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## **Foreword**

### **Intercultural ‘translation’ of knowledge across international borders**

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Welcome to the December 2015 issue of the *Asian ESP Journal*, which features a broad range of studies from a variety of Asian locations. As in 2014, we continue to emphasize the paradox that the importance of a personal authorial voice rather than a detached objectifying voice appears to be increasing as publication uses more technical means to cross international borders. In an age when everything can be found and ‘borrowed’ on the Internet, Asian ESP continues to encourage studies that reflect the insider’s authentic living voice rather than a detached impersonal voice which can so easily disguise the author’s own stance and identity. A detached impersonal voice is often accompanied by a spurious claim of ‘objectivity’.

At the heart of the Asian EFL group as a whole is the notion of tolerance of epistemic diversity. We hope that our 2015 volume reflects a diversity of views and that the reader will respond by seeking connections. It is the nature of international communication that nothing reported from one local context can be directly transplanted into another context, but we do claim that much of it is ‘translatable’ in the sense that competent local practitioners will work out how to transcend local constraints with the help of outside knowledge and will recognize and disregard international centralizing hegemonies, whether these be conceptual or in the form of centralized indexing of academic publication. Intercultural ‘translation’ is our means of making connections across borders and international publishing has little use without it.

In *Secretarial needs in a bicultural academic office*, Pi-Hsia Lü, D. Victoria Rau and Yu-Fang Wang provide an interesting ethnographic study in an area that is not frequently discussed in even in ESP studies of the workplace. This study illustrates the methodological advantages of starting from an experiential insider perspective and then using a variety of research perspectives to make sense of the experience so that it might become shareable across contexts.

Yan Wang's study *a Hypermodal Analysis of "Care" in Healthcare Communication* examines the importance of multimodal online communication and its development. This raises issues as to how concepts such as 'care' with their emotional overtones are communicated. Yan Wang also points out that the same kind of issues that are important in designing corporate websites for healthcare providers can be applied to designing website platforms in other contexts including course providers.

Remaining within the healthcare *milieu*, Ian Ramos' article concerns the needs of third- and fourth-year nursing students, writing case studies or thesis proposals at a medical university in Southeast Asia. The author's findings indicate that the English courses on offer fail to achieve the stated objectives of the syllabus. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the perceived priorities of students (and their clinical instructors) and the English teaching provision at the university. In conclusion, Ramos proposes that English courses should explicitly focus upon practice drills, process writing and editing skills.

Despite considerable recent research on textbook evaluation, ESP materials research has rarely focused on the pedagogical effectiveness of different lexical categories. It is this perceived shortcoming that prompted Boshraadi *et al.* to investigate the lexical requirements of a group of Iranian dentistry students. Their focus was ESP content in general, reading and writing skills in particular. The study assembled 100 dentistry students and 30 teachers, randomly selected from two different universities. The survey instruments employed were a questionnaire and a focused-group interview, with the aim of comparing perceived student needs with the lexical items found in their set textbook. Results revealed that the target textbook did appropriately satisfy the lexical requirements of the participants, filling the gap between perceived and real needs. The authors suggest that their findings may contain valuable implications for course designers, language teachers, and materials developers alike.

In *A Comparative Analysis of the English Writing Ability of Chinese and Korean University Students*, Cui Zheng examines the linguistic features of the written English of Chinese and Korean university students. Written assignments from both groups are considered from the perspectives of fluency, grammatical and lexical complexity, the aim being to examine the similarities and differences between them. Participants comprised 84 Chinese and 84 Korean university students, and results indicated that few significant differences existed between the two groups. Such differences as do exist can be attributed, at least in part, to L1 influence and student writing strategies. Insights from this study thus inform the teaching of written English, particularly in Chinese and Korean EFL contexts.

Japanese learners of English become susceptible to phonological priming effects in word identification tasks only at high levels of proficiency. Such is the contention in Clay Williams' piece *Japanese L2 English Word Recognition Processes: Decoding Sound vs. Shape*. Further, it is likely that even high-level Japanese students will encounter difficulty with orthographic processing of visual word stimuli. Proceeding from these assertions, the study details an experiment, conducted with a group of 30 students, dedicated to assessing susceptibility to orthographic and phonological priming effects. Results showed that error rates for targets preceded by phonological primes emerged as "significantly higher". Comparing these findings to those of previous studies, (involving Chinese E2L learners), Williams outlines the pedagogical implications not only for Japan, but for the greater East Asian region.

Our final inclusion employs genre analysis to explore the rhetorical differences in letter writing between British native speakers and Iranian non-native speakers of English. In *Where the Difference Lies: British and Iranian rhetorical choices in English business request letters*, Monfared *et al.* subject two corpora to rhetorical analysis. These corpora comprise authentic written samples from 30 Iranian non-native English speakers and an equal number of British native English speakers, along with data from interviews with 10 of the study's participants. Results showed that the Iranian letters displayed a "deference face system", in which emphasis on rapport-building strategies prevails. In the British business letters, conversely, a "solidarity face system" emerges as salient.

In closing, it is axiomatic that the articles featured in this issue derive from, and thus address the needs of, a diverse set of learning environments. All of these contributions are, however, underpinned by the unifying theme of Intercultural ‘translation’. It is our aspiration that the *Asian ESP Journal* will serve to advance the cause of mutual intelligibility, while yet promoting the primacy of the individual voice.



## **Secretarial Needs in a Bicultural Academic Office**

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## **Abstract**

This study explored the communication needs of those in secretarial positions in a bicultural academic office. Needs analysis was employed, using a combination of ethnographic and autobiographical methods to investigate insider views, with the ultimate goal of determining how to teach secretarial English. The research site was the English department of a university in Central Taiwan. The data collection methods used in this study included semi-structured interviews, daily observational field notes and self-reflection. The results showed that the perceived communication needs identified by participants include being a caretaker with high English competency, being a good communicator with a service attitude and high EQ, and being a life-long learner of pragmatic strategies. Secretaries in a bicultural workplace not only need basic communication skills but must also be able to deal with the unique demands of that setting, particularly cultural sensitivity. Given the power differentials in the target setting, an awareness of sociopragmatic aspects of business discourse is also essential. An understanding of these needs will help newcomers acculturate to the target workplace setting, which suggests pedagogical implications for ESP course development.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes; needs analysis; ethnography; autobiographical method; secretarial English

## **1. Introduction**

Secretaries in academic offices have frequent verbal and nonverbal interaction with a variety of people, including teachers and students from different cultural backgrounds. Ordinary secretaries only need to deal with administrative paperwork and maintain good rapport with other members of the workplace, but in multicultural settings those abilities are not enough. Secretarial work involves not only linguistic exchanges with other people, but also complex intercultural professional communication (Pan, Scollon, & Scollon, 2002). Secretaries function as liaisons, keeping communication within such institutions open and reducing the chance for misunderstanding. To meet the communication needs of secretaries in such institutions, a variety of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are needed at the university level in Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Taiwan and other parts of the world where

English is used as a second/foreign language. Many European universities now also offer courses in English to attract international students, so various departments now require secretaries with good multicultural communication skills that have been essential in English/Applied Linguistics departments for a longer time.

ESP has been regarded as a subfield of English language training, providing specific training in content area knowledge and specialized skills within targeted domains, such as academic or workplace settings (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Strevens, 1980). An important concept in ESP is needs analysis, which aims to investigate the perceived language needs of different parties. The design of needs analysis research has been strongly influenced by the work of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who advocate a *learning-centered approach*. This approach involves learning as a “process of negotiation between individuals and society” and includes teaching, syllabi, methods, materials, etc. (Jordan, 1997, p. 25). Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 54) define needs in terms of “*target needs* (i.e. what the learner needs to do in the target situation) and *learning needs* (i.e. what the learner needs to do in order to learn).” The present study was conducted in response to the *target needs*, in an attempt to probe the communication needs of those in secretarial positions in a bicultural academic office.

A number of needs analysis studies have been reported in the ESP literature, as summarized in Flowerdew (2013). Several studies have investigated ESP in workplaces (Cowling, 2007; Ibrahim, 1993; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999, 2005; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008). For instance, Lehtonen and Karjalainen (2008) investigated how 15 Finnish employers perceived the language needs of new employees. Kassim and Ali (2010) designed questionnaires administered to engineers of 10 multinational chemical companies in Malaysia. Based on the perceived needs identified by the different participant groups at a leading Japanese company, Cowling (2007) developed a syllabus for a series of intensive workplace English courses for the company.

Most ESP research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods in the data gathering stage. Many ethnographic studies follow the ethnographic principle of aiming for “thick descriptions” of the target environments (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991), which involves in-depth ethnographic data collection methods such as observations and exploratory interviews. Several have focused

on needs analyses in the workplace from an ethnographic perspective (Garcia, 2002; Ibrahim, 1993; Jasso-Aguilar, 1999, 2005; Long, 2005). An example of this type of needs analysis is Ibrahim's case study (1993) of language needs in the manufacturing industry in Japan. The study, spanning a period of ten weeks, attempted to identify the communicative events occurring in one particular discourse community, the Display Monitor Department of a Japan-based multinational company. The results indicated that the communicative events and the rules governing them were greatly influenced by the management culture of this organization and by the context of the situation. Jasso-Aguilar (1999, 2005) investigated the perspectives of maids and institutional representatives of a hotel in Waikiki in which the maids worked. Garcia (2002) researched the communicative tasks of workers by visiting a factory. Jasso-Aguilar's (1999, 2005) and Garcia's (2002) studies employed a critical ethnographic approach, examining the power differentials existing in these social contexts (Starfield, 2013).

An examination of the literature of ESP in workplaces, especially from an insiders' view of the target setting using ethnographic methods or even the larger umbrella term of qualitative research, reveals a lack of information about secretarial needs in bicultural academic settings in Taiwan.

The present study thus explores this little-known area in a non-English-speaking environment, employing ethnographic methods. Ethnographic methods entail long-term immersion or participant observation in an intact cultural group. Data-gathering techniques are usually multiple and flexible, typically relying on observations, formal and informal interviews, analysis of authentic documents, and the researcher's own experience of events and processes in the target setting (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation and triangulation are used within the qualitative research tradition to help validate data and increase the credibility of the interpretations (Davis, 1992). Moreover, perception from an insiders' viewpoint reduces the need for intuition or "guessing" the language used in specific work situations or for specific tasks (Long, 2000).

The first author of the present study has worked as a secretary in an academic office at a university in Taiwan for eighteen years and is therefore an insider in the target setting.<sup>1</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was adapted from the first author's doctoral dissertation (Lü, 2012), supervised by the second and third authors.

study, needs analysis is carried out, utilizing a combination of ethnographic and autobiographical methods in order to obtain a detailed understanding of the communication needs placed on secretaries and further provide pedagogical implications for ESP curriculum development.

## **2. Materials and methods**

### ***2.1 Research site***

We investigated an English department office at a university in Central Taiwan. Currently foreigners constitute around one fifth of the faculty, with six foreign teachers and twenty-one local Chinese teachers<sup>2</sup> in the department. Five of the foreign teachers were American, with one from Europe. Normally departmental meetings were conducted in English. Because of the policy of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, the university was encouraged to enroll more international students; therefore, there has been an increase in the number of international students coming from various countries, adding much more cultural diversity to the department.

The department office was usually busy during breaks between class periods, since students would come in to ask questions or borrow teaching equipment. Secretaries in the office were seated side by side in office cubicles separated by dividers, so each had his/her individual space. Next to the main department office was a small lounge with a comfortable long table and chairs lit by pale yellow lighting. Teachers often went there to take a break and chat with each other over tea or coffee, and teachers' mailboxes were in that room. Adjoining the lounge was the chairperson's office in which a sofa set was located. Here the chairperson would greet guests or discuss administrative affairs with secretaries.

### ***2.2 Participants***

Six groups of participants were recruited. All the participants' profiles are shown in Table 1. For ethical reasons (Punch, 1994; Stake, 1994), pseudonyms are used for the participants (chairs, teachers, students, and secretaries).

Since there are many administrative affairs to deal with every day, secretaries are usually assigned different kinds of tasks. At the time of the research during 2010-2011, there were four

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, "Chinese teacher" refers to any local teacher who is a native speaker of Chinese in Taiwan.

academic secretaries in the department office: SE1, SE2, SE3 and SE4, including the first author. All the secretaries undertake translation, communication with teachers and students, alumni list updating and mailing, conference organizing, meeting arrangement and minute taking. In addition, they are assigned different specialized tasks. SE1 mainly deals with affairs related to the graduate program, scholarship applications, and budgeting. SE2 is in charge of full-time faculty affairs and arranging alumni festivities. SE3 is assigned undergraduate course scheduling and part-time faculty affairs. SE4 is engaged in department homepage updating and helps organize academic activities. The language requirements for secretaries are increasing now because of the policy of internationalization promoted by the school and the Ministry of Education. Secretaries are regarded as unqualified if their English proficiency level is lower than that of the students.

### ***2.3 Data-gathering instrument***

The qualitative methods used in this study were ethnographic semi-structured interviews, daily observational fieldnotes, and self-reflection on the targeted environment with attempts to triangulate using “multiple sources of data, multiple points in time, or a variety of methods” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69). Each method is elaborated on in the following subsections.

**Table 1: Participants’ profiles**

Position	Name	Status of Nationality	Chinese Proficiency*	Recorded Time
Chair	C1	Foreigner	L, S	1hr10min11sec
Chair	C2	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	59min59sec.
Chair	C3	National		42min11sec
Chair	C4	National		53min58sec
Chair	C5	National		19min30sec
Chair	C6	National		41min20sec
Teacher	TF1	Foreigner	L, S	28min31sec

Teacher	TF2	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	42min19sec
Teacher	TF3	Foreigner		34min1sec
Teacher	TC1	National		29min23sec
Teacher	TC2	National		34min4sec
Teacher	TC3	National		29min27sec
Teacher	TC4	National		16min
Student	SF1	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	30min15sec
Student	SF2	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	36min47sec
Student	SF3	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	25min39sec
Student	SF4	Foreigner	L, S, R, W	25min23sec
Student	SC1	National		17min28sec
Student	SC2	National		12min4sec
Student	SC3	National		16min39sec
Student	SC4	National		42min12sec
Secretary	SE1	National		30min47sec
Secretary	SE2	National		56min12sec
Secretary	SE3	National		1hr18min31sec
Secretary	SE4	National		1hr22min39sec

\* Chinese proficiency in L (listening), S (speaking), R (reading) and W (writing).

### 2.3.1 Ethnographic semi-structured interviews

Retrospective interviews constitute one type of external evidence that has been used successfully in the study of institutional talk (Kerekes, 2003; Thonus, 1998). Much ethnographic interviewing is thematic or topical in structure. Based on Rossman and Rallis (2003), the first author identified

domains of experience in which she was interested and developed questions or topical statements to elicit the participants' understanding of those domains. Ethnographic questions were used to gather cultural data from a cognitive perspective. As Vygotsky (1987) noted, every word that people use in telling their stories is essentially a microcosm of their own consciousness and the semi-structured interview "allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

Before the interview, the participants were greeted by the researcher and given an informed consent statement so that they fully understood the objectives of the study. At the same time, they were informed of the audio-recording and were ensured of confidentiality. After gaining permission for audio-recording, the first author then started to ask the participants semi-structured interview questions. Four sets of interview questions were designed: those for the chair (and former chairs), teachers, students, and secretaries, respectively (See Appendixes A to D). The audio-recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. The finished transcription and interpretation were then sent to the participants for confirmation to avoid any misinterpretation.

### **2.3.2 Daily observational field notes**

Beginning to observe requires coming to an understanding of "the field" or the setting. Denzin (1994:505) noted that, "an event or process can be neither interpreted nor understood until it has been well described." Thick description is necessary for "thick interpretation" (Denzin, 1989: 83), as it presents details, emotion, and textures of social relationships (Geertz, 1973). The first author closely observed the situations happening in the office and wrote down the speech events as soon as possible after the exchanges occurred. The exchanges might be oral or written. Considering that certain procedures and schedules for academic work routinely occur at different times during the semester, the first author spent one whole semester (Fall 2010) taking notes of her observations of the situations happening in the office and writing down the speech events immediately after the exchange occurred.

### **2.3.3 Self-reflection**

As the first author was the main instrument of the qualitative research, she was part of the phenomenon being studied, and therefore needed to reflect on her actions, feelings and conflicts

that she experienced during the research. The process of critically reflecting on her own role and preconceptions was ongoing through all the stages of data collection, analysis, interpretation and write-up of the paper, following Rossman and Rallis' (2003) suggestion that the qualitative researcher systematically reflect on how s/he affects the ongoing flow of everyday life and is affected by it. Reflexivity also requires the researcher to take stock of his/her relationship with participants and examine his/her own reaction to their accounts and actions (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). If the researcher adopts a self-critical stance to (i) research, (ii) research relationships, (iii) personal assumptions and preconceptions, and (iv) his/her own role in research, the study will become more reliable and valid, in other words, more trustworthy and authentic. The self-reflection was deemed an introspection of the past, which serves as a vital support for the real-world observations.

#### ***2.4 Data analysis procedures***

All the collected data were analyzed on the basis of content analysis (Patton, 1990), including the procedures of coding, categorization, description, and interpretation. Coding was a process in which conceptualization of ideas was needed. First, both the fieldnotes and the transcripts collected from semi-structured interviews were examined and synthesized. Different categories were classified based on their properties or correlations. Information gained from participants' statements was voiced through transcription. Direct quotations derived from the transcripts were afterwards cited to exemplify each designated category. Afterwards, reasonable inferences and plausible explanations were proposed, depending on the needs of each situation. The final stage of analysis involved triangulation of qualitative data sources, "comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods" (Patton, 1990, p. 467). Hence, the secretarial needs at the workplace were revealed. By using multiple sources of information in this study, the findings were validated and cross-checked.

### **3. Results and discussion**

By means of triangulated sources of data, three perceived needs are identified (1) being a caretaker with high English competency, (2) being a good communicator with a service attitude and high EQ, and (3) being a life-long learner of pragmatic strategies. These needs will be



elaborated on in the following subsections. A selection of extracts from the interview data and fieldnotes, some of which were translated from Mandarin Chinese to English, was analyzed.

### ***3.1 Being a caretaker with high English competency***

The first identified communication need is that secretarial positions require someone to be a caretaker with a high caliber of English. The word caretaker is typically used in the context of caring for property or for individuals who are unable to take care of themselves because of their youth or a physical or mental disability. Although fully competent in their native language and culture, many people arriving in Taiwan feel totally helpless, and turn to the secretaries to meet their every need. Thus secretaries need ability to answer a variety of questions ranging from academic life to everyday living, to translate documents not only accurately but in a culturally-sensitive manner, and to adapt to different English accents.

#### **3.1.1 Knowledge to answer questions from academic life to everyday living**

For many years secretaries have needed to interact with foreign teachers, but in recent years, more and more universities have recruited international students as well. Secretaries need to reply to the questions raised by those students concerning course selection, assist them in using the online platform to drop and add courses, and provide other assistance. Hence, they usually need to spend over 50% of their time using English to communicate with foreign teachers and students by email, phone or face-to-face communication, a figure agreed on by all the secretaries.

From a chairperson's perspective (C3), secretaries in the department office are expected to reach near-native English proficiency and *yishoubaoban* 'taking care of all the relevant assigned tasks,' and foreign teachers expect secretaries to take care of their every need.

*The ideal situation is that the English secretaries can use English without any problems. They can do whatever they are assigned. This is my dream. When a new [foreign] teacher is hired, they are capable of dealing with all the relevant assigned tasks.* (interview data: C3, a former department chairperson)

*Everything. I mean...Where to live, how to pay the bills, uh...how to get to the hospital, how to install particular software in the computer, uh...how to find the building, when do I pay my taxes, when do I have to get my resident permit renewed, what do I do with a student who is not coming to class & how do I get to the E-campus network, and almost everything you have to do, you have to do the first time and...you just don't know how to do it--how do I put the syllabus on the web, how do I get to my e-mail, I mean almost everything, almost everything you [secretaries] have to do, you have to... have somebody help you the first time.*  
(interview data: TF3, a foreign teacher)

*It's been a long time since I have been a newcomer, but....I think that newcomers have so many requests and the secretary really does a lot to help them, for example, housing, phone, insurance, government applications for work permits, knowing where their classrooms are, trying to understand the culture of schools in Taiwan, um, they're just numerous, they...I think newcomers often expect the secretary to take care of their every need.* (interview data: TF1, a foreign teacher)

To meet the expectation of a caretaker in the work context, secretaries are expected to have a very good command of English. It is reasonable in the current situation to require new secretaries to have an M.A. degree, as mentioned by C3, a former Chinese department chair. As noted by Scollon and Scollon (1995), the amount and type of formal, academic education and training are a significant measure used in setting job requirements and in screening potential members of the workplace. The following is the self-reflection of SE2, i.e., the first author.

*I benefited substantially from "learning by doing" in the target workplace. The biggest challenge I undertook was when C3, a Chinese teacher was the department chair. She asked me to reply to foreign applicants for the full-time position directly by email, since I was the contact person indicated in the job advertisement. I was deeply impressed with what she said to me, "I totally count on you," even though I was shocked at being assigned the task. At the beginning, I was afraid that my English proficiency was not good enough to interact with applicants with Ph.D.s,*

*which might influence the reputation of the department. Through the email exchanges, I gradually built up my confidence and learned appropriate English usage for different occasions. (self-reflection: SE2, a secretary/the first author)*

### **3.1.2 Textual and cultural translation ability is a must**

Since most of the foreign teachers cannot read and write Chinese documents, translation ability is a must for the secretarial positions. Most foreign teachers have high expectation for the translation to be accurate and precise. New teachers, in particular, need help with translation to understand all the rules and regulations of the department and the school.

*Secretaries need to translate documents very well, comprehend the legal vocabulary and be well-versed in academic language in both English and Chinese to handle the academic work (paperwork) and the work of legal documents well, which are very necessary for foreign teachers to know in order to live and work in Taiwan. (interview data: C1, a former department chair)*

*It has been our long-term tradition that the agenda of the department faculty meeting, notifications from other administrative offices and other documents be translated into English from Chinese by secretaries. (interview data: C4, a former chairperson)*

*This tradition of translating documents is also part of our departmental culture. (interview data: TC2, a Chinese teacher)*

Foreign teachers often drop by the department office during their break time, check their mailboxes hastily and ask secretaries what the Chinese documents say. Without good translation ability, secretaries cannot translate the documents accurately.

*Because there are foreign teachers in our department, English becomes an important language. Some [foreign] teachers will raise their questions about the administrative work orally; therefore, secretaries need to have English oral ability. In addition,*

*some documents need to be translated, so we need to have translation ability. These two abilities will reveal whether you [secretaries] can use English precisely and they [foreign teachers] can understand what you [secretaries] said. (interview data: SE3, a secretary)*

Secretaries often act as interpreters in various meetings, such as the orientation for new faculty and seminars on certain topics hosted by the school, as well as the department faculty meetings. Interpretation is needed whenever foreign faculty attend the meetings.

Furthermore, foreign teachers speaking and teaching English in the setting come from different places, such as the USA, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Madagascar, Malaysia and so forth. From C2's viewpoint, cultural translation is necessary. She added, "The only way to maintain the pushing and pulling and have a balance between localization and globalization is to make sure the channels for foreign communications are open," which means keeping all the communication channels open for foreign teachers. "The secretary has to work twice as hard to have all the documents written bilingually."

*Cultural translation, not word translation, but cultural translation. It's a very different bag...it's a very different way of understanding both. It's not literal translation, that's easy, that's words, but I mean actually, being able to understand what the communication is about, what's behind it, where they are going. Why is it there? Is there something hidden behind it. All of these, you have to ...you have to know in order to really communicate. In your own culture, you know what's behind everything, but in another culture, you don't know why this particular rule is made, or why something comes down to you in the way it does, right? So, this is something that I think is probably very difficult for you, and for the other people there because of cultural translation. (interview data: C2, a former department chairperson)*

According to the fieldnotes, the Office of Academic Affairs redesigned the format of online syllabi, asking teachers to match the departmental educational goals and core competencies that students were expected to achieve with the goals of the courses they were teaching. SE1, a senior secretary, had a hard time explaining the new policy to teachers, especially foreign teachers. As

mentioned by C2, foreign teachers needed to confirm and reconfirm the new policy, which made implementation more difficult.

