actions to be taken	38	76	36	72
S.2 Establishing the action owners	50	100	18	36
S.3 Summarising the client's situation	0	0	4	8
S.4 Providing information about the client's reaction/decision	0	0	4	8
S.5 Recommending strategies to follow and concluding	14	28	2	4

Table 6. Results of the steps (S.) employed for Move 6C in the e-mails from India and China.

All the participants of the Indian group included Step 2, while only 36% of the Chinese writers considered it important to establish who the person to perform the action would be in Move 6C. This may be due to cultural influences on the writers' part.

The statistical analysis indicated that there were important differences in the use of steps for setting action owners, recommending strategies to follow and concluding. The statistical results indicated that Indian writers employed Steps 2 and 5 significantly more frequently, but the differences found in the results for Steps 1, 3 and 4 cannot be considered significant and it can therefore be said that the use of these steps by both groups was similar. The level for statistical significance was taken as $p \leq 0.05$ in these steps.

It should also be noted that around 70% of the writers of both groups included Step 1 – that is, establishing the actions to be taken. In business, this is a very important issue to take into account. Also, few writers from either group employed Steps 3 or 4 – that is, summarising the client situation and providing information about the client's decision. One would expect these steps to be important when concluding a negotiation; however, the results for both groups do not reflect this. The writers did not follow the same structure in the e-mails, avoiding the use of recommendations or of information about the decision of the client. The reporting of how the negotiation was concluded is important as the managers are then better informed and can react accordingly, and may better manage future contact and business negotiations with the customers. However, the Chinese writers decided not to include information relating to several of the steps in Move 6C. We can observe several examples of these occurrences found in the corpus in Examples 7 and 8.

Example 7: Steps of Move 6C from Indian e-mails.

- S.1:** Continue the initial link & later MR JAYANT-MADURA. & MR ALEX-LASER CO can take over for the consultancy project. Push for meeting date for Gonzalo visit in APRIL-2011 with customer already given offer to MR HEMANNA FOR G-2 plus@180000 euro. Check the laser AMC FOR 2 machines in APRIL/MAY-2011.
- S.2:** IN CHARGE: Sai with Mr Bakshi
- S.3:** None.
- S.4:** None.
- S.5:** G2 essential spares follow up for stock. Getting meeting for more

factories in SRI LANKA next visit! Need to check after new year
APRIL-2011/ MR VIR spending some time ON G2 usage

Example 8: Steps of Move 6C from Chinese e-mails.

- S.1:** Will check with Ngai Shing for official contract. Check the result after customer came back.
- S.2:** I will do trial by myself and send return those trial samples after make trial.
- S.3:** Mr Wong explicit that affected by economy status, all investments will freeze for this year. But, for CDS, is under developing.
- S.4:** Mr Alick present they do agree our G2 function. But, he does not have any right to make decision and recommend me to contact HK office, which we had visited before. Mr Allen clears explicit that company will not interest to purchase G2. For this meeting customer focus on develop small laundry by using Ngai Shing washing / Dryer machines, although like, before close the meeting, have brought up CDS dyestuff for this customer and looking forward to visit them after Chinese to develop more on CDS.
- S.5:** As the coming half year, Vietnam is my priority focus country, we fly more often and arrange customer meeting. Will further discuss this with them when go there in Mid-August. Also worry the maintenance job task. By joining an exhibition and visit more Vietnam, believe our product could launch into Vietnam in short period time

Examples 7 and 8 demonstrate that the arrangement of e-mails changes depending on the nationality of the writer. The writers from China provide greater explanations within each step whereas the Indian writers are more concise and do not elaborate to any great extent in their messages. These examples do not follow the same tendency than examples 3, 4, 5 and 6 as Chinese writers tend to be more concise, but it seems they consider that summarising and concluding the negotiation should be explained in detail, as seen in examples 7 and 8.

Finally, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the results shown in Tables 5 and 6, regarding the steps employed by the Indian writers, and Figure 2 illustrates the steps used by the Chinese writers in Moves 5C and 6C.

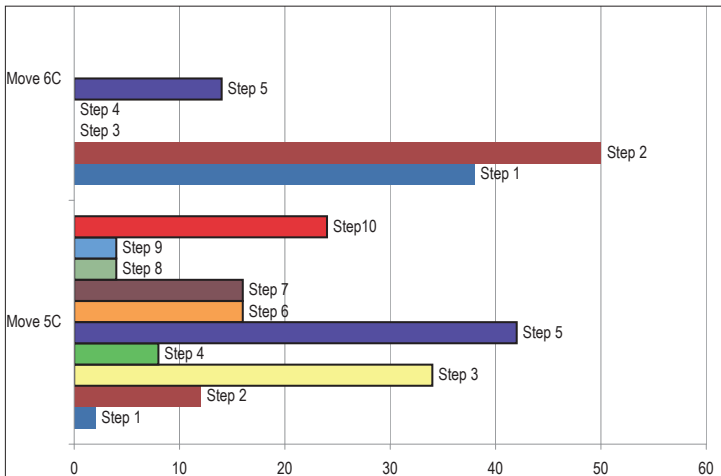


Figure 1. Steps in Moves 5C and 6C employed by Indian writers.