Secretaries, teachers and students all need to be culturally sensitive, especially secretaries who are engaged in bicultural or multicultural communication in the workplace setting every day. A secretary (SE3) sensed that, “The workplace setting is special in having foreign faculty. That is to say, we [secretaries] may be immersed in two kinds of cultures.” Most foreign newcomers react to cultural differences because of culture shock and “cultural adaptation.” “One does not translate language but cultures” or “Translation is cultural translation” (House, 2009, p. 72).

With the advance of computer technology, electronic mail has become a powerful communication tool in academic settings (Li, Chen & Rau, 2011; Lightfoot, 2006), functioning as a main mechanism of intercommunication among the members in the target work setting (Swales, 1990). Secretaries usually send out translated documents to foreign teachers by email, as mentioned by SE1, a senior secretary. To deal with cultural translation occurring out of the sight of foreign faculty, secretaries need to be more patient when engaging in oral or written exchanges, and to succeed in interpersonal communication, they need to be aware of the ways of using language in the target setting.

### ***3.1.3 Adapt to different accents of English***

In addition to being a caretaker with a high level of English proficiency and cultural translation ability, secretaries need to have sociolinguistic competence to adapt to different accents of English. “Because we’re in the English department ... the secretaries need to be able to communicate with all sorts of people with different accents of English. That’s basic,” said by a former department chair, a foreign teacher who served in the department for over twenty years. A foreign teacher also said, “It is more difficult for you [secretaries] to understand people who don’t have an Anglo-Saxon accent.”

*First of all, because we’re in the English department, of course, the secretaries need to be fluent in English, and aural skills, and writing, and be able to understand. Also the...people who try to contact the department, some people do not...necessarily need to speak English, but they use English to communicate, so...the secretaries*

*need to be able to communicate with all sorts of people with different accents of English. That's basic.* (interview data: C2, a former department chairperson)

*Everybody has an accent, so I suppose it is more difficult for you [secretaries] to understand people who don't have an Anglo-Saxon accent. Sometimes, it is really difficult. For example, you [secretaries] may meet a teacher with an Indian accent. Watching movies can help, and you can get used to all kinds of accents.* (interview data: TF1, a foreign teacher)

Having long-term immersion in the target setting, secretaries often encounter teachers or students from different cultural backgrounds. They recalled their exchanges with foreign teachers.

*A new foreign teacher usually does not slow down his rate of speaking. He has now taught in the department for two years. When he first arrived, all of the secretaries had a hard time understanding his way of speaking English, since he usually spoke softly and quickly and sometimes even murmured at the end of his speech. One time when he asked about the annual physical exam for faculty on campus, saying, "How late..?" but I misunderstood it as "How they..?" When I answered, "There are a blood test and ...", he repeated his question slowly, and I finally understood what he meant. Now I have gradually gotten used to his way of delivering utterances.* (interview data: SE3, a secretary)

*At the beginning of my secretarial career, I was only used to American English, since it was the language that I learned from the very beginning of my English education in junior high school. I found that I had serious problems interacting with a foreign teacher, who was from New Zealand. He came from the capital of that country and had taught here for several years, but spoke New Zealand English with a strong accent. Later, I realized that, even though people speak English, they might have different accents. I then found that the vowel system of the English that teacher used is different from what I had been taught.* (self-reflection: SE2, a secretary/the first author)

Being equipped with the notion of “World Englishes” (Crystal, 2007) is indispensable to secretaries working in academic contexts. English is an international language, which is spoken internationally and learned by many people as a second language or a foreign language (Baker & Jones, 1998). It is necessary for secretaries to adapt to different accents of English in order to meet the communication needs required in the workplace setting. Being aware of “cultural relativity” (Wolfson, 1989), secretaries need to know how to interact with people coming from different sociocultural backgrounds who tend to have very different value systems, which are manifested in speech as well as in other sorts of social behavior. Recognizing that the two groups from different sociocultural backgrounds are inherently different can help reduce miscommunication.

### ***3.2 Being a good communicator***

In addition to having excellent basic language skills, in order to make things run smoothly secretaries are also expected to be good communicators, serving as mediators to connect the teachers and the students, the school administration and the teachers, and the school administration and the students. There are two features for being a good communicator: A service attitude and politeness. Without good communication abilities, serious communication problems might develop. As mentioned by a foreign graduate student (SF3), “sufficient communication abilities are required for people in secretarial positions to respond to academic-related requests, such as providing information and answering questions about how to do things.”

#### **3.2.1 A service attitude**

Secretaries frequently deal with foreign teachers who are under the pressure of culture shock or adjustment to their new surroundings, especially new teachers who have just arrived in a foreign environment and are adjusting to the culture, weather, language and everything else. As mentioned in Section 3.1.1, newcomers often expect the secretary to take care of their every need. The ability to interact well with foreign faculty should be the top priority. When foreign teachers feel frustrated with administrative matters, such as submitting course syllabi or teaching materials online in Chinese programs, they have no control over the situation, so secretaries need to be mentally strong enough to handle such difficult situations. Therefore, patience and a good attitude are very important qualities for secretaries.

Communication is more than language, according to a former foreign chairperson (C2). Secretaries are expected to be able to communicate with teachers coming from all sorts of areas with different ideas. In addition, it is important for secretaries to be able to see something from the other persons' point of view. A foreign student (SF4) recalled times when he came to the department office to ask for help when he had problems with course selection, or he was not sure how to use the online platform provided by the school. A former foreign chairperson (C1) even said, "Unless they [newcomers] have a friend or another faculty member that they can ask, you [secretaries] are going to be bombarded."

The incumbent chair (C6) even compared the workplace to other service-oriented jobs, since secretaries also work to serve people (cf. Urban, 2008). People working in these workplaces need to be good communicators with a serving attitude. Teachers and students with whom long-term relationships are established constitute the public served by university departmental secretaries. No matter what happens, these "customers" are always right. Secretaries need to learn to "roll with the punches" and believe that "tomorrow is another day." Good attitude was also highlighted by a senior secretary (SE1). She thinks this factor is beneficial, contributing to successful communication.

### **3.2.2 Politeness with high EQ**

To maintain a good rapport with teachers and students, secretaries have to *chayan guanse* (Lit. 'examine the facial expressions,' meaning 'carefully watch what somebody is doing and saying') and employ politeness strategies when necessary. This feature is shown in the following fieldnote and self-reflection.

*I recall one experience in the working environment when I received a phone call from the school guard. He discovered that one of our foreign teachers was not wearing his safety helmet when he entered the school gate riding a motorcycle. He asked me to tell the teacher that he needed to abide by the law, even on campus, or he would be fined for violating the law. After I hung up the phone, I did not know what to do. It was difficult for me to convey this information to him, since I felt that it would be a face-threatening act (FTA). After a while, the teacher entered the department office. I was hesitant to approach him, and all of a sudden, an idea came*



*to me. To reduce the imposition of the FTA, I employed politeness strategies. I recounted the first half of the story told by the school guard and made up the second half. I told him the guard called the department office because the guard was concerned about his safety when not wearing a helmet on campus. After he heard what I said, his long face turned into a smiling one. Even though I made up the second half of the story, the result was better than I had expected. (fieldnote/self-reflection: SE2, a secretary/the first author)*

Good secretaries, like soldiers standing in the front line of a battle, tend to shield their bosses (*zai qianmian dang zidan* ‘standing in the front line of a battle to shield their bosses from being shot by bullets’), as noted by C3, a former Chinese department chair. Secretaries are usually the first ones attacked when Chinese and foreign teachers complain about the department, so their emotional intelligence (EQ) must be high. In many cases high EQ and politeness can resolve a conflict, but sometimes secretaries are unexpectedly attacked due to misunderstanding.

Learning how to respond in an extremely polite way is the most important skill that any secretary can possess, as politeness is a face-saving strategy, which allows human interaction to proceed without causing one or both parties to lose face (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987). As TC3, a Chinese teacher, mentioned, “Secretaries are in the department office to solve other people’s problems, so they need to learn to speak English extremely politely.” This strategy is also important for maintaining good rapport in the workplace setting when an asymmetrical power structure exists (Scollon & Scollon, 1995), as it does between teachers and secretaries.

### ***3.3 Being a life-long learner of pragmatic strategies***

The process of moving from novices to experts in the workplace involves contextualized linguistic and pragmatic development and the acquisition of institutional rules. The third need perceived by the participants is to be a life-long learner of pragmatic strategies. This involves, in the first stage, a process of language socialization as secretaries enter a new sociocultural context, taking up new roles in the workplace setting, and in the second stage paying attention to the pragmatic dynamics of the language use. These two stages are explicated in the following subsections.

### 3.3.1 A process of language socialization

The secretaries interviewed reflected on their work experience for the first few years in the department office. They tried to learn the language (the forms of discourse) used in the targeted setting with the help of experts in the office. A junior secretary (SE4) who had worked in the office for two years said that she gradually learned the skills and structures of knowledge in the environment through the assistance of other secretaries (SE1, SE2 and SE3), all of whom had been in the secretarial positions for at least six years. SE1 and SE2, known as “domain experts” (Cowling, 2007), had worked much longer. Over a period of time, SE4 started to become more at ease and sense greater confidence that she was beginning to fit into the new position. She became aware of language use in the sociocultural setting, i.e., the department office, and familiarized herself with the genres used and translation required in the office. She took up her new role as a secretary in the academic office and became socialized in the institutional context, which can be observed by the way she used the device of hedging in the oral exchanges with teachers. She started to skillfully employ hedging in making refusals when teachers came to seek assistance while she was busy.

*I will say to him, “Teacher, is this urgent?” Now I have learned this and say, “Teacher, is this urgent? I am dealing with something very urgent right now; could you wait a while if it is not urgent.” Because he saw I was terribly busy-looking, he then said, “Oh. Well, I can find someone else. Never mind.” Just ask if the teacher is pressed for time. If not, could he wait awhile? (interview data: SE4, a junior secretary)*

SE4’s “situated learning” revealed training and apprenticeship at work (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A foreign student (SF2) stated, “It is not so much for the information itself, but how it is given to the hearer.” The importance of using mitigating devices or strategies is to redress the threatening force in order not to hurt the hearer’s “face,” which manifests the importance of secretaries’ awareness of the sociopragmatic aspects of talk at work. The study of institutional talk allows researchers the opportunity to study contextualized linguistic and pragmatic development on the one hand and the acquisition of institutional rules on the other (Kasper, 1998).

### 3.3.2 Pragmatic dynamics of language use

Actually no matter what stage secretaries are at in their career, experts or novices, continual learning is very important. When the incumbent chairperson (C6) was asked if secretaries needed on-the-job language training courses, she said that there was no need to provide such courses. She expressed her special viewpoint.

*Basically secretaries need to be equipped with the knowledge related to language and culture and also have an ability to learn from their experience. In a word, they need to be good language learners, which is more important. As good language learners, they will observe the pragmatic dynamics of each occasion and situation or make good use of opportunities to strive for self-growth. (interview data: C6, a department chair)*

A foreign student (SF4), who often came to the department office, also emphasized that, “A good secretary will be always willing to continue to learn, because procedures change, everything changes, courses change, teachers change, the secretaries have to change too.” Furthermore, a foreign teacher (TF3) also highlighted the importance of pragmatic dynamics of language use when secretaries interact with teachers. He recalled his experience when he first contacted the department.

*...the people that I spoke to tended to be flexible with regard to their level of familiarity with you..., and they sort of let the person they would deal with set the tone. I think the secretaries in the academic department have to be...alert and sensitive, and be...not forgetful with respect to...whom you're talking to, so they can make whatever adjustment they need to make for whatever adjustments they feel are appropriate. (interview data: TF3, a foreign teacher)*

Secretaries need to be sensitive to pragmatic dynamics of language use, which involves knowledge of language and culture and of the sociocultural relationships with people around them. The language used in the target workplace can be shown in the linguistic behaviors, such as address forms. In this hierarchical, multicultural workplace setting, it is very important to be

aware of social relationships by using appropriate address forms. The choice of address forms determines the interpersonal relationship the speaker has with the hearer. The fieldnote showed that, in the setting, the department chair and teachers act like superiors in higher positions, usually calling secretaries in lower positions by their first names (FN). The exception is new faculty who have just come, who call secretaries by TLN (title and last name) due to the distant relationship at the beginning. The use of FN (first name) between teachers and secretaries is rare because of the face concern. In Chinese Confucian thought, *zunshi zhongdao* ‘respect for teachers and those of higher social status’ is deeply rooted in Chinese minds. However, there are a few cases where young Chinese and foreign teachers intend to develop symmetrical and solidarity relationships with secretaries. Secretaries normally adjust their language use depending on the familiarity they have with teachers. Some teachers are egalitarian, but others are authoritative, so secretaries need to use address forms appropriately. They use titles and last names (TLN), titles and first names (TFN), or first names (FN) depending on the social distance between the persons they interact with.

#### **4. Conclusion and pedagogical implications**

Secretaries do not just articulate predictable adjacency sequences, e.g., asking time, saying good morning and goodbye, which are called “gambits” (Scollon & Scollon, 1995, p. 179). What they deal with are complicated exchanges, which involve linguistic, social and cultural facets. In particular, communication with foreigners is much more complex (Van Hook, 2011). Although six foreign teachers out of twenty-seven full-time teachers in the department is not many, they often need help, either oral or written, mainly because of language barriers and being unfamiliar with the administrative procedures on campus. Hence, the secretaries serve as translators, interpreters, message transmitters and mediators between the teachers and the students, between the school administration and the teachers, and between the school administration and the students. The present study conducted using ethnographic and autobiographical methods unveils insiders’ viewpoints of communication needs required in the setting, which is unique in the research of workplace English. This study took the researcher-participant stance to interpret the recurrent patterns and principles that occur every day based on various methods of collecting data. The findings can indeed uncover the micro-culture of the workplace context investigated, which can then be projected to inform communication needs in global settings. We presented the

findings from multi-faceted viewpoints, which, we believe, are unknown to those outside the target workplace environment, and it also provides a valuable reference for other contexts, such as a multinational corporate setting, in which secretarial communication is equally important.

This research has led us to suggest that secretaries need to not only be proficient in basic communication, but communication in particularly demanding bicultural workplace-related settings. In addition, those who are interested in such secretarial positions need to acquire basic knowledge of the domain and demonstrate the necessary attitude and language skills required in the workplace. One significant finding from the needs analysis is the importance of translation skills. In a training course for secretaries, developing translation skills should be highlighted. Our research also suggests that, given the power differentials in the workplace, it is also important to conduct explicit classroom instruction along with practical workplace experience to increase learners' awareness of the sociopragmatic aspects of institutional discourse (Marra, 2013). Secretaries are expected to develop meta-skills that enable them to “live psychologically in two cultures” (Shanahan, 1996). The demands on secretaries are not just language itself, but also cultural understanding. Learners should be also directed in the concept of cultural sensitivity in the work contexts, which will be beneficial to smooth communication.

The application of research is at the heart of ESP, which is predicated on the notion that the specific professional and occupational needs of the learners should be the starting point for a training course (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The target communication needs perceived by insiders and observation of the target setting can provide ESP teachers with authentic data to establish teaching objectives, by which learners can be guided and duly instructed, and can be used to design teaching materials, including the topics to be covered and the steps to be followed in the teaching plans. Moreover, ESP teachers or course developers can familiarize learners with the language practices of the target discourse community. If possible, providing learners with access to the target workplace will enable them to become socially and psychologically integrated into the target discourse community (Basturkmen, 2006). From this study, we can conclude that core courses in secretarial English could include English for Administration, English for Rules of Procedure, E-mail Writing,

Translation/Interpretation, Cross-cultural Communication, Pragmatics and Rhetoric, and English for Tourism<sup>3</sup>.

To get an in-depth understanding of the target workplace setting, detailed investigation of the workplace culture and institutional discourse is needed since culture and discourse are closely interwoven (Kramsch, 1998). Moreover, as email has become embedded in organizational communication (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Nickerson, 1999) as a main tool of written communication in workplaces, it would be important to further investigate email communication in university academic offices from the aspects of the structure of email messages, the purpose of using email and even the rhetorical strategies used in the target environment. Email exchanges will definitely reveal many sociocultural and linguistic facets of institutional discourse.

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<sup>3</sup> This course is needed because new teachers need to understand and get around in the local area.

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## **Appendix A**

### **A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews with the Chair and Former Chairs**

1. How long have you been teaching here? How long did you serve as the Chair of the Department?
2. What language skills and communication abilities does a secretary in an academic department office need to have?
3. What are the requirements for recruiting a new secretary?
4. How do you assess a secretary's performance?
5. Have you ever had any difficulties with comprehending the translation done by a secretary? How do you assess the translation?
6. Is it necessary to offer on-the-job language training courses for a secretary?
7. What are the difficulties you think that a secretary might encounter in the workplace?
8. Does our department have a special culture that is different from that of other institutes or companies?
9. What's your expectation for those in the secretarial positions?

## **Appendix B**

### **A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers**

1. How long have you been teaching here?
2. What language skills and communication abilities does a secretary in an academic department office need to have?
3. How do you assess a secretary's performance?
4. What are your most common channels of communication with secretaries?
5. What are your most preferred channels of communication with secretaries?
6. What are the main purposes of your spoken communication with secretaries?
7. What are the main purposes of your written communication with secretaries?
8. Have you ever had any difficulties with comprehending the translation done by a secretary?  
How do you assess the translation?
9. What are the difficulties you think that a secretary might encounter?
10. Is it necessary to offer on-the-job language training courses for a secretary?
11. If you are a newcomer in the department, what kind of help do you need from a secretary?
12. Does our department have a special culture that is different from that of other institutes or companies?
13. What's your expectation for those in the secretarial positions?

## **Appendix C**

### **A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews with Students**

1. How long have you been studying here?
2. What language skills and communication abilities does a secretary in an academic department office need to have?
3. How do you assess a secretary's performance?
4. What are your most common channels of communication with secretaries?
5. What are your most preferred channels of communication with secretaries?
6. What are the main purposes of your spoken communication with secretaries?
7. What are the main purposes of your written communication with secretaries?
8. Have you ever had any difficulties with comprehending the translation done by a secretary?  
How do you assess the translation?
9. What are the difficulties you think that a secretary might encounter?
10. Is it necessary to offer on-the-job language training courses for a secretary?
11. If you are a newcomer in the department, what kind of help do you need from a secretary?
12. Does our department have a special culture that is different from that of other institutes or companies?
13. What's your expectation for those in the secretarial positions?

## **Appendix D**

### **A Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews with Academic Secretaries**

1. How long have you been working here?
2. What language skills and communication abilities does a secretary in an academic department office need to have?
3. Could you assess your own English proficiency? How do you assess a secretary's performance?
4. Could you describe the frequency of your English usage in the workplace?
5. What are the most common channels of communication you have with teachers and students?
6. What are the most preferred channels of communication you like to use with teachers and students?
7. What are the main purposes of spoken communication with teachers and students?
8. What are the main purposes of written communication with teachers and students?
9. Translation could be done orally or in written form. What kinds of documents do you usually translate? What channel do you usually use to send out your translation? Do you have any difficulties with translating documents? Could you elaborate your experiences?
10. What are the difficulties you have encountered? What other difficulties do you think a secretary might encounter?
11. Is it necessary to offer on-the-job language training courses for a secretary?
12. If you are a newcomer in the secretarial positions, what do you think are the most important things to learn?
13. Does our department have a special culture that is different from those of other institutes or companies?
14. What's your expectation for those in the secretarial positions?



## **A Hypermodal Analysis of “Care” in Healthcare Communication**

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### **Abstract**

This study approaches healthcare communication in the intercultural context. It is aimed at examining the website of a health insurance company in Hong Kong and investigating the composite verbal-visual meanings of the interactive hypertexts. Informed by the semiotic scheme of hypermodality, this article analyzes the presentational, orientational and organizational resources of the semiotic modes of the webpages, discusses how “care” is expressed by the company through all kinds of multimodal strategies in hypermedia, and explores the multiplicative functions of semiotic systems of the webpage design in a multilingual and multicultural community. A diachronic comparison of the old and new versions of the website shows the technological and social changes reflected in healthcare communication.

**Key words:** hypermodality, care, health insurance

### **1. Introduction**

“Care” is the major concern of customer service for a company, and the website is an important connection between the organization and the customers. How “care” is expressed on the website



plays an essential role in customer satisfaction and retention. In the age of technology and competition, the effective website design using multimodal resources can help attract the attention of potential customers and bring in new customers. Verbal texts, visual images, audio/video clips and hyperlinks are combined to enhance the expression of “care” in hypermodality.

This study is to investigate the expression of “care” through hypermedia on the website of a Hong Kong health insurance company and explore the construction of interpersonal meaning in customer service of the organization in a multicultural and multilingual community. A diachronic analysis is also conducted to reveal the socio-cultural changes as reflected in website design.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1 Research into “care”***

“Care” is considered as a significant concept of social theory and enquiry with considerable importance for the field of sociology (Fine, 2005). The study on healthcare was originally a focus of research in the sociology of medicine and among the healthcare practitioners. Studies have shown that more than half of the patients do not get the right treatment, both patients and doctors suffer from the “fog of care”, and the reasons for this are as complicated as the healthcare system (Falchuk, 2007). The traditionally asymmetric nurse-patient relationship is investigated and the discursal practices in nursing are analyzed from a functional perspective (Candlin, 2000). A cross-sectional study aimed at evaluating the association between care recipient depression and caregiver attitudes suggests that multiple complex characteristics of care recipients should be considered in future studies (Soldato *et al.*, 2008). There is also sociological discussion on racial healthcare inequalities (Taylor-Clark *et al.*, 2007).

Besides research in specific professions related to healthcare such as doctors and nurses, the study on healthcare communication has recently attracted the attention of applied linguists, sociolinguists and discourse analysts. As Barton (2004) suggests, the discourse-based methods, such as genre theory, genre analysis, and discourse analysis, provide a descriptive basis for a critical analysis of the multiple connections between discourse practices and research in

professional communication. A genre analysis of treatment discussions in medical oncology shows that the oral genre of treatment discussion in oncology encounters is organized to allow practitioners to do, appear to do, or avoid doing difficult work like presenting a prognosis (Barton, 2004). Abrahamson and Rubin (2012) compared lay (consumer) and professional (physician) discourse structures in answers to diabetes-related questions in a public consumer health information website, and revealed differences in discourse organization by identifying prevalent rhetorical relations in each type of discourse. Based on 46 interviews conducted with employees in three chemical factories, Rasmussen (2013) combined Foucault's conception of governmentality with a discursive psychology approach, and analyzed occupational health and safety discourse, bringing special attention to dilemmas that emerge as employees name and negotiate particular risks and safety measures. Candlin and Candlin (2002) discussed the relationship between discursive competence and professional expertise, and offered models for research involving analyzing interactional data in first language, or in language contact situations. The intercultural communication in healthcare situations becomes a focus of research. For example, Dogra (2001), Hardoff and Schonmann (2001), and Spencer and Silverman (2001) have addressed the issue of designing specific training programs on professional communication for medical students and practitioners in treating culturally and linguistically diverse patients. Just as Candlin and Candlin (2003) pointed out, there is a need for "collaboration of applied linguists, professional practitioners and researchers from other areas of social science in the exploration of healthcare communication in multilingual/multicultural contexts and elsewhere" (p. 134).

## ***2.2 Multiple meanings in hypermodality***

Hypermodality, according to Lemke (2002), is the conflation of multimodality and hypertextuality. It is "one way to name the new interactions of word-, image-, and sound-based meanings in hypermedia, i.e. in semiotic artifacts in which signifiers on different scales of syntagmatic organization are linked in complex networks or webs" (p. 300).

A website can reflect a company's integrity, credibility and professionalism. It offers a web of "pages" related to the company's products and services. A distinctive advantage of a website over a printed brochure is that it can be updated on a regular basis thus ensuring that the

customers are kept up to date with the new products and services. Two kinds of resources that extend beyond the affordances of plain text need to be examined when exploring the meaning made with hypermedia: the semantics of hypertextuality and the semiotics of multimedia (Lemke, 2002). With the help of hyperlinks, the hypertexts become multisequential (Aarseth, 1997). Viewers may navigate different traversals to create different combinations of hypertexts. They may also exploit the affordances of different media to form different impressions of the company.

There is a growing body of literature on multimodal communication drawing on the systemic functional principles. The systemic functional-multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA) is “concerned with the theory and practice of analyzing meaning arising from the use of multiple semiotic resources in discourses which range from written, printed and electronic texts to material lived-in reality” (O’Halloran, 2008, p. 443). Using the systemic functional linguistic tool to develop a conceptualization of website hierarchy can reflect the fluidity of websites as hypermedia texts on the WWW and the role that the interaction between content organization, webpage and navigation design plays in revealing a website’s hierarchical organization and thereby orienting users within it (Djonov, 2007). Knox (2007) applies the systemic functional hypermodal frameworks to study the visual, verbal and visual-verbal communication on the home pages of three English-language online newspapers from different national cultures, and identifies a visual grammar of online newspaper home pages which is distinct from that of traditional newspapers.

With regard to the hypermodal study of healthcare websites, Thompson (2012) conducts a historical case study of a mental health community website, applies social semiotics and critical discourse analysis to interrogate the visual discourse surrounding mental health online, and expands on research in the field of visual communication, health communication, and new media studies.

### ***2.3 Multimodal analysis of corporate websites***

The design of a company’s website can help establish its online identity. Studies on the multimodal features of organizations’ websites offer insights into ways of designing and constructing appealing and effective websites (Cheng & Suen, 2014).

The linguistic, semiotic and pragmatic properties regarding function and functionality of websites can be described to characterize the corporate websites (Medina *et al.*, 2005). The effects of website design include service quality, sales performance, cultural factors, customer satisfaction and purchase intentions, etc. (Hu, 2009; Scaglione, *et al.*, 2009; Law & Chen, 2012; Bai *et al.*, 2008). For instance, Jeong and Choi (2004) examined the current trends of picture presentations on hotel websites and suggested that the photographs on hotel websites can influence the attitude of the customers.

As to the importance of the construction of healthcare information across multimodal tools, Thutloa (2012) conducted an electronic questionnaire survey, investigating how the multimodal tools used by two leading South African health insurers influenced the consumers' health subjectivity. Linguistic, textual, multimodal features and health literacy have been identified as a challenge in the dissemination of health information, and the consumers have proposed more accessible health information and better designed artifacts for their health subjectivity.

Despite the critical function of the central concept of “care” in health insurance industry, very few studies have addressed the multimodal features of health insurance companies' websites with the focus on the expression of “care”.

### **3. Methodology**

The health insurance company under discussion is Bupa, the UK's largest health insurer and the health insurance specialist in Hong Kong with decades of extensive experience. This study looks into the website of Bupa HK (<http://www.bupa.com.hk>), and presents a multimodal analysis of the textual and hypermedia resources used to express the meaning of “care”.

The data collected for the present study consist of texts, audio/video clips and hyperlinks on the company's website. The company's websites of 2008 and 2014 were downloaded using the WebZIP 7.1 software, so that all the webpages on the entire website in different periods of time can be saved for further study offline.

The theoretical framework used for the hypermodal analysis of webpages in this study is the one proposed by Lemke (2002), which is derived from the theory of meta-functions of language (Halliday, 1985) and the visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The semiotic scheme

offered by Lemke (2002) is a useful way to understand the design resources presented by hypermodality, i.e. to analyze multiplicative combinations of the presentational, orientational, and organizational resources of each semiotic mode. “These are generalizations across modalities of what Halliday (1978) first demonstrated for linguistic signs, when considered functionally as resources for making meanings” (Lemke, 2002, p. 304). According to Lemke (2002), presentational meanings are those which present some state of affairs; orientational meanings are those which indicate what is happening in the communicative relationship and what stance its participants may have to each other and to the presentational content; and organizational meanings are those which enable the other two kinds of meanings to achieve greater degrees of complexity and precision, e.g. structural units, cohesive or catenative chains, etc. These three generalized semiotic functions can be construed from the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings (Halliday, 1985) of written texts and the representational, interactive and compositional meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) of multimodal texts respectively in the specific analysis of the website design.

Informed by these systemic functional linguistic theories, this study analyzes the presentational, orientational and organizational meanings realized by various kinds of hypermodal resources on the website of the insurance company, and interprets how “care” is effectively expressed by the company when communicating with its customers. A contrastive analysis of the company’s websites of 2008 and 2014 is conducted to show the diachronic changes in meaning construction and social development.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

In this section, the Bupa 2008 website is analyzed according to the hypermodal framework (Lemke, 2002), with the focus on the expression of “care” through hypermedia. Then the results of analysis are compared with the Bupa 2014 website to illustrate the diachronic changes of the website design.

## ***4.1 Multimodal analysis of the hypertexts and hypermedia***

### **4.1.1 Presentational resources**

The informational contents of the Bupa 2008 website include the textual messages from the company, the introductions to the products and services, the audio-visual advertisements, the contact details, the membership information, etc. Some of these contents are displayed in different sections on the homepage, and others can be accessed through hyperlinks to new webpages.

The most striking image on the homepage is the flash animation below the navigation bars. A wounded young man with a miserable look is stretching out his right hand covered with a bandage; his family members are pulling him backward; and at the other end a pile of money personified with a man's face is waving to him. The caption of this flash appears and separates the man from the money: "I've got my insurance. Why do I need to pay before checking out?" Then another caption shows and replaces this one, functioning as the solution to the problem: "Bupa Medical Insurance. Check out without paying up!" The message conveyed through this flash is that Bupa medical insurance is advantageous compared with the plans offered by other insurance companies, because you don't need to pay up when you check out. This flash serves as an advertisement of the advantages of Bupa medical insurance, emphasizing the convenience of payment and appealing to people's possessive instinct.

Research has indicated that "emotional advertisements are better at gaining and retaining interest and attention" (Lwin *et al.*, 2014, p. 95), and emotional appeals in advertising are more effective for service-related products (White, 2010). Emotions can make the advertisements more memorable in customers' mind and improve the communication of the messages with the most important benefits of the products or services highlighted. The use of flash animation on Bupa's website reinforces the role of emotions in a new advertising medium.

Below the flash animation is a brief introduction to the company: "Bupa, the UK's largest health insurer started its business in Hong Kong in 1976. Today, we are trusted by over 170,000 members and 2,000 companies to provide individual and group health insurance services." The Bupa logo is located on the top left of the homepage, which consists of the company's name in

both English and Chinese with a shape of electrocardiogram in between. The design of the logo indicates the strong connection between the organization's mission and people's physical condition. The bi-lingual version of the company logo was designed for the local market in Hong Kong to unify Bupa's corporate identity and strengthen its brand presence in all healthcare markets around the world.

On the top right is a navigation bar, consisting of five buttons in black: "Bupa HK", "Bupa worldwide", "About Bupa", "Career" and "Contact us". These links will lead you to the company profile, including the introduction to the Bupa Group and its offices all over the world, the media center with Bupa's news, the career development opportunities offered by Bupa, and the contact channels with Bupa whereby the (potential) customers can make enquiries about the products or membership services. Immediately below this navigation bar, there is another one in light blue, consisting of six links: "What's new", "Individual medical insurance", "Group medical insurance", "Customer care", "Health Gallery" and "Bupa Active". The sixth link "Bupa Active" leads to a new page with four different ways of access to internal communication: member login, company login, intermediary login and provider login. Those with relevant ID numbers and passwords can visit these sites. The same content is also displayed in the "Quick Quote" section on the left of the homepage, which provides different types of Bupa health insurance schemes for individuals or organizations. The menus of the first five major links are put in the middle of the page, including the headings and their main contents in bullet-point form. Each bullet point is a link to more detailed information about the products, services, or policies of the company. Take, for example, one of the headings "What's new", a click on which will direct you to a page where the company's products and services are promoted. The hyperlink to this section can also be accessed from the flash animation advertisement, the image of the Bupa healthcare card with the slogan "Apply now and get 1<sup>st</sup> year 50% off" on the lower part of the homepage, and the link of "What's new" on the light blue navigation bar on the top. The details of Bupa CarePro schemes and terms of conditions are listed on the new page of "What's new", where a TV advertisement with the title "All-new TVC reinforces Health Insurance Specialist Image" echoes the flash animation on the homepage. Both advertisements emphasize the patients' worry about the huge amount of medical expenses.

On the bottom left are the contact details, such as telephone numbers, email addresses, working hours, etc. At the bottom right corner there are three links to “Accessibility”, “Sitemap” and “Legal Notices”, and the registered company name “© Bupa (Asia) Limited 2008”.

The effectiveness of website design is important for the company to attract and keep customers. Manganari *et al.* (2011) found that consumers’ perception about the ease of use of the layout can affect consumer behavior. Kim *et al.* (2011) argued that “the navigation functionality metric, which is comprised of operational efficiency, the speedy transmission of words and images, and modern technology, had a significantly positive effect on a site’s perceived trustworthiness and reliability” (p. 263). Studies on website evaluation have emerged in various disciplines, such as information systems, marketing, human-computer interaction, advertising, tourism, etc. (Park & Gretzel, 2007). Based on a review of website evaluation literature, Chiou *et al.* (2010) summarized a total of 12 factors: ease of use, information quality, responsiveness, visual appearance, security/privacy, interactivity, trust, fulfillment, personalization, advertising/persuasion, playfulness, and technology integration, which can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of website design. Li and Wang (2011) proposed a more concise framework, i.e. the ICTRT (information, communication, transaction, relationship and technical merits) model to evaluate websites. The presentational meanings realized by various hypermodal resources on Bupa’s website can meet the requirements of an effective website: detailed information about the products and services, appealing promotional activities, smooth communication channels, convenient transaction process, and post-purchase customer service (Li & Wang, 2011).

#### **4.1.2 Orientational resources**

The orientation of Bupa’s website is self-evident. The form of address takes the second-person point of view and the “you attitude” is adopted, which is aimed at establishing a friendly company-customer relationship; and the contents on the webpages are intended to promote the products and services of the company. The two-line caption of the flash animation is a dialogue between the customer and the company. The heading “medical insurance for you” shows the company’s consideration of the customers’ benefits. The hyperlink “set up your staff medical benefit plan easily with premiums from HK\$2.60 per employee per day” is intended for saving



money for the business and their staff. The links of “Contact us”, “Bupa Active”, “Quick Quote” and other contact details allow the public to ask questions and make suggestions to the company. The company can also avail itself of the opportunity to respond to public queries. These features can generate return visits which may be conducive to long lasting relationships. All these components of website design function as a clear indication of the company’s communicative relationship with its (potential) customers.

Public relations research on the Internet as a communication channel has focused on how the design of the website incorporates features that foster dialogic communication between organizations and their publics (Taylor & Kent, 2004). Dialogic potential of a website allows for two-way communication which promotes interactivity; thus corporate websites can be used as a means of enhancing dialogue between service providers and their customers, and help to shape and maintain corporate identity and reputation (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2013).

The designer of Bupa’s website combines the verbal and visual signs to establish a position as a thoughtful caregiver and information provider to the (potential) customers. The easy access to further communication shows the company’s willingness to enhance dialogue with the public. According to relevant studies, commercial health sites usually intermix health information with product promotion and advertising (Sellitto & Burgess, 2005). On Bupa’s website, we can also see that the promotional efforts are interwoven with the informational contents and the service provision.

#### **4.1.3 Organizational resources**

When I view the organizational composition of Bupa’s website as a whole, I find that the main cohesive ties organizing the texts and visual images are color and typeface. The predominant color of the webpage is light blue interspersed with grass green. All the webpages which can be accessed through hyperlinks have the primary blue color tones and the secondary green touches. The backgrounds of the headings are all in light blue and the subtitles contrast with grass green. The two colors, blue and green, are symbolic of health and life which are the main themes of healthcare. The typeface “Arial” is consistent on each page.

The textual units on each of the webpages are in parallel structure and the interpage relationship is that of expansion or elaboration, i.e., the contents in the hypertexts further specify or describe the headings on the homepage.

The two organizing principles – cohesive and structural – highlight the similarities of salient features on the website and address the multilayered relationship between webpages (Lemke, 2002).

#### ***4.2 The expression of “care” through hypermedia***

I now focus my study on the central concept “care” in customer service and the construction of interpersonal relationship between the customer and the company. The expression of “care” can be realized by different hypertextual and multimodal devices as follows.

##### **4.2.1 Layout of the webpage**

Each of the webpages has a similar layout: the navigation bars on the top, a sidebar on the left to facilitate the searching, and the informational contents in the middle, occupying most of the space of the page. The Bupa logo always appears at the same position on each page, which enhances the impression of the company image on the viewer. The consistency of webpage design makes it easier for the viewer to browse and access the pages through hyperlinks.

##### **4.2.2 Hyperlinks**

The navigation bars, the sidebars and the headings of the contents are all hyperlinked. Even some of the texts will become underlined if you move the cursor over them. The underlined texts will direct you to new pages connected to the headings. Each webpage is reversible, i.e., you can come back to the previous page by clicking the “back” button. The hyperlinks create a set of multilayered webpages. Website hierarchy is a central principle for organizing information in websites with implications for user orientation on the Web (Djonov, 2007).

##### **4.2.3 Visual images**

The visual images selected for the webpages are also intended for establishing the company’s image as a caregiver. The pictures can be grouped into three categories: (1) healthy life; (2)

family life; and (3) career life. Most of the pictures present the images of smiling faces of family members and business partners which indicate health, happiness and success. The atmosphere of happy life reflected in the pictures and the message conveyed here imply that you can have a better life if you become a customer of the company.

#### 4.2.4 Lexical ties

It is not difficult to discover the lexical ties through all the webpages. Words referring to the major subjects of the web contents can be divided into four groups (as illustrated in Table 1.).

**Table 1: Lexical ties of the web contents**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Lexical Item</b>
<b>people</b>	I, you, business, group, children, adult, staff
<b>healthcare</b>	health, health information, health tests, clinics, private hospitals, treatment
<b>insurance</b>	full cover, claims, premium, medical insurance, quotation, scheme, program, benefit, privilege
<b>money</b>	discount, bill, miscellaneous expenses, cash payment, extra charge, fees

These lexical items tie all the webpages together to present a cohesive whole as the image of a health insurance company. These words help to establish the business relationship between the company and the customers, making the company's stance manifest: We are showing our concern about you; we are providing what you need; our products and services will help you with your personal finance; and you will have a better life if you join us. The lexical cohesion enhances the meaning of "care" expressed by the company.

#### 4.2.5 Languages

What I have analyzed so far is all about the English website. As one of the official languages in Hong Kong, English is widely used in governmental, educational and public fields among non-

Chinese speakers and well educated locals in Hong Kong. On the top right of the homepage, there is a link written in Chinese “中文”. If you click this link, you will come to the Chinese website. The texts are presented in the form of traditional Chinese characters which can be read by people from both Hong Kong and Mainland China. The written Chinese has a set of common grammatical rules which are shared by both Cantonese and Putonghua. But for the dialogues or oral language, the grammar and vocabulary of Cantonese are used. For example, the caption of the flash animation is a question-and-answer sequence in Cantonese: “有買保險，出院都要留低錢？保柏醫療保險，出院免找數！” The accent of Cantonese is employed in the audio-visual devices on the website. The characters in the TV campaign all speak Cantonese. The dominance of Cantonese over Putonghua on the Chinese website is due to the fact that the insurance products provided by the company are intended for the locals.

#### **4.2.6 The “you attitude”**

The designer of the website adopts the “you attitude” and presents a very considerate image of a healthcare insurer thinking from the customers’ position. The advertisements shown on the website, e.g. the flash animation and the TV campaign, are designed from the patients’ point of view, as if the company puts its feet in the patients’ shoes. It seems that the company understands the patients’ concerns very well and tries its best to solve the problems for the patients. The “you attitude” reinforces the company’s “care” about the patients’ worries.

#### **4.2.7 Accessibility to membership**

The company views every viewer of the website as a potential customer and provides all possible facilities to make him/her become a real customer. The Quick Quote section appears at the same place on each webpage, so that the viewer can get quote whenever he/she becomes interested. The contact numbers and the email enquiry access are also available on each page. The repetition of this kind of information is intended to facilitate the contact between the (potential) customer and the company.

#### **4.2.8 The customer care page**

The expression of “care” is highlighted on the customer care page. On the right side of the picture of a smiling Customer Service Representative, the mission of the customer service department is shown against a light blue background: “At Bupa, we strive to provide fast, convenient, accurate and simplified services in the areas of claims, enquiries and membership management. What’s more, Bupa always cares about our members’ wellbeing by introducing member privileges and health information”.

There are five headings listed on the left-hand side of the page: “Claim”, “Manage your scheme”, “Member online services”, “Useful health information” and “Member privileges”. More links to these headings are listed in the middle of the page. The sense of “care” is reflected on each of the hyperlinked pages through the provision of all possible channels for customer service.

Health literacy depends on broader cognitive abilities (such as multimedia processing) necessary for comprehension (Morrow *et al.*, 2012). The multimodal and hypertextual devices on Bupa’s user-friendly webpages provide customers with easy access to the healthcare information they need. When browsing on the website, customers can naturally feel the “care” extended by the company.

### ***4.3 Diachronic changes in the expression of “care” on webpages***

When comparing the company’s 2008 and 2014 websites, I have identified the following differences in webpage design and health culture.

#### **4.3.1 Colors and visual images**

On the homepage of Bupa 2014 website, the colors of purple and pink are added against the blue background. The flash animation of a wounded young man is changed into a picture of a smiling mother and a smiling boy. They hold a pink balloon with the advertising slogan “up to 15% lifetime discount” on it. A lot of colorful balloons are flying in the blue sky so as to create a sense of happiness. A more positive and warmer feeling can be felt, and the negative feeling of worrying about money is reduced.

The two TV commercials on the webpage of “About Bupa” are entitled “Full Cover Benefit” and “Bringing you happiness through health” respectively; both reinforce the positive feelings of security and happiness.

The pictures of smiling faces still dominate the webpages, but for the visual images of healthy life, there are more pictures of people actively doing physical exercises, such as swimming and playing Yoga. This is an indication of people’s changing concept of healthy life with more emphasis on active sports rather than passive medical treatment. Images of doctors and nurses are also added, which is aimed at enhancing the professionalism of the company’s healthcare service. Another new addition is the pictures of people using mobile phones, iPad, computers, etc., which is a sign of the high-tech and media development.

#### **4.3.2 Communication channels**

On the right top of the homepage, two new buttons are added, i.e., Facebook and YouTube. On the webpage of Customer Care, there are two links to Twitter and SinaWeibo. The addition of social media channels is the result of the recent fast-growing popularity of new media communication. Bupa members can enjoy a free SMS notification service by clicking the link “Get SMS Now”, which is a more convenient way of communication than phone-calls and emails.

With these new developments, the company can achieve a higher level of interaction with its customers and get quicker feedback from them.

#### **4.3.3 Health tools**

Besides the health tips provided on the webpages, there are some new mobile applications: Bupa fitness app, Bupa ground miles app and Doctors finder app, which are all free to download for iPhone/iPad/Android devices. These apps are available on iTunes and Google play. The viewers can have access to them by clicking the buttons or scanning the QR codes on the screen. These new high-tech applications are designed to meet the requirements of the mobile technology development and people’s increasing initiative to keep fit.

From the above mentioned diachronic changes in the company's website design, we can see the evolvement of the company's perception of customer care as well as its online communication practices. As Goodings (2012) indicates in a historical research of social network sites, there is an "ongoing need to blur the boundaries of how we understand the relationship between human experience and technology, particularly in relation to visual/textual, online/offline, reality/representation and social/psychological" (p.485). In order to keep up with the fast development of mobile technology and social media, the insurance company makes full use of its website to achieve better and more efficient communication with its (potential) customers and cater for their demands in new technological forms. In recent years, with the development of society, people's perception of health and medical care is also undergoing tremendous changes. According to the results of a case study by Thompson (2012), "web design transformations over the course of a decade demonstrate how visual imagery conveys a shift from a biomedical discourse focused on illness to a social-therapeutic discourse centered on health and wellness" (p. 395). A large number of people do not visit the website of a health insurance company with a particular illness or medical condition. More and more people have begun to attach greater importance to keeping fit. Therefore, the insurance company modifies its strategy from appealing to people's worries about spending more money to encouraging people to do sports, from emphasizing the negative feeling of insecurity to highlighting the positive feeling of happiness. By doing so, the image of a considerate company is established that cares about customers' wellbeing rather than merely seeking to make profits.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has investigated the multimodal expression of "care" in hypermedia and the way it is construed in English, Cantonese and written Chinese on the website of a health insurance company in Hong Kong. In the tri-lingual context of Hong Kong, the effective use of the three varieties of language is a key factor to the success of business. To establish a harmonious atmosphere and a cooperative interpersonal relationship with the customers, the company avails itself of the presentational, orientational and organizational resources of semiotic modes on the website, and expresses the meaning of "care" through linguistic strategies, audio-visual devices and psychological appeals. By means of the effective combinations of all kinds of multimodal resources realized in hypermedia, the health insurance company conveys the message: "We care

about the quality of your life.” Behind the expression of “care”, there is a strong sense of promotional effort. With technological and socio-cultural development, the health insurance company responds to the new changes quickly and achieves timely communication with its customers. The website design is intended to keep the existing customers as well as attract the potential customers. The successful expression of “care” on the website is of vital importance for the health insurance company to keep a long-standing relationship with its customers.

Research of this kind has important implications in theory and practice. Firstly, the findings of this study add to the growing literature of multimodal study of online communication. The systemic functional framework of hypermodality can be extended when applied to professional communication studies, incorporating such factors as professional expertise (e.g. “care” in healthcare industry), technological innovation (e.g. social media) and socio-cultural development (e.g. the changing perception of health), so as to reveal the dynamic features of professional discourse. The findings may provide insights into professional communication practices as well, particularly the construction of interpersonal meaning in the healthcare industry. Secondly, the study also has practical value for healthcare providers when designing the corporate websites. The effective integration of audio-visual, textual, hypertextual resources can facilitate the customers’ use of the website and secure more return visits. Lastly, this research has implications for marketing education. Studies show that student learning can be enhanced by identifying fundamental principles used in designing website platforms, especially when students are viewed as customers using technology in a service encounter (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2011). For marketing educators, “study of website interactivity (as a theoretical construct) presents an opportunity to illustrate how research technique is closely tied to a marketer’s theoretical assumptions and research objectives” (Clayton & Hettche, 2012, p. 35). The same issues important in designing corporate websites can be applied to designing website platforms for courses. The results of this research can be integrated into a marketing curriculum and discussed in the classroom.

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**Error, Register, Grammatical-Rhetorical, and Genre Analyses  
on Nursing Students' Case Studies and Thesis Proposals**

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**Abstract**

The study aims to investigate the writing needs of third- and fourth-year nursing students when writing case studies and thesis proposals in a medical university in Southeast Asia. With the exploratory-quantitative-interpretative type of research design, the findings were identified on the following: a) the difficulties encountered by students as shown in student survey questionnaire, and clinical instructor and English teacher interviews; b) errors on visual, grammatical, content and organization, and documentation style committed by students in the written samples; c) register, grammatical-rhetorical and genre analyses of students' writing samples.

It was found that English courses did not prepare them sufficiently for writing case studies and thesis proposals as there was no uniformity in achieving objectives set in the syllabus. There was a mismatch between what students and their clinical instructors felt should be prioritized in

English courses and what English teachers were teaching. To improve the teaching of writing, English courses should focus more on practice drills such as writing paragraphs and academic essays, process writing of the different parts of the research paper, and editing skills.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, genre analysis, register analysis, grammatical-rhetorical analysis, error analysis, process writing.

## **Introduction**

Writing academic papers is a critical skill expected of college students. For nursing students in medical universities, this can include academic reports such as case studies, research proposals and laboratory reports, often submitted to their clinical instructors in the third- and fourth-year of study. However, it has been observed that many students are ill-equipped for the task; written assignments submitted are far below the clinical instructors' expectations in terms of organization, mechanics and genre conventions. Nursing students are expected to already possess these skills when they are in the higher years (third- and fourth-year of study) because in the context of South Korea, for instance, as required by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the students would have already satisfactorily completed English 11 (Study and Thinking Skills) and English 12 (Writing in the Discipline) in their first- and second-year of college.