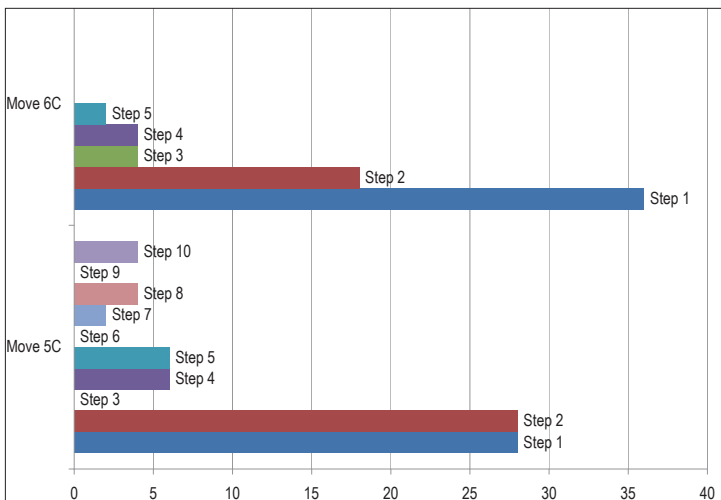


Figure 2. Steps in Moves 5C and 6C employed by Chinese writers.

A comparison of the two figures reveals the differences in the moves and steps employed by the writers, with these varying according to their mother tongue and cultural background. We can observe when contrasting both figures that the steps in Moves 5C and 6C are followed in quite a different way by the writers from India and China.

Conclusions

In the first stage of the analysis, most of the variation found in the moves proposed by Bhatia (1993), and shown in Table 3, centered on Moves 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The writers in both groups employed Moves 1, 2 and 8. These moves represent the basic compulsory parts of e-mails: referencing, greeting and ending politely. However, it should be emphasised that the lack of occurrences of Moves 5 and 6 is due to the nature of the e-mails included in the corpus. As they are reports from managers to the headquarters of the company, there is no need to use pressure tactics or enclose documents. On the other hand, variation was found between the non-native speakers of English in the use of Moves 3, 4 and 7. Chinese managers introduced the offers received and solicited a response; in contrast, Indian managers solicited a response but did not include Moves 3 and 4.

In the second stage of the analysis no variations were detected in the first four moves – that is, the writers followed the company's proposal for the structuring of their e-mails. Most of the writers included six moves in the e-mails, although variation was seen in the use of Moves 5C and 6C. At a more detailed level of analysis, variation was found in the use of different steps.

On the one hand, Move 5C concerned the description of the negotiation and it was subdivided into ten steps. The first step established the objective of the visit or meeting: the Indian writers did not include this step in Move 5C, while Chinese writers often considered it important to do so (56%). The reason for this may be that the Chinese writers of this study tended to express their ideas in a concise, precise and direct way, getting straight to the point (S.1 and S.2), whereas the Indian writers preferred not to specify the objective of the visit, focusing on establishing the client's plans and intentions (S.5) or providing information about the client (S.3). The analysis of the e-mails also revealed a preference by the Indian writers for giving lengthy descriptions and additional information, whereas the writers from China were more synthetic and precise (see S.5 and S.7 in examples 5 and 6). The results for Step 10, giving a personal opinion, also showed that the Indian writers expressed their personal opinion in detail and the writers from China again employed a concise and brief style.

On the other hand, Move 6C, summarising and concluding the negotiation, was subdivided into five steps in order to identify the variation more precisely. Variation was observed in form of the inclusion or omission of Steps 2 and 5. Step 2 established the person responsible for the follow-up of

the negotiation, and the Indian writers included this in their e-mails, whereas the Chinese writers chose not to do so. Step 5 involves recommending strategies to follow and the Indian writers included this, whereas the Chinese writers did not consider this to be important.

Summing up, it was found that Indian and Chinese managers included standard information in their e-mails, such as the participants, the name of the company, the local agent, the representative (Moves 1, 2, 3, 1C, 2C, 3C and 4C); however, the moves that involved descriptions or concluding remarks were not so frequently included. The writers preferred not to give personal opinions or describe future strategies. By contrasting the results obtained in Moves 5C and 6C, it can be seen that most of the Indian e-mails included more steps and information than the Chinese e-mails (compare Figures 1 and 2). We believe these findings support the research undertaken by Rogerson-Revell (2007) Cheung (2011), Carrió-Pastor and Muñiz Calderón (2012a), Carrió Pastor and Muñiz Calderón (2012b), and Weninger and Kan (2013) in the sense that English used as a lingua franca in a business environment tends to vary, depending on the cultural, linguistic or social background of the speaker.

After analysing the steps employed in these e-mails, it is our position that communication was not impaired when Chinese writers did not include several steps in their e-mails; nevertheless, some relevant issues were not included, such as providing information about problems, and this could be problematic for the company. Our recommendation is that especial care should be taken regarding e-communication training in international companies. Managers should be aware of the fact that staff with different mother tongues may not use the same discourse strategies when communicating in English and this could lead to certain company information being lost.

Despite the fact that English is used as a global language, writers show their linguistic background when they communicate. Further research could be carried out by contrasting this corpus of e-mails written by Asian writers with e-mails written by non-native speakers from other countries, as the descriptive analysis of the English used by non-native speakers requires further study. Other aspects such as the use of rhetorical aspects of English in international business English could also be included in further analyses.

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