Based on this concern, this study was conceptualized, with the aim of reviewing the content of English 11 and 12 and determining how the courses may be improved to address the concern of the clinical instructors. Both English 11 and English 12 courses are within the context of *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP). English 11 aims to develop English communication skills for academic purposes while English 12 aims to develop writing skills for occupational purposes, i.e., genre-based writing for nurses in a context where English is the medium of communication.

The investigation also served as a needs analysis since it sought to determine the areas in the aforementioned courses that need to be improved to meet the needs of the nursing students vis-à-vis completing the written requirements to be submitted to their clinical instructors in their clinical immersion classes. This was done through a review of the English 11 and 12 syllabi, student survey questionnaire, and genre analysis of a sampling of students' case studies and

thesis proposals (requirements identified by both the students and clinical instructors as needing much improvement).

English 12 focuses on developing skills from paragraph writing to conceptualizing and organizing a research paper. As seen in the syllabus, grammar is taught at the post-writing stage where sentence errors such as run-on, fragments, misplaced and dangling modifiers, and agreements such as pronoun-antecedent, subject-verb, and so forth are discussed.

## **Related Literature**

### ***Text Analyses in ESP***

The *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) approach requires "a willingness on the part of the language educator to enter (not unlike ESP students themselves) as a stranger into strange domains—academic and occupational areas that may feel quite unfamiliar—and to engage in a degree of reflection that attempts to sort out the extent to which learners' purposes are actually served when the language practices of any target discourse community are taught" (Belcher, 2006 cited in Belcher, 2009, p. 2). In other words, ESP is typically "goal-directed" (Robinson, 1991, p. 3). Thus, ESP courses develop from needs analysis, which specifies what exactly students have to do through the medium of English.

Robinson (1991) further describes ESP as being "generally constrained by a limited time period, in which their objectives have to be achieved, and taught to adults in homogeneous classes in terms of the work or specialist studies that the students are involved in" (p. 3). According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), Hutchinson and Waters (1987) see ESP "as an approach rather than a product, by which they mean that ESP does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching materials, or methodology" (p. 2).

Strevens (1988) further posits that ESP has four absolute characteristics: a) ESP is designed to meet specific needs of the learner; b) it is content-based; c) it is centered on the language appropriate to the activities that the target learners are expected to engage in;



d) it is in contrast with general English, which is not designed for any pre-specified homogeneous group of learners who have common needs in terms of the use of the target language.

Moreover, Streven (1998, cited in Dudley-Evans & St. John) defines ESP with two variable characteristics of ESP: a) it is “restricted as to the language skills to be learned; b) it is taught according to any pre-ordained methodology” (p. 3).

There are several techniques or levels of text analysis in ESP. These are the following: first is register analysis, which focuses on surface level linguistics description; second is grammatical-rhetorical analysis, which deals with functional language description; and the last is genre analysis which is language description as explanation. Moreover, it is also important to include error analysis as it is a type of linguistic analysis that systematically determines areas that need reinforcement in teaching (Corder, 1974).

Register analysis is defined by Halliday (1978) as “a useful abstraction linking variations of language to variations of social context” (p. 64). He suggests that “there are three aspects in any situation that have linguistic consequences: field, mode, and tenor” (Eggins, 1994, p. 52). In particular, field concerns with “what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place”; mode, “what it is that the participants [of a transaction] are expecting language to do for them in that situation;” and tenor, “with who are taking part in the transaction as well as the nature of the participants, their status and roles” (Hasan and Halliday, 1985, p.12).

Moreover, Halliday (1978) calls the relationship between register variables (field, tenor and mode) and language components (ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions) as ‘realization,’ i.e. “the way in which field, tenor and mode condition ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning from the perspective of context” (Eggins & Martin, 1997, p. 241). Zequan (2003) specified the roles in each of the three metafunctions as follows:

Ideational metafunction, which is concerned with mapping the reality of the world around us (i.e. who is doing what to whom, when, where, why, how), reflects differences in field which are realised through both transitivity selection and lexical choices. In the same way, differences in tenor are realized through mood

and subject, and modality plus appraisal choices which in turn construct the social relationships played by interactants, i.e. the interpersonal metafunction. And finally, the register variable of mode manifests the textual metafunction which is realised through nominalization and theme choices. Hence, a picture can be drawn of the triadic relationships of the three register variables, the lexico-grammar, and three meanings and metafunctions of language use.

Seen below is Table 1 illustrating the relationship between register variables (field, tenor and mode), and language components (ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions), and the discourse-semantic, and lexico-grammatical patterns that realise particular register variables.

**Table 1: Hallidayan Model**

<b>Context Register variable</b>	<b>Type of meaning "at risk"</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Lexico-grammatical patterns</b>
Field	Ideational	Lexical cohesion Conjunctive cohesion	Transitivity (case) Logical-semantic relations (taxis)
Tenor	Interpersonal	Speech function Exchange structure	Mood, modality, vocation, attitude
Mode	Textual	Reference (participant tracking)	Theme Information structure Nomination

adapted from Eggins and Martin (1997, p. 242)

Grammatical-rhetorical analysis seeks “to investigate the relationship between choice and rhetorical function, especially in the case of science and technology” (Bhatia, 1993, p. 17). Widdowson (1971) explains that language draws the links between sentences by using ‘rhetorical markers’, such as “however”, “in other words”, etc. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998, 2011) support by claiming that “logical connectors, such as “moreover”, “however”, “therefore”... are generally seen as a key to understanding the logical relationships in texts and therefore relevant

to the teaching of reading, listening, and writing in EAP (*English for Academic Purposes*)" (p. 78). These transition markers link all statements to establish unity and coherence of a paragraph. To complete the idea of a paragraph, the markers help identify the types of paragraph development such as narration, cause-effect, classification, comparison-contrast, process, definition, analogy, etc.

Genre analysis is "the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings" (Bhatia, 1997, p. 205). Bhatia (1997, cited in Satya, 2008) explains that genre analysis shows a genuine interest in the use of language to achieve communicative goals; however, genre analysis does not represent a static description of language use but gives a dynamic explanation of the way expert users of language manipulate generic conventions to achieve a variety of complex goals (also see Bruce, 2008). For Cheng (2006), genre is "the abstract, goal-oriented, staged, and socially recognized ways of using language delimited by communicative purposes, performed social (inter)actions within rhetorical contexts, and formal properties (structure, style, and content)" (p. 77). Furthermore, "many writing teachers believe... that explicit attention to genre in teaching provides learners a concrete opportunity to acquire conceptual and cultural frameworks to undertake writing tasks beyond the courses in which such teaching occurs" (ibid.). Such explicit attention to genre means a careful and thorough analysis of how text is organized.

A genre may be composed of several moves. According to Swales (1990), moves are seen as text elements that are obligatory if the text is to be acceptable as an example of the genre. For example, Santos (1996) analyzed ninety-seven research article abstracts in applied linguistics using the five moves, namely: Move 1: situating research; Move 2: presenting the research; Move 3: describing the methodology; Move 4: summarizing the results; and Move 5: discussing the research. Santos reported that moves 2 and 3 were important obligatory moves in the genre, and different moves required different linguistic resources to realize their purposes in terms of writing themes, choice of tenses, and choice of verb voices.

According to Samraj (2009), each rhetorical move may be realized by one or more steps, but not all moves comprise constituent steps. Samraj (2002) analyzed the research article abstracts

introduction sections between conservatory biology and wildlife behavior by using the simplified create-a-research-space (CARS) model, namely: Move 1: establishing a territory; Move 2: establishing a niche; and Move 3: occupying the niche. It was reported that one element which is the discussion of previous research was not only included in Move 1, but also played a significant part in Move 2 and Move 3. She called it "a freestanding sub-step" and asserted that "it can be employed in the realization of any step in the introduction" (p.16).

Another level of text analysis that could be included in ESP is error analysis. Gass and Selinker (2008) define errors as 'red flags' that are evident in learner's knowledge of the second language. Researchers treat errors as 'valuable information on the styles that people use to acquire a language' (ibid.). The errors can be divided into three sub-categories, namely: overgeneralization, incomplete rule application, and the hypothesizing of false concepts. Errors reflect a learner's competence at a certain stage and thereby differ from learner to learner (findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\_7571/, January 26th, 2011). Hendrickson (1984) proposes four areas for error correction, namely: visual, grammatical, organization and content, and documentation style. Moreover, according to Lightbown and Spada (1999), 'contextualized correction' is the most appropriate method in error analysis because meaning-based instruction develops accuracy, fluency and overall communicative skills. Richards and Sampson (1974) explain: "at the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort" (p.15).

### ***Writing and Ways to Improve Writing***

After choosing a topic, Oaks (2006) explains that a writer can visualize the writing process in his/her mind using detailed descriptions and interpretations based on observations and evidence, and that he/she can increase understanding by synthesizing or correlating relevant items or ideas. Similarly, Ronald (1999) identifies a five-step speech-writing process emphasizing creativity, organization, style, memorization and delivery, and he suggests that process takes precedence over product when teaching this approach. According to Seow (2012), "process writing in the classroom is highly structured as it necessitates the orderly teaching of process skills, and thus it

may not, at least initially, give way to a free variation of writing stages..." (p. 316). However, there are still issues on writing no matter how great teachers have improved their teaching skills.

In Korea, Kim and Kim (2007) identified four problems in university writing classes, namely: a) a heavy emphasis in grammatical form, b) overemphasis on final product, c) lack of genre-specific writing across the curriculum, and d) the need for more diverse types of feedback. To solve these problems, the study suggested that considering the balanced instructional and curricular approach of the process and genre-based approach to teaching writing should be prioritized. The two approaches to teaching have provided four principles (guidelines), namely: a) balancing form and function, b) scaffolding language learning, c) extending the writing curriculum, and d) providing meaningful response and formative assessment. It was believed that these four principles describe how university English writing teachers applied them to class effectively.

In Mercado's (2007) study, presented during the International Conference on Research in Higher Education Institutions (ICRHEI) in Cebu, Philippines, genre analysis was employed in looking into research articles in linguistics, mathematics and science written by Filipino professionals. Two of his findings were as follows:

- a) the following lexico-grammatical features are distinct to research articles in linguistics, mathematics and science prepared by Filipino writers: tense-aspect and voice of the verb; dependent clause tokens and their structural positions; and conjunctions and their structural positions. These lexico-grammatical features show more of similarities than differences among the three types of research articles examined; and,
- b) cohesion and hedges, the rhetorical style of Filipino writers of research articles in linguistics, mathematics and science are similar in the sense that the additive-adversative modulated rhetorical style is revealed.

In a study of thesis proposals among biology students at a university in the Philippines, Gloria (2006) determined that students had difficulty using research articles as sources and that they were more comfortable with less challenging sources such as textbooks, web-based articles, and

encyclopedias. Student surveys indicated that participants struggled with the longer, complex sentences, unique text structures, and scientific vocabulary commonly found in research articles. The authors recommended the integration of a research writing course and the biology thesis writing course to adequately prepare students for the required thesis proposal component. Finally, genre analysis was emphasized as a means to familiarize students with research articles to make it easier to utilize them in their research both as sources and as criteria for evaluating their own work.

Moreover, Li's (2011) cross-linguistic and cross-disciplinary study of research article abstracts revealed variations in textual structures and linguistic features between international authors. The study employed Hyland's (2000) five-move model for formatting papers. The five headings in this model -- Introduction (Move 1), Purpose (Move 2), Method (Move 3), Product (Move 4), and Conclusion (Move 5) -- are employed using varying patterns depending on the cultural background of the writer. Genre analysis is therefore a useful analytical tool for understanding the cultural differences that contribute to these differences in rhetorical structure in research article abstracts. Li warned ESP writing instructors to be aware of these differences in rhetorical strategies and to guide non-native authors to adhere to international academic norms when writing to contribute to the collective academic discourse.

The aforementioned studies seem to indicate that writing students in ESL contexts commit not only organizational structure and grammatical errors, but also show weaknesses in terms of discourse and pragmatic competence. Moreover, they need to be immersed in process and genre-based approaches to writing compositions. Thus, students need to develop revision skills, since this is one of the tools for helping reshape their writing.

## **Research Methodology**

This study is exploratory-quantitative-interpretative in orientation: the design is non-experimental, the data collected is primarily quantitative, and the analysis is highly interpretative. Further, the study employed triangulation in the sense that multiple methods of data collection and multiple sources of information were considered. Multiple methods of data collection included survey questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. Multiple sources

of information included were 192 third-year and 120 fourth- year nursing students from which 60 participated in the focus group discussion, eight clinical instructors, two English teachers and the use of six sample written requirements from students.

The number of survey respondents was determined by purposive-cluster random sampling with the Slovin's formula. This formula was also used to determine the number of students in the focus group discussion as well as the clinical instructors who were interviewed. Frequency count was determined by the percentage formula. The researcher sought the assistance of the university's statistician who was based at the Office of Research.

Moreover, the collection of data through survey questionnaires, focus group discussion and interview were simultaneously done. As for survey questionnaire, there were two parts, namely: Part 1 included students' profile and means of language exposures, and Part 2 included difficulties of written requirements such as case studies, thesis proposals and other written requirements which students listed in 'Others' section. These Other written requirements were class reports, hospital requirements and laboratory reports, reaction papers, evaluation forms and notes, and worksheets. As for focus group discussion with 60 students and interview with eight clinical instructors and two English teachers, the researcher was guided with a set of guide questions. The questions asked during the focus group discussions and interviews were not aimed at validating the data from the questionnaires but were considered as additional sources of information. As for the analysis of students' six sample papers, they were subjected to error, register, grammatical-rhetorical, and genre analyses. In particular, there were two surgical case studies, two communicable or medical case studies, and two thesis proposals; each type of written requirements included poorly and well written samples. The papers were collected based on the clinical instructors' assessment using the pre-determined criteria indicated in the College of Nursing Guidebook and the Office of University Research Council.

Criteria for case studies include: a) introduction; b) objectives; c) nursing assessment (personal history, family and individual information, social and health history, diagnostic results, present profile of functional health patterns, and pathophysiology and rationale); d) evaluations and recommendations; e) evaluation and implication to nursing practice, nursing education, and nursing research; f) referral or follow-up; and g) bibliography. While criteria for thesis proposal

include: a) title with background, 3 points; b) review of literature, 10 points; c) significance of study, 4 points; d) objectives, 12 points; e) scope and limitation, 6 points; f) research methodology, 24 points; g) bibliography, 5 points; h) format, 2 points; i) timetable, 2 points; j) budget, 2 points; and k) proponents' bio-data, 2 points.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results and discussion on a) difficulties encountered by students in writing case studies and thesis proposals according to clinical instructors and English 12 teachers, b) error analysis of students' sample case studies and thesis proposals, and c) levels of linguistic description of the sample case studies and thesis proposals that involve register, grammatical-rhetorical and genre analyses.

### ***1. Writing Difficulties on Case Studies and Thesis Proposals***

Among the identified written assignments, case studies were perceived to be the most difficult. However, it should be noted that the third-year students did not note thesis proposal as a difficult requirement because they have not yet taken the subjects that require thesis proposals. The 91 respondents who perceived the thesis proposal as a difficult requirement were all fourth-year students. In fact, 91 represented 75.8% of all the fourth-year respondents in this study. This means that there were respondents amongst the fourth-year students, who checked both the case study and the thesis proposal as the most difficult writing requirements. Moreover, both third- and fourth-year students rated the 'Others' section in the questionnaire indicating the following: class reports as second in rank (4.5%); hospital requirements and laboratory reports, third (3.2%); reaction papers, fourth (1.6%); and evaluation forms and notes, fifth (0.32%).

As for writing of the case study, data show that *writing evaluation and implication to nursing practice, nursing education, and nursing research* (32.1%) was considered the most difficult. This was followed by *formulating objective* (23.4%); *writing evaluation and recommendation such as promoting early recovery and rehabilitation* (22.4%); and *formulating sentences and longer discourse using correct grammar, syntax, and sequencing of ideas* (19.2%), which ranks 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively. All of the aforementioned skills, except the fourth in rank, focused on knowledge and organization of content. Perhaps, students considered the top three difficult.



Students 1-10 and 25 mentioned in the focus group discussions that they were not explicitly taught how to write the parts of the case studies.

Students had also devised ways so that their clinical instructors would not detect that they had plagiarized their sources. Student 21 mentioned that they paraphrased a few of the sentences to make the paper appear original. Student 38 added that when they totally paraphrase, the outcome will tend to be a whole lot different.

The other writing skills such as *paraphrasing sentences* (15.1%), *summarizing texts* (13.5%), *writing introduction* (11.5%), and *acknowledging sources* (18.9%) were not considered difficult by some of the students. In fact 28.5% of the respondents believed that summarizing texts was easy. Similarly, 23.7% believed that paraphrasing was easy. This seems to contradict what the students repeatedly mentioned in the focus group discussions when they were asked what note-taking skills were difficult. Students 18, 23, 52, and 55-58 claimed to have copied and pasted instead of having summarized and paraphrased. As discussed earlier, students may know how to paraphrase and summarize but opted not to do so because it took so much time, according to Students 6, 15, 44 and 51-60. Students 25 and 32 added that if the text is hard to understand, they would find it hard to paraphrase. Student 6 said in the focus group discussion that they had already learned paraphrasing skills in their English classes in high school and in first-year college; however, student 10 in the focus group discussion said that such skills were not well mastered because of lack of reinforcement in English 12.

As for writing the thesis proposal, data showed that *writing the review of literature and related studies (well-organized presentation of local and foreign related literature and studies)* (35%) was considered the most difficult. This is followed by *formulating objectives* (30.8%), *describing the methodology* (29.2%), *describing significance of the study* (24.2%), *describing the scope and limitations of the study* (22.5%), and *writing the introduction and the rationale* (21.7%), which ranked 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, respectively.

According to Students 31-40 and 48 in the focus group discussion, they found *writing the review of literature and related studies* difficult because they were not taught writing thesis proposal well in English 12. The students also said that teaching thesis proposal in English 12 class was not satisfactory because the lessons taught were more on the basics which they had already

learned before taking the class. On the contrary, English Teacher 1 said that they teach students how to write a thesis proposal but they tend to forget the process, but they know the idea; and English Teacher 2 said that they train their students with only 50% of the skills due to time constraints because thesis proposal is only a part of English 12 syllabus. Further, it was mentioned by Student 36 in the focus group discussion that the methods used by the English 12 teachers in teaching these skills were reporting (with little input) and role play.

Having taught English 12, English Teacher 1 had observed that one of the reasons was the lack of time allotted for the class. In fact, this had been the pervading complaint of English teachers during faculty meetings. There were a lot of topics which could not be fully discussed or covered in one semester because there were many topics outlined in the syllabus, and it was impossible to comprehensively cover such topics, considering that they required several written outputs. It would also be difficult for the teachers to use innovative approaches to the teaching of writing such as the process and genre approaches because these require a lot of time.

On the other hand, the students found *formulating definition of terms* (14.2%) (related and well-cited operational definition of variables and parameters); *formulating text* (14.2%) (correct grammar, syntax, flow or sequence of ideas); *acknowledging references* (13.3%) (well-formatted and related), *paraphrasing sentences* (11.7%), *summarizing texts* (11.7%) manageable. However, these students claimed that summarizing and paraphrasing were easy. As mentioned in the discussion above, it appears that students indeed found paraphrasing and summarizing texts manageable. However, because they lacked time needed for note-taking, they resorted to copying and pasting.

As for the types of paragraph development -- such as analogy, cause-effect, classification/division, comparison-contrast, definition, description, elimination, enumeration, example, narration, and process -- involved in case studies and thesis proposals, *analogy* (21.2%) was the most difficult because the exposure of the students in the content courses is more on precise scientific presentation of concepts and theories. In the six written requirements, it was seen that the students did not use analogy to explain concepts and theories. This is probably because they were not exposed to this method in their reading in the content course. In other words, since the students were not frequently exposed to analogy when reading both

entertainment and academic texts, they have not been immersed in such method. The second most difficult was *process* (20.8%). This is because nursing students were still trying to master the concepts in doing procedural activities. On the other hand, the least difficult was *description* (9.94%). This may be because students had been taught describing things, people, places, events, etc. from the elementary grades. However, some still considered it difficult because description in nursing is more specialized, since the terms and concepts to be described are specific to the nursing or medical science.

## ***2. Error Analysis of Sample Case Studies and Thesis Proposals***

Four areas of errors (visual, grammatical, content and organization, and documentation) were considered in analyzing the case studies and thesis proposals.

### **a. Visual errors**

As for the total number of errors committed in capitalization: in well-written compositions, the students frequently committed *incorrect use of capitalization of letters* (238 errors); while in poorly-written output, the students frequently committed *omission of capitalization* (55 errors). It appears that English 12 did not emphasize these areas as these are very basic. In fact, these topics are not covered in English 12 syllabus.

As for the total number of errors committed in punctuations: in well-written compositions, the most frequently omitted punctuation mark was *semi-colon* (186 errors); second and third in the rank were *comma* (130 errors) and *period* (10 errors). The punctuation mark that was mostly used incorrectly was *period* (57 errors), followed by *comma* (51 errors) and *colon* (6 errors) as second, and third most frequently observed visual errors, respectively. On the other hand, in poorly-written compositions, the most frequently omitted punctuation mark was *comma* (89 errors); second and third in the rank were *period* (53 errors) and *semi-colon* (32 errors). The punctuation mark that was most frequently used incorrectly was *period* (27 errors), followed by *comma* (18 errors) and *hyphen* (7 errors) as second and third most frequently observed visual errors, respectively. These errors were committed, especially when the students wrote various objectives, nursing intervention, nursing care plan, and other research components that required listing or enumeration.

As for the total number of errors in spelling: for both well-written and poorly-written compositions, *incorrectly spelled words* (15 errors and 3 errors, respectively) were mostly committed due to technical terms that students were initially unfamiliar with. This was reiterated in the interview with the clinical instructors. Clinical instructor 1 said: “In editing, they have to check the spelling, grammar, and other problems in making a paragraph...”

As for the total number of errors in word division: in both well-written and poorly-written compositions, the error most frequently committed was *form incorrect* (18 errors and 14 errors, respectively), *e.g., hair style, 35 years old son*, etc. The error ranked second both in well-written and poorly-written requirements was *unnecessary words* (3 errors and 13 errors, respectively). Moreover, students’ writing had a lot of circumlocution.

#### **b. Grammatical errors**

As for the total number of errors in agreements, in both well-written and poorly-written work, the most frequently committed error was *subject-verb agreement* (41 errors and 140 errors, respectively) followed by *pronoun-referent agreement* (14 errors and 28 errors, respectively). Clinical instructors 1~6 also had observed that students committed basic grammatical errors.

On the other hand, clinical instructor 6 believed that these students were somehow good because they had English background in high school. She said that when she was a student, she also felt that she had already learned basic grammar rules in high school; however, she felt that her knowledge was not “reinforced” in college. The rest of the clinical instructors were also aware about the issue of lack of reinforcement of writing skills in English 12 class. Moreover, clinical instructors 1 and 3 cited a circumstance that the “students do not anymore thoroughly check work on their papers because of their hectic hospital duty schedules”. Hectic work life may also be a contributing factor to students’ grammatical errors in writing.

As for the total number of errors in sentences, in both well-written and poorly-written compositions, the most frequently committed error was *faulty parallelism* (57 errors and 50 errors, respectively); the second in rank was *fragment* (20 errors and 10 errors, respectively); and the third, *misplaced or dangling modifiers* (3 errors and 7 errors, respectively). These three

mentioned errors were committed when students listed and enumerated things for the nursing care plan and when they explained and described procedures or concepts.

As for the total number of errors in verbs, the most frequently committed error in well-written composition was *tense incorrect* (22 errors) (e.g. *are* instead of *were*; *kept* instead of *keep*), followed by *incorrect sequence of tenses* (6 errors); while, in poorly-written compositions, the most frequently committed error was *form incorrect* (15 errors) (e.g. *is rose* instead of *is risen*), followed by *tense incorrect* (9 errors). This is also consistent with the observation of the clinical instructor and English 12 teacher interviews.

As for the total number of errors in prepositions, in well-written work, the most frequently omitted proposition was *of* (8 errors), followed by *to* (4 errors) as second in rank, *for* (2 errors) as third in rank, *with* (one error) as fourth in rank; while the preposition that was mostly used incorrectly was *for* (3 errors), followed by *with*, *of*, and *in* 1 error each) as second in rank. On the other hand, in poorly-written compositions, the most frequently omitted propositions were *of*, *to*, *for*, and *with* (1 error each) of equal rank; while the preposition that was mostly used incorrectly was *with* (3 errors), followed by *in* (2 errors) as second in rank, then *to* (1 error) as third in rank. These prepositions were difficult to use because of the absence of their equivalent in the respondents' first language, Cebuano.

As for the total number of errors in vocabulary: in well-written compositions, the most frequently committed error was *item incorrect* (19 errors), followed by *unnecessary words* (17 errors); while in poorly-written work, the most frequently committed error was *unnecessary words* (40 errors), followed by *item incorrect* (8 errors). As observed by the clinical instructors, students tended to commit these errors, since the students were more proficient with the use of general English rather than technical English. This was also supported by one of the English 12 teachers.

The written samples showed that students were weak in expressing their ideas with the appropriate degree of formality (register). Instead of using academic terms, they tended to use informal vocabulary, even street language or slang. This was mentioned by all clinical instructors in the focus group discussion. Students failed to take into account the differences in field, tenor, and mode of the text. As a result, they also failed to recognize the appropriate register to be used

when writing academic texts. An examination of the English 12 syllabus showed that register is not discussed or included as a topic relevant to writing in the discipline.

As for the number of errors in word order found in the students' written work, *Observe S-V-O Place Time word order* (5 errors) was the most frequently committed error (for instance.....*usually is* ...instead of *is usually*). These were few in number and only found in poorly written compositions. Such errors were not observable in the well-written samples.

As for the total number of errors in articles and determiners, in both well-written and poorly-written compositions, the most frequently omitted and misused article and determiner was *the* (19 and 8 errors; 6 and 3 errors, respectively). This is understandable because according to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (2001), "articles are understandably problematic from a cross-linguistic perspective: most Asian languages have no articles" (p. 270).

As for the total number of errors in conjunctions, in both well-written and poorly-written compositions, the most frequently omitted and misused conjunction was *and* (25 and 3 errors; 12 and 3 errors, respectively).

### **c. Content and organization errors**

As for the total number of errors in content, in both well-written and poorly-written compositions, the most frequently committed error was *awkwardness* (12 errors and 8 errors, respectively). It seems that this is related to the instance mentioned by all clinical instructors during the interview. Students tended to write convoluted lines, because they did not know how to express and organize their ideas to the point.

As for the total number of errors in paragraphs, in well-written compositions, the most frequently committed errors were *present a paragraph or succeeding paragraphs with transition markers/sentences/another paragraphs* (4 errors), followed by *give a stem for enumerating and listing* (1 error); while in poorly-written, the most frequently committed errors were *present a paragraph or succeeding paragraphs with transition markers/sentences/another paragraphs* (5 errors), followed by *begin a new paragraph* (3 errors). The students had difficulty organizing the information they gathered from their readings and survey researches. This was also mentioned in the interviews with the clinical instructors and the English 12 teachers.

#### **d. Documentation style.**

As for the total number of errors in documentation style, in well-written compositions, the most frequently committed errors were the omission of *parenthetical citation* (129 errors) followed by *indentation* (50 errors) as second in rank, then *bibliography* (8 errors) as third in rank. The most frequently misused documentation style were *spacing within sentences or paragraphs* (18 errors), followed by *heading/subheading* (6 errors) as second in rank, then *title page/page number* (1 error) and *table of contents* (1 error) as third in rank. On the other hand, in poorly-written composition, the most frequently committed errors were the omission of *title page or page number* (74 errors), followed by *indentation* (26 errors) as second in rank, then *bibliography* (6 errors) as third in rank; while the most frequently misused documentation style were *parenthetical citations* (32 errors), followed by *spacing within sentences or paragraphs* (24 errors) as second in rank, then *bibliography* (4 errors) as third in rank. These errors were committed probably because as mentioned by some students, they were not informed about the documentation style in their nursing subjects. All students in the focus group discussions and all clinical instructors in the interviews said that the students were just given the guide book where format and criteria are found. Further, the clinical instructors only discussed and explained the format when students asked for clarifications. Likewise when students are taught thesis proposal in Research 11 class, the format and criteria are merely given to the students, and sometimes, they are shown sample research proposals.

Table 2 below summarizes the results of the error analysis from the four case studies and two thesis proposals.

**Table 2: Results of the Error Analysis**

	Samples 1, 3 & 5	Samples 2, 4 & 6
	well-written	poorly-written
1. Visual errors		
a. capitalization	238	55
b. semi-colon	186	32
c. comma	130	18
d. period	10	53
e. comma	51	89
f. colon	6	0
g. hyphen	0	7
h. form incorrect	18	14
i. unnecessary words	3	13
2. Grammatical errors		
a. subject-verb agreement	41	140
b. pronoun-referent agreement	14	28
c. faulty parallelism	57	50
d. fragment	20	10
e. misplaced & dangling modifiers	3	7
f. verb tense incorrect	22	9
g. incorrect sequence of verb tenses	6	0
h. form incorrect	0	15
i. omitted prep. <i>of</i>	8	1



k. omitted prep. <i>to</i>	4	1
l. omitted prep. <i>for</i>	2	1
m. omitted prep. <i>with</i>	1	1
n. incorrectly used prep. <i>for</i>	3	0
o. incorrectly used prep. <i>with</i>	1	3
p. incorrectly used prep. <i>of</i>	1	0
q. incorrectly used prep. <i>in</i>	1	2
r. incorrectly used prep. <i>to</i>	0	1
s. item incorrect vocabulary	19	8
t. unnecessary words	17	40
u. s-v-o place time word order	0	5
v. omitted article & determiner <i>the</i>	19	8
w. misused article & determiner <i>the</i>	6	3
x. omitted conjunction <i>and</i>	25	3
y. misused conjunction <i>and</i>	12	3
3. Content and organization errors		
a. awkwardness	12	8
b. present a paragraph or succeeding paragraphs with transition markers/sentences/another paragraphs	4	5
c. give a stem for enumerating and listing	1	0
d. begin a new paragraph	0	3
4. Documentation style		
a. omitted parenthetical citation	129	0
b. omitted indentation	50	26
c. omitted bibliography	8	6

d. omitted title page/page number	0	74
e. misused spacing within sentences or paragraphs	18	24
f. misused heading/subheading	6	0
g. misused title page/page number	1	0
h. misused table of contents	1	0
i. misused parenthetical citation	0	32
j. omitted bibliography	0	4

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Table 2 shows that samples 1, 3 and 5 had more errors compared with samples 2, 4 and 6. However, this does not mean that samples 1, 3 and 5 were no longer considered as well-written. In terms of content and clinical procedures, clinical instructors still considered them as well-written (see Tables 4, 5 and 6).

### ***3. Levels of Linguistic Description of Sample Case Studies and Thesis Proposals***

The six written requirements were analyzed with the use of the three levels of linguistic description which include: register analysis (field, tenor and mode), grammatical-rhetorical analysis (hedging devices, functions and techniques), and genre analysis (move structure). Samples 1, 3 and 5 were considered by the clinical instructors as well-written while samples 2, 4 and 6 were considered poorly-written. Their basis for classification was students' adherence to the predetermined guidelines and format as indicated in the Nursing Guide Book and in the checklist from the Office of Research.

Table 3 below shows results of the register analysis. In determining field, the research identified the topic and in what context the topic was written. For example, Sample Topic 1 is *A Case Study on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease* (field), which was written as a requirement for graduation. Tenor refers to the role relationship of the writer and the intended reader. This role relationship determines the distance between them. The distance between the student and the clinical instructor (tenor) is quite pronounced, thereby, influencing the tone (formal) of the paper. This is indicated in the use of third person, instead of first person pronoun, and the use of

hedging devices such as *may* and the use of explicit cohesion in markers. Mode, on the other hand, refers to whether the text is mediated or not. The case study was a written document and was therefore mediated by print.

In terms of grammatical-rhetorical analysis (see Table 4 below), the most commonly used rhetorical functions identified by the researcher were as follows: *describing* and *narrating* used for writing introduction, objectives, nursing assessment, and diagnostic result; *giving a definition*, *describing a process*, *enumerating*, *showing cause-effect*, *comparing-contrasting*, and *describing problem-solution* used for presenting profile of functional health patterns, pathology and rationale, nursing intervention, evaluation and recommendation, evaluation and implication for nursing practice, education, and research, and referral and follow-up. Hedging devices such as *will*, *may*, and *able to* were also frequently used. Techniques such as the use of time and cohesion devices including sequence of time were used to facilitate the writing. Case Study Samples 2, 3 and 4 followed the same procedures of analyses in terms of register and rhetorical (see Tables 3 and 4 below).

In Thesis Proposal Samples 5 and 6, the students had a direct relationship to the faculty of College of Nursing (tenor) as they had submitted a thesis proposal on health nursing (field) before graduation, as a requirement through the written output (mode) (see Table 3 below). Further, the students were instructed through the checklist from the Office of Research on how to write a thesis proposal. Similar to all other research studies submitted, the thesis proposal used the rhetorical functions such as in the following: *describing*, *enumerating*, *comparing-contrasting*, *showing cause-effect*, and *describing a process* used for background, review of related literature, related studies, significance of the study, objectives, scope and limitation, and methodology; *giving a definition* used for definition of terms; *describing* and *describing a process* used for bibliography, time table, budget, list of figures/appendices or table of contents, and proponents of bio-data. Hedging devices such as *will*, *able to*, *may*, and *according to* and techniques such as use of time and cohesion devices including sequence of time were frequently used throughout the paper (see Table 4 below.)

**Table 3: Results of the Register Analysis**

Register Analysis	
Sample 1 (medical nursing case study) <i>well-written</i>	Field: A Case Study on Chronic Obstructive, a partial fulfillment of the requirements in medical nursing Tenor: nursing student - clinical instructor Mode: formal written output
Sample 2 (communicable disease case study) <i>poorly-written</i>	Field: A Case Study on Hemorrhagic Fever, a partial fulfillment in the requirements in communicable disease nursing Tenor: nursing student - clinical instructor Mode: formal written output
Sample 3 (surgical case study) <i>well-written</i>	Field: A Case Study on Total Abdominal Hysterectomy and Salphingo Oophorectomy, a partial fulfillment in the requirements in surgical nursing Tenor: nursing student - clinical instructor Mode: formal written output
Sample 4 (surgical case study) <i>Poorly-written</i>	Field: A Case Study of Chronic Renal Failure (ESRD), a partial fulfillment in the requirements in surgical

nursing

Tenor: nursing student - clinical instructor

Mode: formal written output

Sample 5 (thesis proposal)

*well-written*

Field: The Effect of Mentha Piperita Lamiaceae Oil  
(Peppermint)

in Enhancing Memory: Basis of Adjunct Therapy,  
a

research proposal as requirement in Research 11  
subject

Tenor: nursing student - the faculty of Cebu Doctors'

University – College of Nursing

Mode: formal written output

Sample 6 (thesis proposal)

*poorly-written*

Field: The Effect of Azadirachta Indica (Neem) Seed  
Extract

on Head Lice Infestation among Selected Children

in Barangay Kamputhaw, Cebu City: A Basis for

Information Dissemination, a research proposal

as requirement in Research 11 subject

Tenor: nursing student - the faculty of Cebu Doctors'

University – College of Nursing

Mode: formal written output

**Table 4: Results of Grammatical-Rhetorical Analysis**

	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4	Sample 5	Sample 6
	well-written	poorly-written	well-written	poorly-written	well-written	poorly-written
Hedging devices:						
<i>will</i>	/	/	/	/	/	/
<i>may</i>	/	/	/	/	/	/
<i>able to</i>	/	/	/	/	/	/
<i>according to</i>	x	x	x	x	/	/
Functions:						
1. describing and narrating for introduction, objectives, nursing assessment, and diagnostic result	/	/	/	/	n/a	n/a
2. defining, describing a process, enumerating, giving cause-effect, comparing-contrasting, and solving problems for present profile of functional health patterns, pathology and rationale, nursing intervention, evaluation and recommendation, evaluation and implication for nursing practice, education, and research, and referral and follow-up	/	/	/	/	n/a	n/a
3. describing, enumerating, comparing-contrasting, giving cause-effect, and describing a process	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	/	/

for background, review of related literature, related studies, significance of the study, objectives, scope and limitation, and methodology						
4. defining for definition of terms						
5. describing and giving a process	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	/	/
for bibliography, time table, budget, list of figures/appendice s or table of contents, and proponents of bio-data	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	/	/
Techniques:						
1. the use of time						
2. cohesion devises including sequence of time (e.g. <i>before</i> <i>admitted to the hospital,</i> <i>during</i> <i>and after medication, and</i> <i>future</i> <i>follow up, et.</i> )	/	/	/	/	/	/
	/	/	/	/	n/a	n/a
3. cohesion devises including sequence of time (e.g. <i>before</i> <i>the data gathering; at the</i> <i>previous and present</i> <i>research,</i> <i>etc.</i> )	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	/	/

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Samples 1, 2, 3 & 4 (case studies); Samples 5 & 6 (thesis proposals)

In terms of move structures, Table 5 shows the results of genre analysis on the four sample case studies.

**Table 5: Results of Genre Analysis on Case Studies**

	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	Sample 4
	well-written	poorly-written	well-written	poorly-written
Move 1: establishing the field	/	/	/	/
Move 2: summarizing previous research	/	/	/	x
Move 3: preparing for present research	/	/	/	/
Move 4: introducing present research	/	/	/	/
Move 5: identifying the objectives of the study in terms of				
1) what the researcher will do;	/	/	/	/
2) what the patient and his/her significant others will do	/	/	/	/
Move 6: describing nursing assessment in terms of				
1) personal history;	/	/	/	/
2) diagnostic result presented (in table form);	/	/	/	/
3) functional health patterns; and	/	/	/	/
4) pathophysiology and rationale	/	/	/	/
Move 7: discussing evaluation and recommendation in terms of				
1) prognosis of patient based on nursing assessment and rationale, and	/	x	/	/
	/	x	/	/



2) recommendation to promote early recovery  
and rehabilitation

Move 8: discussing evaluation and implication  
of the study

to:

	/	x	/	/
1) nursing practice,	/	x	/	/
2) nursing education, and	/	x	/	/
3) nursing research				
Move 9: presenting referral and follow-up (if any)	x	x	/	/
Move 10: citing bibliography (wrong format)	/	x	/	/

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Sample 1 (medical nursing case study); Sample 2 (communicable disease case study)

Sample 3 (surgical case study); Sample 4 (surgical case study)

In sample 1, all except Move 9 (presenting referral and follow-up) were present in the students' paper; in sample 3, all moves were complete. It should be noted that as indicated in the Nursing Guide Book, Move 9 is not obligatory as it would depend on whether this section is necessary for the particular case. On this basis, the clinical instructors classified this paper as "well-written". On the other hand, sample 2 lacked Moves 7, 8, 9 and 10 and sample 4 lacked Move 2. Thus, the case study was classified as "poorly written" because the important components made up the case study as presented in the Nursing Guide Book. Indeed, the focus for the clinical instructors' classification of case study as "well or poorly-written" was based on content and strict compliance to the predetermined format.

Table 6 shows the results of the move structures of genre analysis using the two sample thesis proposals.

**Table 6: Results of Genre Analysis on the Thesis Proposals**

	Sample	Sample
	5	6
	well-written	poorly-written
Move 1: establishing the field	/	/
Move 2: summarizing previous research (review of related literature / empirical studies)	/	/
Move 3: preparing for present research	/	/
Move 4: introducing present research	/	/
Move 5: describing the importance/significance of the study	/	x
Move 6: identifying objectives	/	/
Move 7: identifying scope and delimitation	/	/
Move 8: describing methodology in terms of		
1) research design,	/	/
2) research locale,	/	/
3) study subjects,	/	/
4) sampling size,	/	/
5) sampling methodology,	/	/
6) data collection,	/	/
7) definition of terms,	/	/
8) choice of data presentation, and	/	/

9) methods of statistical treatment	/	/
Move 9: citing bibliography	/	/
Move 10: describing study plan in terms of		
1) transmittal letter,	/	/
2) time table,	/	/
3) budget, and	/	/
4) proponents' data	/	/

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The researcher identified 10 moves. In samples 5, all moves were complete and it was thus rated as “well written”. Sample 6 was considered “not well written” because it lacked Move 5, discussing the significance of the study. All clinical instructors in the interview emphasized that content, the most important component, was given the top priority when rating the writing.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

There was a mismatch between what students and their clinical instructors felt should be prioritized in English 12 and what English 12 teachers were teaching. The English 12 syllabus with its content and content arrangement was not updated to respond to the students’ real needs for writing. Real needs such as sufficient input for thesis proposal and case study with necessary grammar points and research skills were not given much attention. Moreover, as seen in the syllabus, there were too many topics to be covered in a semester. This could be one factor why English 12 classes were not able to focus more on practice drills such as writing paragraphs, academic essays, journals, and research papers with the teacher discussing the errors students had committed.

To improve the teaching of English 12 so that it would better equip students for these written requirements in the junior and senior years, it is recommended that the time frame should focus more on the writing activities. The activities may include: a) editing where teachers discuss the grammar and writing problems found in the compositions; b) writing short paragraphs or longer

essays closely monitored by the teacher; c) watching a movie from which a reaction paper is constructed; and d) identifying and arranging paragraphs according to its logical sequence.

In addition, a support group that involves English teachers, clinical instructors, and curriculum developers should always assess students' real needs before, during and after the writing class is implemented to achieve meaningful learning experience.

Recommended priorities for teaching English 12 course are as follows: The first priority is teaching step-by-step how to write the different parts of written requirements such as case studies and research papers. It appears that the students preferred the process approach to writing, where teachers periodically conferred with the students on the progress of their paper.

Second in rank is presenting models of well-written case studies and thesis proposals similar to those submitted to the clinical instructors, since this was the first time the students encountered these intensive written requirements. Another reason as mentioned in the focus group discussions is that, case study was not taught formally in their content class because the clinical instructors merely provided the guide book that presents the different parts of the case study.

The third strategy that needs to be prioritized in English 12 is providing more exercises on how particular academic papers such as case studies are organized, e.g. how to write the introduction, body, and conclusion. The students in the focus group discussions mentioned that they simply copied and pasted these sources of information. They were also not able to organize their written assignments well because admittedly, they lacked both the skills and the time to do so.

The fourth in rank is providing exercises where practicing how to edit and revise poorly-written academic papers, such as case studies and thesis proposal, are given attention. As an English 12 teacher, the researcher corroborates with this statement. In fact, developing editing skills is not among the objectives in English 12.

The fifth rank is focusing on the teaching of commonly committed errors in writing such as fragments, dangling and misplaced modifiers, subject-verb agreement, and others. Though these are always taught in English 12 classes, these may be incidental only, since the teaching of these aforementioned commonly committed errors is also not articulated in the syllabus. Whether English teachers teach these commonly committed errors is a matter of individual decision, since

this is not part of the objectives of English 12 as articulated in the syllabus. This is unfortunate because as seen in the six samples of written requirements, these errors were indeed rampant in students' output.

The last priority is providing students with more practice exercises on drills in grammar. The importance of grammar cannot be overlooked as when grammar is erroneous, content can be distorted, and in the field of nursing, content should be accurately presented and discussed.

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## **Critical Evaluation of Lexical Categories in ESP Textbooks Used for Iranian Dentistry Students: The Gap between Perceived and Real Needs**

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, research on textbook evaluation has gained considerable momentum; however, models of evaluation employed to measure the potential value of ESP materials have rarely focused on the pedagogical effectiveness of different lexical categories. Accordingly, the present study sought to investigate the type of lexical items that the dentistry students need to understand for coping with specialized content in general and mastering reading and writing skills in particular. For this purpose, from the population of senior students studying dentistry at Isfahan and Kashan universities in Isfahan and their ESP instructors, a sample of 100 dentistry students and 30 teachers were randomly selected. A questionnaire followed by a focused-group interview was then utilized to specify the students' needs in terms of technical and semi-technical lexical items employed in their current ESP textbook, viz, *English for Students of Dentistry* (2003). Based on the Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) classification system, the course book was analyzed and the technical and semi-technical vocabulary items were carefully specified and tabulated. The results revealed that the target textbook appropriately fostered the lexical requirements of the participants by filling the gap between perceived and real needs. Clearly, the findings may have insightful implications for course designers, language teachers, and material developers.

**Keywords:** Learner-centered curriculum, needs analysis, ESP textbook evaluation, lexical categories, ESP course book for dentistry students

## **Introduction**

The essential role of English, either as a primary resource for communication in the community or as a subject taught in the school curriculum, cannot be ignored. In the latter case, based on the long-term objectives defined by the educational system significant decisions have to be made about the required human resources, allocation of budget, and design and choice of teaching materials including textbooks (Ellis, 1997; Hedge, 2000). Of prime concern, however, are the decisions made on the design and efficacy of ELT textbooks because, as Hutchinson and Torres (1994) contend, textbook is considered as a universal element in the process of language teaching and learning. The pedagogical utility of English textbooks in L2 contexts has been

acknowledged by many practitioners (e.g., Ellis, 1997; Litz, 2005; Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008; Tomlinson, 2008), all claiming that the use of textbooks offers substantial advantages to both students and teachers. Tomlinson (2008), for example, points to the importance of textbook as a reference point for teachers in directing their ideas on how lessons can be delivered and monitored as the process of teaching progresses. Moreover, a textbook can function as an effective resource in supporting naive or less experienced teachers by providing them with a systematic outline of the course by which they can enhance their self-confidence (Mares, 2003).

Similarly, a textbook can serve as a language resource for students so that EFL learners can use its content and related activities to crack the L2 code for creating meaningful output, and to keep track of their learning achievements (O'Neil, 1982). In other words, textbooks are a fundamentally learning support for the learners by which they can self-study and self-assess their attainment of the target goals. According to Litz (2005), textbooks can also be used as a potentially valuable study aid for the students particularly in cases where they encounter problems caused by teachers' incompetency and low level of professional proficiency.

Despite the many advantages that ELT textbooks offer, there have been a number of anti-textbook voices pointing to their potential downside (e.g., McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2008; Ur, 1996). One of the main demerits concerning the wide use of textbooks, as Ur (1996) and Tomlinson (2008, p. 3) remark, is that no one textbook has been designed to fully cater to the individual learners' needs, their learning styles, and the demands of typical classroom contexts within the complex dynamics of L2 learning process. The rationale behind such deficiency can be attributed to the fact that textbooks are mostly designed based on the material developers' perceptions of and their intuition on what the learners need to know rather than on the learners' actual needs and the principles of language learning (Tomlinson, 2008, p. 7). Simply put, textbook writers most often consider the learners' perceived needs rather than their actual needs when producing ELT materials. As such, it can be claimed that textbooks are used without expert scrutiny concerning their pedagogical value, which in most cases, leads to the doom of the given ELT course (McGrath, 2002; Mukundan, 2007). On this basis, in-depth evaluation of textbooks can serve as a powerful watch-dog for preventing the frustration caused by the failure in attaining the defined goals of the teaching/learning program (Sheldon, 1988).

The review of the literature concerning material evaluation abounds with numerous efforts for appraising the educational worth of the textbooks used by L2 learners. According to Tomlinson (2003), textbook evaluation refers to a well-planned process by which the instructional effectiveness of the teaching/learning materials is carefully specified. Similarly, Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004, p. 5) maintain that ELT materials evaluation “involves measuring the potential value of a set of learning materials by making judgement about the effect of the materials on the people using them”. Within such perspectivization, concerned practitioners have used various techniques for evaluating ELT textbooks in general and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) materials in particular. However, it seems that research in the area of ESP course book evaluation has received little attention.

Recently, ESP has turned into a prominent area especially in the rapidly progressing third world. In fact, ESP education has generally been regarded as a separate activity within ELT context, and eventually, ESP research has become an identifiable component of applied linguistics studies. The main concerns of ESP has always been, and remains to be, conducting such activities as needs analysis and text analysis as well as improving learners’ technical vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension proficiency. In fact, the primary objective of undertaking such activities is to equip learners with appropriate resources by which they can become a potential member of the community of specialists who employ the same language for communicating with other members (Gilbert, 2005; Leki, 2003a; Robinson, 1991).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that ESP is an approach, rather than a product, in that it does not involve a particular kind of language, teaching material, or methodology. They suggest that the foundation of ESP is built upon the simple question “why does this learner need to learn a foreign language?” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 27). The answer to this question encompasses a number of important factors such as the learner, the language required, and the learning context, which necessitate the analysis of needs in the ESP settings.

Clearly, needs are defined as the reasons for which the students are learning English, which may vary from study purposes such as following a postgraduate course in an English-speaking country to work purposes like participating in business meetings or making hotel bookings.

These purposes are the starting points determining the language to be taught (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Needs analysis, then, can be defined in its simplest form as a process in which specific learning needs of the target students learning a foreign language are taken into consideration. These learning needs concern the process of establishing “how”, “why”, and “what” of the target language purposes in a specific course; i.e., how students learn the language, why and for what reasons they need to learn it, and, as a consequence, what specific syllabi may best suit them based on these pre-determined objectives.

Accordingly, learners’ needs analysis must be given the highest priority in designing ESP textbooks because it plays a fundamental role in supporting students’ learning process. As Tomlinson (2001) maintains, a well-organized analysis of the demands of textbook users would be a key issue in developing ESP materials as it is the needs of the learners that actually matter in ESP education. Gilabert (2005) also believes that the real needs of ESP learners and teachers are of great importance in developing ESP textbooks with the aim of preparing learners to perform adequately in the expected target situations. Learners are then seen to have different interests and needs, which can have a powerful impact on their inner drive for learning.

In this regard, in 2007, in a ground breaking study in South Africa, Moragh Paxton tried to investigate the appropriateness of the ESP textbooks written for the students of Economics. This project used linguistic and inter-textual analysis of the students’ writings to survey the relationship between the academic curriculum and students’ voices in an Economics course. In this article, Paxton made an attempt to illustrate the difficulties freshman students faced in their Economics textbook by investigating and analyzing students’ essays. Using the interview technique as the main instrument for his data collection process, he concluded that rather than exposing students to a variety of arguments and encouraging the development of critical reading skills appropriate for academic contexts, the Economics textbook tended to be single voiced, thus encouraging rote learning and plagiarism.

Exploring study needs from the learners’ perspectives, Banerjee (2003) also conducted a longitudinal study of 25 postgraduate students by drawing on their on-going study experiences. Having interviewed the participants at a number of different points during their Master degree,

Banerjee found out that the students experienced certain difficulties stemming from factors related to both language and the courses they were taking. In fact, the difficulties students experienced comprised a wide range of factors such as the lecture/seminar structure of the courses, the demand for critical and independent thinking, the role of the teacher as well as the emphasis in many courses on group work.

One of the fundamental purposes of ESP courses, as mentioned earlier, is to improve learners' technical vocabulary knowledge and their reading comprehension proficiency. Vocabulary acquisition has always been considered the principal component in the process of foreign language learning and, as Biria, Mehrabi Boshrahadi and Nikbakht (2014, p.11) assert, "the knowledge of lexical items is clearly the core of language ability and the basic foundation of language learning process". Given that, teaching lexical items must be highly regarded as a prominent area in designing ESP textbooks (Benesch, 2003). Research reports on lexical categories provide ESP materials developers with invaluable insights regarding the problems that students will probably encounter more frequently in their textbooks (Carter, 1987). As such, the question of what types of lexical items should be incorporated into ESP textbooks has become a crucial issue, which needs to be addressed in designing effective materials intended for ESP/EAP courses. Despite the relative long history of ESP as a recognized branch in English language education, ESP practitioners are divided about the types of vocabulary items that are considered appropriate for ESP course books (Gatehouse, 2001). In this regard, Blachowicz and Fisher (2006) comment that learners' needs are not often considered in designing ESP materials and, as it is often the case, the lexical items selected are not suitable for satisfying the actual target needs of the learners. They further add that making logical decisions about the choice of vocabulary items based on students' needs would not only influence ESP learners' reading comprehension but it also motivates them to fully participate in both social and academic classroom routines. Long and Norris (2000) also contend that two issues are of paramount importance in teaching lexical items in ESP courses; i.e., a) what type of lexical items do the learners need to learn?, and b) what type of lexical items do the course designers believe the learners need to learn?

It should be noted that different ESP practitioners have classified lexical items differently, but for the purpose of this study, the Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) classification system is utilized. The writers classified lexical items used in ESP course books into three main categories:

- **Technical lexical items** refer to 'words that have specialized and restricted meanings in certain disciplines and may vary in meaning across disciplines' (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 83). Such words are not usually translated into other languages; rather, they are borrowed and adjusted for pronunciation and orthography by the specialists of the related field. Exemplifying this kind of words would be *parameters* in Linguistics and *relay* in Electronics.
- **Semi-technical lexical items** are 'words that are used in general English but have a higher frequency of occurrence in scientific and technical descriptions and discussions' (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 82). Such words may or may not vary across scientific disciplines. Examples of semi-technical words are *function*, *cycle*, *confirm*.
- **Non-technical lexical items** include words which 'appear both in general and specific English with the same meanings and levels of frequency' (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 82).

It is generally suggested that the priority in teaching lexical items in the ESP context should be given to the semi-technical words due to their greater significance in terms of frequency and informational range within subject-specific courses (Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984). From the psycholinguistics point of view, it is often discussed that items of this type cause students to experience difficulty in understanding a given technical text (Hunt & Beglar, 2002). The evidence supporting this view, as Richards (1974) claims, comes from the fact that EFL learners mostly find it easier to retain the concrete and context-bound lexical items in a given text and are able to recall them first when asked to list the words associated with a certain topic. However, because semi-technical words are context-less and non-concrete, they may indeed create greater difficulty for students to master them compared with technical items.

Considering these facts, Evans and Green (2007) set out to investigate the necessity of teaching semi-technical lexical items in the ESP domain. They conducted a study on one of the largest



English-medium universities in Hong Kong in order to investigate the perceived problems of ESP learners concerning different skills as well as what the learners needed to learn in terms of the words presented in their discipline, i.e., semi-technical and technical lexical items used in the textbooks related to Business, Engineering, Health and Social Sciences, and Communication. The focus of interest in this study, however, was on the level of difficulty the learners faced in reading specialized texts. The findings revealed that specialist (technical) words, as most students believed, were the main cause of the difficulty in the reading comprehension process since what they signified could not be determined by the students. Interestingly, this problem was also quite common in other skills like speaking, writing, and listening.

Overall, objective evaluation of ESP course books can be significant and pedagogically useful for two main reasons. First of all, as Ellis (1997) states, evaluation of materials should be performed in various phases. In fact, he enumerates three different stages in which evaluation can take place; namely, pre-use, in-use, and post-use evaluation (see Ellis, 1997 for further discussion on three types of evaluation). However, the possible approach in the present study is a sort of post-use or retrospective evaluation. Post-use evaluation, as the least administered type of evaluation, is regarded as the most beneficial kind of textbook evaluation because while determining both short and long term implications of using a given textbook, it can provide in-depth information concerning its suitability (Tomlinson, 2003). The results of post-use evaluation can actually serve as a significant source of feedback for prospective stakeholders such as policy makers, administrators, and teachers as well as learners. Secondly, in the present day and age, the criterion of Value For Money (VFM) is quite important in educational context where the cost effectiveness criterion plays a pivotal role in the success of a given language program.

Moreover, it is often argued that locally prepared materials are not pedagogically as effective as textbooks available on the international markets. However, the fact that domestic organizations have a more realistic understanding of the learners' needs attending universities in the local contexts cannot be ignored (Bao, 2006a).

As such, SAMT organization in Iran is the authority for publishing ESP textbooks for various academic disciplines. Since the main objective of ESP courses in Iran is to improve the learners' reading comprehension proficiency and their vocabulary knowledge, SAMT organization, as the highest echelon in decision making, has set up new guidelines asking ESP course designers to employ a needs analysis component in their tasks. Consequently, by using an empirical post-use evaluation, the main objective of the present study was to textually analyze the textbook "*English for Students of Dentistry*", written by Mehrabi and Tahririan (2003) to see whether or not there was any gap between the real needs of the textbook's users in terms of the vocabulary items and the actual word types included in the book. Such evaluation may help both ESP students and their teachers to enhance their understanding of specific as well as nonspecific-domain content, which is necessary for mastering the skills required in the ESP context. On this basis, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What types of lexical items are reported to be most essential according to the dentistry students and their ESP teachers?
2. What types of lexical items are widely used in the ESP textbook developed for dentistry students by the respective authors?
3. Is there any gap between the real needs of dentistry students and ESP teachers in terms of lexical items and the actual types of words existing in their ESP textbook published by SAMT Publication?

## **Materials and Method**

### ***Participants***

Great care was taken for selecting informants who were supposed to provide the required data in the process of needs analysis. As Long (2005) puts it, using target students (in this case, dentistry students) as informants is the only alternative for collecting the related data since they are often the 'primary, sometimes the only, respondents' (p. 19). Accordingly, from the population of

senior dentistry students studying at Kashan and Isfahan Universities of Medicine and Medical Sciences, two samples, 50 each, were randomly selected. The participants were all in-study learners who were actually participating in the ESP classes. In addition, 30 qualified ESP teachers were selected by a convenient sampling method. Obviously, these teachers were also considered as the target sample in the process of needs analysis because possible differences between students and teachers' views on the lexical items required for learning were greatly important (Cowling, 2007). Their teaching experience ranged between 6 to 15 years.

### ***Instruments***

A questionnaire as well as a stimulus-based interview was used as the instruments of the study. In fact, The logic behind using both a questionnaire and an interview as the main measures of data collection stems from the fact that some researchers and practitioners of the field (Al-Khatib, 2005; Boshier & Smalkoski, 2002; Li So-mui & Mead, 2000; Long, 2005) believe that these elicitation techniques are the most common instruments used for collecting data in needs analysis. Generally, the questionnaire contained 15 items, which the respondents were required to respond based on a five-point Likert scale. Each item was then rated on the scale of 1-5 with the rate of five showing "strongly agree" and one showing "strongly disagree" (see Appendix A).

Most of the questions in the interview were open-ended. The questions were designed based on the students' responses to the questionnaire items (see Appendix C). As Robinson (1991) claims, interviewing participants once they have completed the questionnaire would make needs analysts have more control over the data gathered. Accordingly, using the interview method was necessary because it could produce in-depth information about the reasons why participants revealed a great tendency towards selecting particular options. In fact, the questionnaire items served as the stimulus based on which the interview prompts were developed. In such focused-group interview, the prompts served as a stimuli based on which the respondents attended a group discussion to provide reasons for and express their opinions towards their agreement with the inclusion of semi-technical vocabulary items in the target textbook.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

To collect the required data, two different but complementary phases were considered. In the first phase, a lexical analysis technique was utilized to determine the types of the vocabulary items employed in the ESP textbook for dentistry students published by SAMT Publications. Then in the second phase, based on the frequencies obtained, a questionnaire followed by a focused-group interview were used to identify the lexical needs of the dentistry students and, to double check these needs by receiving the opinions of their teachers. The following provides a detailed description of each phase.

#### **Phase 1**

In this phase of the study, each lesson of the textbook under investigation was examined and the frequencies of the different types of lexical items were separately identified for the non-technical, semi-technical, and technical words. The aim was to specify the relevant ratio between non-technical, semi-technical, and technical words employed by the target authors. After identifying the frequency of occurrence for these words, the results were tabulated. It should be noted that two specialists in the field of dentistry and an ESP teacher teaching English to the dentistry students helped the categorization of the words used in different lesson units. The results of the brief were used to calculate the percentage values of the lexical items used in the target textbook. Finally, the quantity of the lexical items thus identified formed the basis for the respective items used both in the questionnaire and interview.

#### **Phase 2**

The validity of the questionnaire was established based on the specialist opinions and its reliability was determined by pilot testing of the questionnaire to thirty dentistry students studying at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran, who were academically similar to the participants in the study. As a result, some of the prompts, which did not contribute to the operationalization of the parameters under investigation, were replaced by more appropriate items. This final modified questionnaire was then administered to the target participants in two

different sessions. Care was taken to explain the rubric of questionnaire in students' L1 to remove the likelihood of misunderstanding. Furthermore, a sufficient amount of time was given to the respondents for answering the prompts to eliminate anxiety and stress, which could have an adverse effect on the quality of responses. In this way, the participants' lexical needs, which according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are necessary in order that the students can function properly in the target situation, were identified. Finally, the ESP teachers' opinions about the lexical items necessary for satisfying the target needs of the participants were also received by the same questionnaire.

For boosting the reliability of the responses obtained from the dentistry students and the target ESP teachers, the method of data collection was triangulated so much so the participants were asked to attend a stimulus-based interview session. However, it is often suggested that the interpretation of the respondents' data may be accomplished in two different but complementary ways. In the first method, the researcher adopts a plausible interpretation using his/her own judgmental values in order to examine the truth and dependability of the answers provided by the respondents. Unfortunately, the interpretation made in this way is an etic processing of the data since it can be based on the interpreter's personal views and tendencies (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

The second approach is referred to as authoritative interpretation in which the interpretation of the data is performed with the presence of the participants thus evoking an emic perspectivization considering the respondents' side of reasoning as well. Accordingly, to further enhance the power of the data, 20 questionnaires completed by the respondents were purposefully selected and served as a stimulus for arranging a group discussion in which the researcher acted as a facilitator by carefully directing the line of discussion towards the topics under investigation to make sure that the responses were the true reflection of the prompts on the questionnaire. The questions in the interview were actually six open-ended opinion questions measuring the attitude of the selected respondents. The group discussion was video-taped and transcribed. Then by careful analysis of the data, the nature of the answers to questions posed in the discussion session was identified. The aim was to find out the respondents' attitudes (i.e., in-favour or opposed) towards the key opinion questions concerning the appropriacy of the lexical items used in the target textbook.

As Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) believe, participants do not state why they selected a given option and, as such, it is necessary to find out *what* the learners want, but the question *why* the learners want what they want cannot obviously be answered by using a questionnaire only. Accordingly, participants were asked questions about why they preferred a particular category since it was important to discover the reasons underlying their preferences. Evidently, analyzing the data collected in this stage led to formulating a pattern of ESP needs for dentistry students and ESP teachers in terms of the types of vocabulary items needed to be included in the related ESP textbook for dentistry students. Moreover, to analyze the data gathered by the questionnaire in the second phase, and to make sure that the choices are based on the learners' attitudes and the results are significant, a Chi-Square test for all the questions was utilized.

## **Results and Discussion**

To investigate the research questions put forth before, the following procedures were carried out. First, using SPSS software, a Descriptive Task was run for calculating the Mean and Standard Deviation values for all the respondents. Following that, the respondents' answers were analyzed using a Chi-Square test.

### ***Results related to the first research question***

Table 1 illustrates the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of the responses provided by both groups of participants, i.e., students of dentistry and ESP teachers. It is clearly observed that the highest percentages of approval ("I strongly agree" or "I agree") in both groups belong to those who believe in learning and teaching only semi-technical words in ESP courses for the students of dentistry. The percentage values of agreed and strongly agreed responses provided by learners concerning learning only semi-technical lexical items are 52 and 19 respectively, whereas these percentages are 43.3 and 20 for the teachers.

**Table1: Percentages of learners' (L) and teachers' (T) responses to questionnaire prompts**

Respondents'		Strongly				Strongly		
Choice		agree	Agree	No idea	Disagree	disagree	mean	<i>SD</i>
		%	%	%	%	%		
Technical	L	3	7	15	47	28	2.1	0.98
Words only	T	3.3	3.3	13.3	60	20	2.09	0.88
Semi-technical	L	19	52	9	16	4	3.66	1.08
Words only	T	20	43.3	10	16.6	10	3.46	1.27
Equal No. of	L	6	8	12	43	31	2.15	1.13
Technical and								
Semi-technical	T	6.6	6.6	16.6	46.6	23.3	2.25	1.11
More Technical	L	3	4	12	45	36	1.93	0.95
Words	T	0	10	10	43.3	36.6	1.93	0.94
More Semi-								
Technical	L	4	7	16	51	22	2.02	0.99
Word	T	3.3	13.3	20	36.6	26.6	2.29	1.11

On the whole, it is apparent from the responses provided by both students and ESP teachers that the majority of the respondents (i.e., 71% of the learners and 63.3% of ESP teachers) feel that only semi-technical words are needed to be included in the target ESP textbook designed for the dentistry students. What is interesting is that the percentages of approval by both students and teachers for the other alternatives on the Likert scale represented in the questionnaire are all less than 17 percent.

There were four questions in the questionnaire (i.e., questions 3, 5, 7, and 12) that specifically targeted the respondents' opinions in terms of the word type they needed to be included in their ESP textbook so as to improve their reading and writing skills. It should be noted that for the ease of analysis, the percentages of "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses were merged and reported under "Agree" column. It was also the case for "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" options so that the sum of percentages was reported under "Disagree" column. As Table 2

reveals, 66.8% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that learning only semi-technical words would help them comprehend both subject-specific and general English texts. By contrast, only 6.8% reported that learning technical items would be regarded as a useful strategy in understanding reading passages. Most of the students also acknowledged the efficacy of learning more semi-technical lexical items in their reading skills and reported that although learning both technical and semi-technical words could assist them in comprehending technical texts, semi-technical items would be more important in this regard (46.1%).

**Table 2: Students' opinions towards the type of vocabulary they need in reading comprehension texts**

Questionnaire items	Disagree %	Agree %
3. Learning both technical and semi-technical words are equally important in improving reading comprehension proficiency.	11.5	75.3
5. Learning technical words serve as an adequate reading comprehension strategy in ESP courses.	6.8	77.6
7. Learning both technical and semi-technical words are of great help in understanding academic texts, but semi-technical words are more important in this regards.	46.1	15.8
12. Learning only semi-technical words are of greater help because they are useful in comprehension of both specialized and general English texts.	66.8	22.2

However, to make sure that the differences are statistically significant, a Chi-Square test was run. Tables 3 and 4 reveal the results.



**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of agree/strongly agree responses provided by both groups of participants**

Respondents' choices	Observed (N)	Expected (N)	Residual
Technical words only	9	26	-17
Semi-technical words only	87	26	61
Equal No. of Technical and Semi-technical words	15	26	-11
More technical words	7	26	-19
More semi-technical words	12	26	-14

**Table 4: Results of Chi-square test**

Chi-Square	
180.3	
d.f	4
Asymp. Sig.	
0.00	

In view of the figures in Table 4, the Chi-Square obtained is higher than the critical value  $X^2$  with the degree of freedom of four. The result of the Chi-Square test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between those who agreed or strongly agreed with the inclusion of semi-technical vocabulary items in their ESP textbook and the participants who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue ( $p < 0.05$ ). To feel fairly confident that the data obtained are statistically significant, the Chi-Square estimated was checked based on the critical values of the Chi-Square from Fisher and Yates (1978): *Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural, and Medical Research*. Clearly, the Chi-Square is significant at the level of 0.01.

These findings confirm the first question showing that semi-technical lexical items are the type of lexis preferred by both the students of dentistry and their ESP teachers.

Additionally, the students' and instructors' answers to the interview questions posed in the group discussion under the supervision of the researcher were analyzed. It is clearly observed in Table 5 that the majority of both students and teachers attending the focused-group sessions endorsed the importance of semi-technical vocabulary items in ESP textbooks.

**Table 5: Respondents' attitude towards the use of semi-technical words in their textbook**

Respondents	Attitudes			
	In-favour		Opposed	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers (N = 6)	4	80	2	20
Students (N = 14)	10	71.42	4	28.58

In the discussion panel, when one of the learners was asked why she strongly agreed with the inclusion of only semi-technical words in the ESP textbook, she commented:

*"....well you know, in our field of study, we need to read academic texts that are written in English, but... you know, the number of technical words used in these types of texts is much higher than that of semi-technical words, and actually that's why we need to learn more semi-technical words".*

Another student, in response to this question, maintained that:

*"....during our academic studies, we have to go through different texts related to our field. So I think we need to learn more and more semi-technical words for understanding the academic discourse permeating dentistry texts".* (for more responses, see Appendix B)

Similarly, teachers mostly believed that technical vocabulary items should not have a dominant position in the arrangement of lexical information and profiles of ESP textbooks designed for dentistry students. They maintained that the priority should be given to semi-technical items since they are of prime importance in terms of frequency and contextual range. One of the male instructors, Reza, stated:

*“...technical words are regarded as highly subject-restricted items that do not co-occur frequently enough within English academic texts... and teaching them falls within the responsibility of subject teachers rather than EFL instructors. Semi-technical words, on the other hand, are available and covered more in materials targeted towards dentistry students”*

When asked about their attitudes on the use of technical texts, most teachers showed a certain degree of reluctance concerning the adaptation of their teaching process to the demands of subject-specific (specialized) courses. They claimed although they have been trained to cope with general principles of ESP texts, they most often experience genuine difficulty in dealing with advanced technical materials. As a result, their credibility may be devalued in the eyes of the learners. (for more responses, see Appendix B)

### ***Results related to the second research question***

In this step, the percentage values of the semi-technical and technical lexical items included in the target ESP textbook were estimated. As Table 6 illustrates, the percentage of semi-technical lexical items is 64.93 while the percentage for technical words is equal to 30.28%. This sheds light on the second question confirming that both classes of words are needed but in different proportions.

**Table 6: Different categories of lexical items included in the ESP textbook**

Number	
Percentage	
Technical words	347
30.28	
Semi-technical words	802
64.93	
Other categories	59
4.77	
Total	1235
100	

The results of this study corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field. Based on the theoretical views underlying the bare essentials of vocabulary instruction developed by Robinson (1991) and Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), the students taking ESP courses should learn semi-technical lexical items because they would incidentally learn subject-specific words (technical words) through other related courses. Likewise, analyzing the needs of the participants in the current study revealed that the students and ESP teachers in the field of dentistry believed that semi-technical words need to be a main part of the words utilized in their ESP textbook. From the empirical point of view, these findings are also in line with those of Holme and Chalauisaeng (2006) as well as Evans and Green (2007) who found out that it was only semi-technical words that the ESP students participating in ESP classes needed to learn in their ESP courses. Interestingly, these authors reported that ESP texts incorporating semi-technical lexical items resulted in positive changes in the learners' attitudes towards learning specialized English.

By contrast, the findings of the present study revealed that the designers of the ESP textbook under investigation, viz, *English for Students of Dentistry* (2003), published by SAMT Publications, included both semi-technical and technical lexical items in right amounts and proportions showing that the authors carefully followed the theoretical principles governing the

design of ESP textbooks. The results are not only consistent with the demands of the students and ESP teachers in the field of dentistry but also with what some practitioners of the field such as Robinson (1991) and Dudley-Evans and John (1998) have reported about the types of vocabulary needed to be taught in ESP courses in general and in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs in particular.

### ***Results related to the third research question***

Regarding the third research question, it was found out that there was a gap between the needs of the students and the types of vocabulary items included in the textbook. Fortunately, the said authors had observed the gap and employed both technical and semi-technical lexical items in right proportions most likely because they had applied a needs analysis phase prior to the design of the intended textbook.

One possible explanation related to the discrepancy existing between the number of technical and semi-technical words might be the designers' oversight of the multiple layers of needs analysis required for ESP course designs. On the other hand, as it is often the case, policy makers and top echelon decision makers defining the objectives of the course design in the academic circles impose their own views upon the format according to which the lesson units in a text must be organized and presented. As such, the process of learners' needs analysis, which plays a pivotal role in the quality and efficiency of the textbook being compiled, often receives little attention. Medgyes and Nikolov (2002) delineating such a gap in compiling academic textbooks assert that it is the policy makers and course planners involved who usually make the design and holistic plan of English language teaching textbooks in the academic contexts. They further argue that in this top-down process, what is rarely taken into account by such policy makers or course planners is the voice of the teachers and learners, which leads to the application of hidden agendas by the teachers in their classrooms for their students.

## Conclusion

This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the inclusion of semi-technical lexical items in the ESP textbook for dentistry students published by SAMT Publications in Iran. On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, analyses of the data collected via the questionnaire indicated that the majority of the respondents (both students and ESP teachers) supported the need for the inclusion of the semi-technical lexical items in the vocabulary sections of the ESP textbooks in the field of dentistry. In other words, the participants showed a greater tendency towards semi-technical lexical items since they comprise the backbone of the core vocabulary in different scientific discourse types.

Surprisingly, the lexical analysis of the target ESP textbook reflected that the local authors enlisted appropriate technical to semi-technical words ratio satisfying the demands of the potential users. The findings of the study have important implications for both ESP teachers and domestic textbook designers of SAMT Publications because it uses a combination method analyzing the needs of both ESP students and their teachers based on a document analysis of the given textbook used for the students of dentistry in the majority of Iranian medical universities. The results may also offer to policy makers and stakeholders the centrality of considering teacher-student needs in developing materials, which can satisfy the multiple aspects of scientific discourse.

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## Appendix A

### Questionnaire Items

Please be so kind as to answer the questions by choosing one of the options that best suits your attitude.

As an ESP teacher/learner in the field of dentistry, I believe that:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No idea	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.Learning semi-technical words are more beneficial than learning technical ones.					
2.Learning technical words are more beneficial than learning semi-technical ones.					
3.Learning both technical and semi-technical words are equally important in improving reading comprehension proficiency.					
4. The more semi-technical words are learned; the easier related texts in the field of dentistry are understood.					
5. Learning technical words serve as an adequate reading comprehension strategy in ESP courses.					
6.Learning more semi-technical words than technical ones are of greater help in improving both reading and writing skills.					
7. Learning both technical and semi-technical words are of great help in understanding academic texts, but semi-technical words are more important in this regards.					

8. In ESP textbook for dentistry students, designers should include only semi-technical words in the vocabulary sections of the book.					
9. In ESP textbook for dentistry students, designers should include both technical and semi-technical words in the vocabulary sections of the book.					
10. When it comes to answering a reading comprehension question, knowing more technical words are of great help.					
11. Because technical words are dealt with in other specialized courses, semi-technical words need to be included in ESP textbook more frequently.					
12. Learning only semi-technical words are of greater help because they are useful in comprehension of both specialized and general English texts.					
13. Learning semi-technical words provide learners with an inner satisfaction.					
14. Learning to use semi-technical words generally results in a higher success in taking ESP exams.					
15. In an ESP course, the knowledge of semi-technical words gives ESP students a higher self-confidence compared to that of technical words.					

## **Appendix B**

### **The participants' opinions supporting their claims in terms of the inclusion of semi-technical vocabulary items in the target textbook:**

#### **Students of dentistry**

- When we are reading English texts in our field of study, we have difficulty in the meanings of semi-technical words rather than technical ones because technical items have been repeated over and over again during other courses and, as such, we have already learned them.
- Because most technical words in our field of study are identical with those in English in terms of meaning, we are familiar with them. So, teaching them in an ESP course is a waste of time.
- Because our English language proficiency is low, we mostly prefer not to use the English books and articles introduced by our teachers at the beginning of the semester, but rather we mainly use the notes we take during the class hours. So, I think the main focus of our ESP textbook should be placed on semi-technical words.
- Many technical words are discussed in other dentistry courses and textbooks.
- The main problem is that many teachers neglect teaching semi-technical words because they assume that we are already familiar with them. However, it is this type of words that are typical of all technical texts including dentistry. That is why we often experience difficulty in understanding the technical passages.
- The number of semi-technical words used in academic texts written in English in our field of study is much higher than the number of technical words and that is why we need them more.
- Learning technical words is easier because they are mostly concrete words such as proper nouns and are repeated continuously during a semester. Therefore, the most important problem that we encounter during our vocabulary learning process is that semi-technical words are not much easy as technical items to be memorized since they are abstract. Therefore, it would be better to focus our attention on learning semi-technical words and expressions.

- In order to communicate with specialists from other countries we need to develop our writing and speaking skills. So, learning more semi-technical words are of greater help.
- Both technical and semi-technical words are important to be learned in ESP courses, although in many cases we know the meaning of the technical words used in dentistry (as dentistry is our field of study), but we have problem with the meaning of semi-technical words.

### **ESP teachers**

- Learners are not good at reading academic texts in English mostly because they know a limited number of general and semi-technical words. So, in their ESP courses they are in need of learning semi-technical words, if not general words.
- Teaching technical words is time-consuming and in most cases it is not possible to convey the meaning of a technical vocabulary item without using visual aids. As such, we have to devote much of the class time to conveying the meaning of a given technical item. It doesn't seem worthwhile because students either already have learned these items or will learn them later through other sources. So, I believe the course book should concentrate on semi-technical items or what is called "common core vocabulary".
- In this field, many Iranian students only need to know semi-technical words to understand the related texts written in English.
- In ESP exams, students have difficulty in semi-technical words not technical items. Usually, in their final exam, they encounter problems in comprehending their texts due to their lack of semi-technical vocabulary knowledge.
- The majority of dentistry ESP teachers are English language teachers who have not received any academic training on the subject course and they may encounter some difficulty teaching technical items.
- The textbook shouldn't concentrate only on the technical vocabulary items as students will get these words from other academic resources during their graduate studies. It is the semi-technical items that should be the main focus of the book since these words are frequently used in dentistry scientific texts and may cause difficulty.
- For the students of dentistry, learning semi-technical words means mastering reading, writing, and speaking skills. I mean, beside mastering reading skill, dentistry students

should have a good command of writing and speaking skills as well because they need to communicate with other specialists or write reports, among other things. To achieve these goals, they need to learn the type of vocabulary which is of prime benefit for them. These are words that occur frequently in technical texts of different type.

- When students cannot comprehend a given scientific text due to having a low level of general vocabulary knowledge, they will lose their motivation and self-efficacy. So, I think there is no point in spending much class time on teaching technical words to students with low English language proficiency.



## **Appendix C**

### **Opinion questions used in the focus-group discussion with 20 participating respondents.**

1. Why did you strongly agree with the inclusion of only semi-technical words in the ESP textbook?
2. What is your opinion about the proper balance between semi-technical and technical vocabulary items in your textbook?
3. What kind of vocabulary items blocks your comprehension of content in reading your dentistry textbook?
4. In your opinion, what type of lexis most likely influences your achievement on an ESP test?
5. Do you think that a higher percentage of semi-technical lexical items may contribute to your better performance on writing and speaking skills?
6. Why do you think dentistry students with a superior knowledge of technical vocabulary items cannot perform well in different language skills?



## **A Comparative Analysis of the English Writing Ability of Chinese and Korean University Students**

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### **Abstract**

This study adopted Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaski and Kim's (1998) linguistic measurement method towards English as a second language writing. The study analyzed English essays written by both Chinese and Korean university students in a writing assessment from the perspective of fluency, grammatical and lexical complexity with the coding of numbers of T-units and their subordinate clauses. The purpose of this study is to explore the similarities and differences of linguistic features of written English between Chinese and Korean university students. Participants included 84 Chinese university students and 84 Korean university students. The results indicate that: 1) Chinese university students' written English and that of Korean counterparts do not have any obvious differences; 2) no significant difference exists between the two groups in grammatical complexity of their written English; 3) Korean university students master more vocabulary than Chinese university students; 4) in terms of lexical density, Chinese English learners prefer the first person plural pronoun "we" while Korean English learners prefer the first person singular form "I". All the findings can be explained, to some extent, by L1 influence and students' writing strategies. All in all, this study examined the linguistic features of

written English of these two groups via quantitative analysis. The main findings may help in the teaching and learning of written English in EFL contexts, especially in China and Korea.

**Keywords:** Comparative analysis; Linguistic features of English writing; T-units; Chinese and Korean university students

## **1. Introduction**

Writing, considered as one of the four basic skills of language, always occupies an important position in L2 language learning, teaching, and testing (Ji, 2006 ; Weigle, 2002; Wright, 2010). Writing theories also went through a developing stage from product-based writing research to process-based writing research (Long, 2010). Writing, as a complicated language skill, integrated not only language ability, but also problem-solving ability. Thus, researchers attempted to analyze writing, especially L2 writing from different aspects. Among these research aspects, comparing and contrasting is one way to explore the similarities and differences between two or more study groups when they learn and practice English writing. Following this trend, this study compared the English writing performance of two L2 writer groups in terms of their fluency, grammatical and lexical complexity through a quantitative research method, aiming to find any differences and similarities of the writing features between Chinese and Korean university students. The result will share some enlightenment and help English language learners and teachers in these two countries improve their English learning and teaching.

## **2. Background and previous research**

### ***2.1 Writing ability***

What is writing ability? Some researchers have pointed out the uses of writing are so varied that no single definition can cover all situations (Purves, 1992; Camp, 1993; White, 1995). Weigle (2005) analyzed writing ability from two perspectives: writing as a social and cultural phenomenon, and writing as a cognitive activity. According to Weigle (2005), writing is social because everybody writes in a social setting and the writing is shaped by social convention and by history of social interaction. Meanwhile, writing is cognitive because writing is a psychological process in which the writer needs to communicate with the potential readers and

the writing texts. Based on Weigle's (2005) explanation, the English essays written by Chinese and Korean university students are likely to be influenced by their different social settings and by their during-writing cognitive process.

## ***2.2 Communicative language ability model***

Why are fluency, grammatical complexity and lexical complexity adopted for the writing comparison between Chinese and Korean English learners? One of the most influential linguistic classifications of writing competency models have been developed by Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim (1998). In their work of examining L2 writing competence, the authors proposed several clusters of performance indicators, which include fluency, accuracy and complexity. Other research has been done since then (Armstrong, 2010; Biber, Gray & Poonpon, 2011; Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Ellis & Yuan, 2004; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007). The fundamental base of this classification could be found from the Communicative Language Ability Model proposed by Bachman (1990). This model consists of grammatical knowledge (including vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology) and textual knowledge (cohesion, coherence, rhetorical, or conversational organization). Grammatical and textual knowledge are considered as organizational knowledge, whereas illocutionary knowledge (ideational functions, manipulative functions, heuristic functions, and imaginative functions), and sociolinguistic knowledge (dialects/varieties, registers, naturalness, and culture) are considered as pragmatic knowledge.

This research is only intended to analyze the organizational knowledge that is manifest in students' writing. That is, it will examine the following aspects of writing produced by the two groups of L2 writers: a) Grammar b) Vocabulary c) Organization.

## ***2.3 Previous research***

In recent years, much research has been done in China focusing mainly on Chinese students' writing problems (Du, 2001; Huang, 1996; Jiang, 1995; Li, 2006; Ye, 2002) or the comparison between Chinese English learners and English native speakers (Ma, 2002; Li, Z. & Li, J, 2005; Si, 2008; Xiong & Yin, 2009). Likewise, in Korea, many researchers (Choi, 1988; Eun, 2009; Kang, 2005; Park, 2007) have investigated and analyzed the writings of only Korean students, or compared and contrasted differences between Korean learners and English native learners.

However, comparative studies between Chinese English learners and Korean English learners have seldom been conducted. The only paper I could find is written by Wang, Koda and Perfetti (2003). They compared the alphabetic and nonalphabetic L1 effects in English word identification of Korean and Chinese English learners, not their English writing proficiency. This empirical study is perhaps the first that compared the English writing proficiency of students from two different L1 groups, which in the literature tend to be collectively referred to Asian students. Despite the fact that the two countries where the participants came from shared a number of similarities and both are Confucian societies, and hence their cultural traditions are considered quite similar in many ways (Huang, 1995; Li, 2011), their performance in L2 writing may display qualitative differences.

### **3. Research Design**

#### ***3.1 Research Question***

This study compares the fluency, grammatical and lexical complexity of written English produced by Chinese and Korean university students. Knowing similarities and differences and the reasons behind it will be helpful for teaching and learning English writing in the EFL contexts like China and Korea.

#### ***3.2 Participants***

A total of 168 Chinese and Korean university students, 39 males and 129 females aged between seventeen years to twenty-nine years participated in the study. The majority of them were between eighteen and twenty-three years old. The class breakdown of the students was 58 freshmen, 77 sophomores, 26 juniors, and 7 seniors. Table 1 shows subjects' basic information.

**Table 1: Basic information about subjects**

	Chinese	Korean
·Gender	M: 23 F:61	M:16 F:68
·Age	19~21	18~21
·Major	Varied	Varied

·Grade	Freshman(1); Sophomore(67); Junior (16)	Freshmen(57); Sophomore (10); Junior (10 ); Senior (7)
·University location	Yantai; Huangshi; Nanchang	Seoul; Ansan;
·Years of learning English	8~10	8~10
·Overseas experience of learning English	None	10 subjects with short period instruction

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### ***3.3 Research instrument***

The two groups of participants were asked to complete a writing task in which they needed to produce an essay. The design of the writing task modeled on that developed for the writing paper of TOEFL. The participants were asked to write a 300-word essay as a response to the prompt “*Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship,*” a topic which was adopted from the TOEFL iBT’s independent writing topics for Asian test takers. The essay is argumentative in nature. By that it means the participants were asked to express their own opinion and either agree or disagree with the statement. The genre was chosen because it requires sophisticated grammar and textual knowledge. For an argument to be effectively communicated, it needs to follow both linguistic and the logical rules (Zappel, 1986). In high-stake English tests such as TOEFL, IELTS, CET and TEPS , the argumentative essay is necessary in order to test writing proficiency. Moreover, the topic used for this study-whether always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship-is a common question one might consider as a part of daily life.

#### **3.3.1 Administration of the writing task**

Prior to the task, the two groups of participants were asked to provide their background information, such as their gender, age, major, university location etc. The sixty Chinese subjects from cities Yantai and Huangshi (as shown in Table 1) finished their writing and questionnaires (for the subjects’ basic information) in an English writing class under the direction of their English teachers, while the other 24 subjects recorded their writings and answered the questionnaires on computers. The forty-seven Korean subjects in Seoul wrote their essays and

answered the questionnaires on computers as assignments; while the remaining 37 Korean subjects finished essays in English class. The participants were given thirty minutes to write the essay. They were informed that they needed to pay attention to the quality of the writing, including the organization and development of ideas, and the quality and accuracy of the language used to express the ideas.

### **3.3.2 Scoring of the essays**

The essays were rated using two methods. One involved holistic scoring. The other involved a close text analysis. Four native speakers of English were invited to score the essays. Two were of them were American PhD candidates majoring in English education, one was a Canadian working towards a Master's degree in English education and one was an American who is a professional editor in an English journal. All four raters received training in the use of the scoring rubric. They were shown how to score the essays using sample essays scored from 1 to 5 adopted from “The Official Guide to the New TOEFL iBT”. Raters did not progress to the essays until they felt comfortable with the scoring scale. Each of the essays collected in the study was first scored independently by the four raters and then inter-rater reliability was calculated via SPSS; the final score is the mean score of the two raters with the highest inter-rater reliability. Those scores with a discrepancy between two raters greater than two points were excluded.

The scoring was followed by a close analysis of the essays, which was performed by two researchers. One is the author of the present study; the other is a MA candidate majoring in English grammar. The analysis examined specifically the fluency and the linguistic complexity of the essays.

### **3.3.3 Fluency analysis of the essays**

According to Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaski, and Kim (1998), fluency can be measured by T-unit length (number of words per T-unit), clause length (number of words per clause), and error-free T-unit length (number of words per error-free T-unit). The present study employs the first two measures, T-unit length and clause length, while error-free T-unit length is excluded. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) claimed that language errors could be classified based on linguistic category (morphology and syntax) and surface strategy taxonomy (the skeleton of English clauses, the

auxiliary system, passive sentences, temporal conjunctions, sentential complements and psychological predicates). Thus the researcher believes that errors are more closely related to the accuracy rather than fluency, thus, errors might be classified and analyzed in detail in a future study.

According to Polio (1997), a T-unit is defined as “an independent clause with all the dependent clauses”. This study adopts Polio’s definition of T-unit and the guidelines for coding T-unit and clause are taken from Polio as well. All the coding was first finished by these two researchers as coders and then discussed by them. SPSS 16.0, quantitative data analysis software, was employed for the T-unit length and clause length calculation and comparison.

### **3.3.4 Complexity analysis of the essays**

Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaski, and Kim's grammatical complexity measures are taken here; that is, T-unit complexity ratio (clauses per T-unit) and dependent clause ratio (dependent clauses per clause). Polio (1997)’s definition of T-unit and clause is again adopted here. SPSS 16.0 is also used here for the grammatical complexity calculation and comparison. Wordsmith 5.0 was employed to calculate the lexical frequency. In order to measure the lexical complexity, Laufer's (1991) formula to describe the lexical richness was taken for the current study. That is lexical density (number of lexical words out of total lexemes). Variables are measured through an online vocabulary profiler called VocabProfile and Wordsmith 5.0 as well.

## **4. Results and discussion**

### ***4.1 General writing proficiency***

Inter-rater reliability check was firstly conducted on the scores of 104 collected English essays written by Chinese university students and 95 collected English essays written by Korean university students. Table 2 shows the inter-rater reliability scores of the essays written by the Chinese university students (henceforth EC). Table 3 shows of the scores on the essays written by Korean university students (henceforth EK)



**Table 2: Inter-rater reliability of EC**

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4
Rater 1	1	.470**	.483**	.709**
Rater 2	.470**	1	.615**	.556**
Rater 3	.483**	.615**	1	.604**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	104	104	104	104

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in the table, the inter-rater reliability of the four raters is not very satisfying as to their reliability. Only the correlation between rater 1 and rater 4, is higher than 0.7, indicating reliable ratings. Therefore, the final score of all the EC is the mean score of the given scores by rater 1 and rater 4.

**Table 3: Inter-rater reliability of EK**

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4
Rater 1	1	.651**	.637**	.724**
Rater 2	.651**	1	.614**	.633**
Rater 3	.637**	.614**		.632**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
N	95	95	95	95

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As we can see from the Table, correlations between four raters of EK are better than those of EC. Among them, correlation between rater 1 and rater 4 is the highest, 0.724, which is higher than 0.7, indicating their ratings are reliable. Therefore, the final score of all the EK is the mean score

of the given scores by rater 1 and rater 4. The final scores of 104 EC and 95 EK were calculated and shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Scores of EC and EK**

Scores	EC		EK		Numbers of essays chosen for comparison	Grouping
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
0.5	<u>1</u>	1.0	<b>5</b>	5.2	<b>1</b>	1 (low)
1	<b><u>33</u></b>	31.7	<b>35</b>	36.5	<b>33</b>	
1.5	<b>21</b>	20.2	<b><u>18</u></b>	18.8	<b>18</b>	2 (middle)
2	<b>34</b>	32.7	<b><u>22</u></b>	22.9	<b>22</b>	
2.5	<b><u>7</u></b>	6.7	<b>8</b>	8.3	<b>7</b>	3 (high)
3	<b>8</b>	7.7	<b><u>3</u></b>	3.1	<b>3</b>	
3.5			1	1.0	<b>Total: 84</b>	
4			3	3.1		

Since this study tries to compare the English writing features of Chinese and Korean students, all the essays should have the same or similar holistic ability as a prerequisite. Table 4 shows the frequency of scores, therefore, the minimum numbers of frequency, those underlined in the table, are chosen in each score for essay comparisons. In total, 84 essays were chosen for the current study; these 84 essays were further classified into three groups based on their scores: Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 (low, middle, and high groups). A comparison of the scores was then performed.

## 4.2 Fluency comparison

Based on Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaski and Kim (1998)'s explanation, T-unit length (number of words per T-unit) and clause length (number of words per clause) are calculated in this study in order to measure the fluency of each essay. Based on the definition of clause length and T-unit length, it is certain that the longer the length is, the more fluent the essay is. Therefore, in the fixed thirty minutes, a longer essay indicates greater fluency.

In the pilot test, these two coders coded the number of clauses and the number of T-units respectively and the final number was decided through discussion. Cronbach's Alpha shows that the inter-coder reliability between two raters is 0.99 of the number of T-unit, and 0.98 of the number of clause. Therefore, the researcher of the present study coded all the number of clauses and T-units alone first and discussed with the other coder when there was any controversy.

### 4.2.1 T-unit length

T-unit length is defined as the number of words per T-unit. Table 5 is a description of means and standard deviation of T-unit length in each group. Hypothetically, advanced English writers should have longer T-unit length than lower level English writers.

**Table 5: T-unit length description in three groups**

Group	Number			Mean			Standard Deviation		
	EC	EK	Total	EC	EK	Average	EC	EK	Average
1	34	34	68	11.61	10.27	10.94	1.95	2.45	2.30
2	40	40	80	12.54	11.63	12.09	2.36	2.63	2.52
3	10	10	20	13.63	13.96	13.80	2.07	3.09	2.57
Total	84	84	168	12.30	11.36	11.83	2.24	2.83	2.59

Table 5 indicates that with subjects' improvement of writing ability, their number of words of each T-unit is also increasing. This indication applies to both Chinese (11.61<12.54<13.63) and Korean (10.27<11.63<13.96) subjects.

#### 4.2.2 Clause length

Clause length is defined as the number of words per clause. Table 6 is a description of means and standard deviation of clause length in each group. Hypothetically, advanced English writers should have longer clause length than lower level English writers.

**Table 6: Clause length description in three groups**

Group	Number			Mean			Standard Deviation		
	EC	EK	Total	EC	EK	Average	EC	EK	Average
1	34	34	68	7.82	6.90	7.36	1.07	0.98	1.12
2	40	40	80	8.12	7.32	7.72	1.09	0.96	1.10
3	10	10	20	8.77	8.47	8.62	1.24	1.25	1.22
Total	84	84	168	8.07	7.29	7.68	1.13	1.10	1.18

The finding in clause length is consistent with what has been found in the T-unit length. With their improvement in English writing, both Chinese (7.82<8.12<8.77) and Korean learners (6.90<7.32<8.77) produce more words in each clause. It indicates that the more advanced their writing ability is, the longer sentences learners can write.

#### 4.2.3 Essay length comparison

Essay length is also a variable to test whether the essay is fluently written or not. Usually in the fixed time, the longer the essay is, the more fluent it is. Our statistics showed that the average EC length is 189 words while the average EK length is 183 words, which means there is no big difference between EC and EK. However, both of them did not reach the 300 words requirement.

Combining the result in T-unit length, clause length and essay length test, it is concluded that, in terms of fluency, Chinese English learners and Korean English learners do not have any obvious differences. This result indicates that both Chinese and Korean university students need to practice writing long sentence to enhance the fluency. It means that students need to learn how to

promote their essay nuance by using adjectives, adverbs or decorating phrases etc. The reasons why both Chinese and Korean university students could not do well probably is related with the Chinese and Korean language structure, the L1 negative transfer. As Ma (1999) pointed out, Chinese is a language focusing more on semantics whereas English focuses more on syntax. Therefore, English is grammatically complex with more conjunctions to form long sentences, while Chinese is more coherent implicitly with fewer long sentences. That is probably why Chinese English learners have difficulty to write long sentences. Here is an example from EC.

*Maybe someone say something bad on your friends, he/she will hate the guy. (EC22)*

This ambiguous sentence has more than a conjunction problem. But one thing this sentence needs, at least, is a coordinating conjunction such as ‘and’, to show a non-contrasting idea. The sentence may sound better if it reads ‘Maybe someone said something bad about your friends and this person actually hates your friends...’ Or we can put it into two separate sentences: ‘Maybe someone said something bad about your friends. In other words, he/she hates your friends’.

The structure of Korean language is SOV, with the verb at the end of the sentence, which confines the number of adjectives or adverbs since this is no qualifier or modifier after the verb. Or in other case, errors could happen if the learners tries to use the qualifier but ends up in the wrong sentence position. Here is an example:

*Because too blunt speaking or too frank speaking [speaking too bluntly or too frankly] can hurt listener. (EK 59)*

“Speak” as a verb in Korean, is always followed by a qualifiers in front of it. Therefore, errors happened when the sentence was written out in English.

The above mentioned is part of the reasons for the weakness of EC and EK in T-unit and Clause length. Clarity is of course very important for writing; however, if the writer keeps on using very simple sentences, the sentence effectiveness will be decreased. It reminds Chinese and Korean English learners to practice thinking and writing in English logic to minimize the negative influence of their L1.

### 4.3 Grammatical complexity comparison

Based on Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaski and Kim (1998)'s grammatical complexity explanation, T-unit complexity ratio (clauses per T-unit) and dependent clause ratio (dependent clauses per independent clause) were calculated and compared in this study. Here is an example:

*For instance, many couples end up in a fighting [independent clause], because they are not experts at hiding personal thoughts [dependent clause]. (EK 25).*

Regardless the error in this sentence, we could say that this sentence is a whole T-unit. There are two clauses in it, one independent clause, one dependent clause. Therefore, the T-unit complexity ratio of this T-unit is 2/1, while the dependent clause ratio is 1/1.

#### 4.3.1 T-unit complexity ratio

**Table 7: T-unit complexity ratio in three groups**

Group	Number			Mean			Standard Deviation		
	EC	EK	Total	EC	EK	Average	EC	EK	Average
1	34	34	68	1.49	1.49	1.49	0.18	0.33	0.26
2	40	40	80	1.55	1.58	1.56	0.26	0.28	0.27
3	10	10	20	1.56	1.65	1.60	0.18	0.30	0.25
Total	84	84	168	1.52	1.55	1.54	0.22	0.31	0.27

Table 7 describes the T-unit complexity ratio in each group: that is, the proportion of clauses in each T-unit. As shown in the Table, there is a slight improvement in both EC ( $1.49 < 1.55 < 1.56$ ) and EK ( $1.49 < 1.58 < 1.65$ ). However, the results do not show the difference between EC and EK.

### 4.3.2 Dependent clause ratio

**Table 8: Dependent clause ratio in three groups**

Group	Number			Mean			Standard Deviation		
	EC	EK	Total	EC	EK	Average	EC	EK	Average
1	34	34	68	0.31	0.30	0.31	0.08	0.12	0.10
2	40	40	80	0.33	0.35	0.34	0.10	0.11	0.10
3	10	10	20	0.35	0.37	0.36	0.07	0.10	0.09
Total	84	84	168	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.09	0.11	0.10

Table 8 describes the dependent clause ratio in each group, that is, the proportion of dependent clause in each clause. As shown in the Table, there is an improvement in both Chinese ( $0.31 < 0.33 < 0.35$ ) and Korean ( $0.30 < 0.35 < 0.37$ ) essays. However, the table does not show the difference between EC and EK. The mean dependent clause ratios of EC and EK are both 0.33, which may indicate that there is no obvious difference between EC and EK. In other words, in every ten independent clauses, there are about three dependent clauses in both EC and EK in general.

In sum, there is no significant difference between EC and EK in terms of grammatical complexity. The common T-unit complexity ratio is 1.5, while the common dependent clause ratio is about 0.33. There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, it might indicate that as foreign language learners, both Chinese and Korean university students can master the use of clauses quite well. The dependent clause ratio 0.33 could indicate that it is not uncommon for Chinese and Korean students to write compound and complex sentences. They demonstrate capability in the use of conjunctions such as *which*, *who*, *where* in a conscious way. Most Chinese and Korean English learners begin to learn English from Grade 3, primary school. After at least 6 years study during middle and high school, they demonstrate a grasp of the traditional grammar of English. What they need to do is to practice more and try to make their

English more accurate and delicate. In other words, they should try to make their writing more polished, for example, by writing longer sentence with more exact qualifiers and modifiers. In fact, that both Chinese and Korean English learners do well in terms of grammatical complexity is also partly because of their writing strategy. Since they started to learn writing in English, these learners have been told to use conjunctions to make their writing coherent.

#### ***4.4 Lexical complexity comparison***

##### **4.4.1 Word frequency**

Borrowing Kim's (2009) use of Wordsmith5.0, the frequency of words in EC and EK written English were calculated. Words the writers favored can reflect the writers' writing process and the social and cultural influence to some extent. Twenty of the most frequently used words in EC and EK are listed in Table 9.

**Table 9: Twenty most frequently used words in EC, EK and EE**

Rank	EC	Frequency	EK	Frequency
1	the	969	the	649
2	truth	469	is	506
3	to	444	to	446
4	in	406	truth	361
5	is	403	<b>I</b>	334
6	<b>you</b>	357	a	332
7	a	356	<b>you</b>	299
8	<b>we</b>	332	and	292
9	telling	297	in	284
10	and	289	that	280



11	tell	233	lie	266
12	that	214	telling	222
13	it	212	relationship	195
14	<b>I</b>	198	<b>we</b>	176
15	relationship	177	not	173
16	of	173	for	158
17	always	170	of	158
18	important	166	can	153
19	't	165	tell	152
20	can	158	people	149

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There are several differences existing in the twenty most frequent words used in EC and EK written English. First is the use of the first person plural form 'we'. While "we" appeared 332 times in the written English of Chinese learners, it appeared 176 times in the written English of Korean learners. Second, in terms of the second person form 'you', both Chinese and Korean English learners demonstrate relative equal frequency of usage. Third is the usage of first person singular 'I'. Korean English writers use 'I' more frequently than Chinese English writers. To be specific, "I" appeared 198 times in EC written English while it appeared 334 times in EK written English. In order to further know the difference, 'we' and 'I' are searched with the help of Wordsmith Concord. Concord shows Chinese learners prefer the sentence pattern 'we should...', 'we must...', 'we can...', 'we have to...' etc. more than the Korean learners. Meanwhile, Korean learners prefer to use the sentence pattern 'I think...', 'I agree...', 'I disagree...' etc. more frequently than Chinese learners. Arguably, Chinese English learners use more 'we' due to their use of language as a social and cultural practice by which, according to Weigle (2005), most Chinese people lean towards promoting the unity and harmony of the whole society. Meanwhile, Korean people may prefer the self-independence. That is why in their essays, they consciously or

subconsciously use more ‘I’ instead of ‘we’. The reason why both Chinese and Korean English learners prefer to use ‘you’ is partly because that both Chinese and Korean English learners, as foreign language learners, try to build an interaction with the potential readers, and try to make themselves understood. So they use more ‘you’ to shorten the distance and build a familiarity. This is what Weigle (2005) pointed out that writing is a cognitive activity.

#### ***4.4.2 Lexical density***

Lexical density is the ratio of content words to grammatical words in any given text (spoken or written). Usually, in an argumentative essay, the higher the lexical density is, the more formal and academic the essay is, since more content words are used. This study employed an online vocabulary profiler called VocabProfile to calculate lexical density. The result shows that lexical density of EC is 0.46 while that of EK is 0.49. Korean English learners do better than Chinese English learners in terms of lexical density. This slight difference might indicate that Chinese university students should pay more attention to vocabulary learning.

Besides, VocabProfile also calculated the proportion of K1 words (1-1000), K2 words (1001-2000), academic words and off-list words, as table 10 shows. Differences lie in K1 words, K2 words, academic words and off-list words. On average, Chinese English writers use more K1 words than Korean English writers, but Korean English writers use more K2 words, academic words and off-list words. The result indicates that for Chinese and Korean English learners, especially Chinese English learners, in order to improve their writing, they need to enlarge their vocabulary. Gottlieb (2006) pointed out: “At the beginning levels of language proficiency, English language learners typically rely on high-frequency, common words, such as *animal*. As more language is acquired, general language emerges, such as *bear*. At the higher levels of language proficiency, students often use more technical, descriptive terms, such as *grizzly*”(p27). As mentioned, Korean students did slightly better than Chinese students. A possible reason is that more Korean university students are motivated to study abroad than Chinese counterparts. Based on the researchers’ observation, therefore, Chinese learners need to remember large numbers of words in TOEFL, IELTS or GRE. In China, the number of these students is growing in recent years too. Motivation, as a cognitive factor, plays a great role in students’ words pool.

All in all, both Chinese and Korean English learners need to enlarge their vocabulary, learn more academic and complex words, and learn how to skillfully use these words in their writing.

**Table 10: Comparison of K1 words, K2 words, Academic words and off-list words**

	EC (n=84)	EK (n=84)
	Mean	Mean
Comparison of K1 words	92.31	91.52
Comparison of K 2 words	0.46	0.49
Comparison of academic words	1.55	1.80
Comparison of off-list words	2.49	2.65

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to compare the writing competence of Chinese and Korean university English learners in order to guide planning the teaching and learning of writing in the EFL learning contexts, namely, like China and Korea. The findings epitomize that writing could be influenced by the social and cultural factors and cognitive activities as well, which echoes with Weigle (2005)'s explanation of writing ability.

Through comparison in different linguistic aspects, writing fluency, grammatical and lexical complexity, some salient differences and similarities have been observed. First, in general, the Chinese and the Korean English participants did not perform well in writing fluency. The obvious evidence is the essay length. Essays were not long enough to reach the requirement. One possible explanation, as mentioned above, is the influence of L1. Von Stutterheim and Klein (1987, p. 196, as cited in Han, 2008, p. 63) stated that “the way in which the learner organizes his utterances is heavily influenced by the conceptual structure present and by the way in which this conceptual structure is encoded in the [native] language.” Chinese language focuses more on the semantics rather than syntax, while the Korean sentence SOV structure also has some negative influence on their English writing. The negative influence of both Chinese and Korean students' L1 disrupts the fluency of their English writing. Second, the comparative lexical

density of Korean learners' written English, especially content words, is higher than that of Chinese learners. This difference may again be reflecting differences in English teaching curriculum in these two countries; there may be more emphasis on English vocabulary teaching in Korea than in China. Another possible reason is that still more Korean university students are motivated to study in English speaking nations than Chinese counterparts, based on the researchers' observation, although interest is notably growing in China too in recent years. Motivation, as a cognitive activity, is proved to be important in L2 writing. In addition, in terms of words frequency, the study shows that Chinese English learners use more 'we' while Korean English learners use more 'I'. It is because of the social and cultural backgrounds, as Weigle (2005) claims. To Chinese people unity and harmony of the whole society is sociocultural norm while Korean people favor self-independence. One similarity is that both Chinese and Korean English learners prefer to use 'you'. It may be because of what Weigle (2005) points that writing is a cognitive activity. To be specific, writing is influenced by the social environment, such as consideration of potential readers. Therefore, Chinese and Korean English learners try to make a dialogue with the potential readers. More 'you' can be used to shorten the distance and build rapport. Another similarity mainly lies in the grammatical complexity. No significant difference was found between EC and EK in their written English grammatical complexity. This could possibly be explained, as mentioned, by their writing strategy and their extended periods of English grammar learning.

There are a few implications of these findings.

1) Chinese learners of English need to pay more attention to vocabulary learning. Teachers of English in China also need to spend more time in teaching students how to enlarge their vocabulary and use a variety of words skillfully. 2) For both Chinese and Korean English learners, when needed, such as for the argumentative writing, more practice is needed in writing or paraphrasing long sentences, such as sentences with more qualifiers, or sentences with more dependent clauses. 3) Most importantly, since writing is a social and cultural phenomenon, students need to learn to capture the English idiom by acquainting themselves with the English social and cultural background. This is very important. Besides, since the influence of L1 is inevitable, students in China and Korea need to learn how to minimize the negative influence of L1, whereas maximizing its positive influence. Since writing is a cognitive activity, students

need to activate their psychological factors, such as motivation, writing strategy, to improve their writing. English teachers should help students during their writing process, such as in cultivating writing strategies, correction feedbacks etc.

There are several limitations of this study. First, the number of subjects was rather low. Second, there was only one writing topic in the given experimental test. Two or three optional topics would be better for the test validity. Since this study is only part of a larger one, therefore, qualitative measure of writing effectiveness such as paragraph organization and rhetorical style was not displayed in the current study. Lastly, reasons for similarities and differences between EC and EK learners can be explored further in future studies.

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## **Japanese L2 English Word Recognition Processes:**

### **Decoding Sound vs. Shape**

**Clay Williams**

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#### **Abstract**

Prior studies of Japanese learners of English have indicated that they become susceptible to phonological priming effects in word identification tasks only at high levels of proficiency, but even at high reading proficiency levels they received no facilitation from semantic primes. Studies have also indicated that phonological processing of English words is favored by lower proficiency students while more proficient readers become more reliant on orthographic processing. The lack of semantic facilitation raises the possibility that, even at relatively high levels of proficiency, Japanese students may exhibit trouble with orthographic processing of visual word stimuli.

The following masked-priming lexical decision experiment was designed to measure advanced Japanese L2 English learners' susceptibility to orthographic and phonological priming effects. The results show clear facilitation effects for both types of priming. Additionally, while there was no significant difference between the amount of priming facilitation between orthographic and phonological primes, the error rate for identification of targets preceded by phonological primes was significantly higher than that of targets preceded by orthographic primes, indicating lexical processing to be more accurate. By comparing the results with prior studies of Chinese students of English, pedagogical implications for EAP and English-medium education across East Asia are explained.

**Keywords:** Word-level processing, Priming, Orthographic, Phonological, EFL, Japan

## **Introduction**

The growing trend of English-medium instruction in East Asia has opened up new possibilities in research on reading and lexical access strategies. Whereas L2 English instruction beyond intermediate levels used to be almost exclusively the domain of ESL programs in English-L1 countries, English-medium institutions allow for the easy identification and recruitment of large numbers of subjects from the same L1 and educational background, and with similar ability levels. English-medium courses also give students a much broader exposure to non-language-specific academic subject content in the L2, which was previously rare in East Asia; however, at the same time, this raises the profile and the importance of being able to accurately identify the word processing strategies and larger reading strategies that students are using to identify and to comprehend subject-specific content, in order to better equip EAP/ESP language teachers to produce theoretically and practically sound pedagogies to assist their students to be able to efficiently process new information in the L2

## **Orthographic Processing**

According to Coltheart (1978), all written language is processed in a similar fashion, involving the use of both lexical and non-lexical processes. This was formalized in the *Dual Route Model* (Patterson & Morton, 1985), which imagines two parallel search processes, one lexical and the other non-lexical in nature, which perform simultaneous searches of the mental lexicon

whenever presented with visual linguistic input, and draws heavily upon Forster's (1976) *Search Model* which likewise envisioned word processing and identification to be a parallel search via orthography and phonology. In this "mental race" the lexical pathway uses information derived directly from the word's orthography and searches for a known "match," whereas the non-lexical route is mediated by phonology, and thus searches for a sound-based match. Whichever pathway first finds a matching entry in the lexicon immediately ends both searches, and the lexical entry (together with all the information therein) is retrieved. Both paths are active for most readers, and the relative efficiency for each path can depend on personal, environmental, and linguistic factors. Today, there is still considerable debate concerning how the information is encoded pre-lexically (e.g., Grainger & Ziegler, 2011), but the basic premise that there is a direct route from orthography to semantics and an indirect route processed via phonology is largely uncontested. There is a robust literature on experimental evidence for phonological and orthographic processing in reading. There is also considerable evidence for both routes coming from studies of dyslexics. Dyslexia is commonly classified according to three major subtypes: surface dyslexia, phonological dyslexia, and deep dyslexia (e.g., Coltheart, 1978; Marshall & Newcombe, 1973), and the variations between these specific types of reading impairment are highly suggestive of specific impairments to one route or the other. Surface dyslexics exhibit difficulty in reading irregular words, but have no discernable difficulty in reading regular words and nonwords (i.e., they will pronounce "pint" as rhyming with "mint"), thereby exhibiting impairment to their lexical route (and thus, an inability to identify "exceptions" to normal phonological rules). By contrast, phonological dyslexics will have no trouble reading regular and irregular words, but have considerable trouble reading nonwords, indicating impairment to the non-lexical route, and therefore their ability to decipher sound without first accessing the word in the lexicon (Shu, Meng, Chen, Luan, & Cao, 2005).

### **Lexical and Non-lexical Pathways**

The lexical pathway, which links orthography directly to the lexeme and can carry semantic information directly, is assumed in most alphabetically-transcribed languages to involve the active recognition of word "shapes" (Coltheart, Rastle, Langdon, & Ziegler, 2001). Fluent readers are highly efficient at recognition of letter patterns, to the point where readers' eyes simply "jump" over high frequency words such as "the" or common prepositions. While our

knowledge of grammar and our ability to accurately predict upcoming words in sentences can assist this, researchers have long been aware of the ability of readers to recognize high-frequency words in the visual periphery by shape alone. This can be easily demonstrated by the fact that reading speeds and accuracy can be so easily impacted by such visual manipulations such as alternating case (e.g., iF yOu FiNd ThIs KiNd Of TeXt A bIt DiFfIcUlT tO rEaD, yOu'Re NoT aLoNe – Akamatsu, 2005).

By contrast, the non-lexical route mediates the reading task via phonology. Programs such as *Phonics* explicitly teach these phonological decoding skills. It is the explicit decoding and use of grapheme to phoneme correspondences. Of course, different language scripts vary wildly in degree to which graphemes can accurately predict pronunciation. The orthographic depth hypothesis (Frost, Katz, & Bentin, 1987) seeks to measure this correspondence directly, placing on one end of the spectrum, languages such as Italian which have a fairly strong and predictable correspondence of individual letters to pronunciation – the so-called “shallow” orthographies; and on the other hand, orthographies such as the Chinese character system (in use throughout the Chinese-speaking world, as well as in Japan and Korea) where such a direct connection between sound and symbol is weak (and in cases of pictographs or ideographs, completely missing) – considered as “deep” orthographies. English is considered to be on the deep end, as the convoluted rules and myriad exceptions to spelling conventions are widely acknowledged. Still, across languages the mental lexicon seems to be arranged according to at least three forms of ‘word knowledge:’ meaning, phonology, and visual form (Coltheart, 2006), of which the second two act as the primary means of visual word identification. As such, the development of these skills is widely seen as essential to developing word recognition and literacy skills (e.g., Stanovich, 2000; Perfetti & Hart, 2001; Coltheart, 2006).

### **Evidence for Phonological and Orthographic Processing**

As the Dual Route Model has been around for nearly four decades, there is a considerable body of evidence going back a long time concerning the use of the lexical and nonlexical paths by fluent readers, as well as what sorts of information are carried along the paths. Phonological processing ability is widely seen as being strongly correlated with general reading ability, especially with developing readers (e.g., Stanovich & Siegel, 1994; Share and Stanovich, 1995;

Strauss 2005) and as being an essential component of the word decoding (and hence reading) process (e.g., Castles & Coltheart, 2004; Halderman, Asby, & Perfetti., 2012). This recognition of the role of phonology in word-level processing extends to L2, as well, and like in L1, its effect seems most profound at beginning levels of literacy acquisition (e.g., Schiff & Calif, 2007; Verhoeven & van Leeuwe, 2008; Russak & Saiegh-Haddad, 2011). In a pre/post-test design of Japanese EFL learners (Williams, 2012), I demonstrate that susceptibility to phonological priming increases along with general language proficiency.

As for studies concerning orthographic processing, Segui and Grainger (1990) found orthographic neighbor interference effects in primes presented briefly, and those effects extended even to primes of 350ms for low-frequency target words. Grainger and Ferrand (1996) reported strong effects for both orthographic and phonological priming in lexical decision and perceptual identification tasks. Homophonous primes have shown strong facilitation effects (e.g., Humphreys, Evett, & Taylor, 1982). Muter and Diethelm (2001) assert that degree of knowledge concerning the letters/characters that make up the language orthography is largely predictive of reading performance, both in readers' L1 and in L2. Koda (2005) maintains that L2 readers' word-recognition skills can be negatively impacted (in comparison with L1 readers) by their limited knowledge of L2 orthography. In a test of L2 Japanese learners, Chikamatsu (2006) found that high proficiency learners were more reliant on orthographic processing, whereas phonological decoding was used more by lower proficiency subjects.

### **The Current Study**

Seeking a more nuanced understanding of the word processing and literacy strategies of individual L2 learner groups is a natural outgrowth of the search for better modern L2 pedagogies. The explosive growth of L2 English-medium tertiary education in East Asia both affords the opportunity for easier management of controlled study on student reading patterns and makes such study vitally important as the numbers of students needing to attain academic reading proficiency in L2 English for use in academic contexts outside of traditional English-speaking nations continues to grow. My study referenced above (Williams, 2012) demonstrated that, by the end of the period of intensive study, students began to show facilitation effects for phonological primes, but not for semantic primes. I suggested that this calls into question the

students' relative ability to make productive use of the lexical route. Paired with Chikamatsu's (2006) findings that phonological decoding was more prevalent among less developed L2 learners, this introduces a troubling possibility that effective control of the lexical route, and ergo the direct linkage of orthography to semantics lay beyond the grasp of subjects who were already enrolled in an English-medium institution. This seems unlikely as, if they were reduced to a one-path, phonology-only strategy for reading, one would expect them to evince considerably more reading problems than their successful entry into an English-medium institution would suggest. It's important to note that my above-cited study did not measure orthographic facilitation directly, but used semantic priming as a stand-in. The following study was devised to determine whether or not advanced Japanese learners of English enrolled at an English-medium institution in Japan would be susceptible to orthographic priming effects, as well as phonological. Also, per Chikamatsu, the degree of facilitation is of interest. If students are dominantly processing via a phonological processing scheme, this could indicate that advanced word identification skills take considerably more time to develop than previously thought; however, if the students are dominantly processing via orthography, this would 1) correspond with the Chikamatsu characterization of the developmental order of word processing skills; 2) demonstrate how my previous (2012) results showing a lack of semantic facilitation do not indicate a weakness of lexical processing. The lack of semantic priming effects could then possibly be stemming from a lack of connections between L2 concepts stymieing spreading activation to semantically related concepts.

*Subjects:* Thirty sophomore students were recruited from an English-medium university in northern Japan. The students were balanced male/female. While all had been studying at the university for 1 year +, none had any significant study/living experience outside of Japan (i.e., not more than 3 weeks total time spent outside of the country). This was why the study relied on 2<sup>nd</sup>-year students, as the students are required to study abroad for one year prior to graduation, and this requirement is most commonly fulfilled in the junior year. All subjects had normal or corrected-to-normal vision.

*Materials:* A masked priming lexical decision test featuring 150 prime/target pairs was designed to run on a DMDX platform (Forster & Forster, 2003). Primes were visible for 51ms, and three test categories were established: orthographic primes, phonological primes, and positive control.

The three test categories were balanced with negative (pseudo-word) categories. As there is often massive orthographic and phonological overlap in English, care was taken to in the test-item creation to maximize distinction between phonological and orthographic prime/target pairs. Orthographic primes and targets could only vary by one letter, but the difference had to cause a change in vowel sound to maximize the phonological distinction between prime and target (ex. powder/PONDER). Phonological primes/target combinations, by contrast were designed to maximize orthographic distinction while maintaining similarities in sound. All phonological prime/target pairs had to rhyme, but could only share one letter in their rhyme and coda, respectively (ex. hate / EIGHT). The positive control category simply combined a randomly generated prime and target, insuring that there was no phonological or orthographic overlap (ex. restore / LABEL).

*Procedures:* Subjects were tested individually in a quiet testing area. They were instructed to respond to individually presented letter strings, determining whether or not they represented an existent word in English, by pushing one of two buttons, labeled “yes” and “no,” respectively. Each letter string was preceded by a prime of 51ms duration. Item presentation was randomized, and reaction times were recorded automatically by the DMDX software for analysis. Each test took approximately 10 minutes to administer.

*Analysis:* Reaction times of all participants were compiled and analyzed according to the three prime types. Of primary interest was whether students would show facilitation effects for orthographic priming and/or phonological priming. The two prime types were also compared directly to ascertain whether or not students were exhibiting any dominant processing strategy.

## **Results**

The results of the study are summarized in Table 1. As we can see, both orthographic and phonological primes produced significant facilitation in comparison with the positive control category. Comparing reaction times, targets preceded by orthographically-related primes were answered significantly faster than those with unrelated primes:  $F1=28.10$ ,  $P<0.001$ ,  $F2=6.16$ ,  $P<0.02$ . Targets preceded by phonologically-related primes, likewise were recognized more quickly than those preceded by unrelated primes:  $F1=15.53$ ,  $P<0.001$ ,  $F2=4.98$ ,  $P<0.03$ .



**Table 1: Reaction Times for Real Word Recognition Across Prime Types**

Priming Type	Average Reaction time (measured in milliseconds)
Orthographic Primes	638ms*
Phonological Primes	642ms*
Positive Control	679ms

Turning to the issue of dominant processing strategies, direct comparison of reaction times to targets preceded by orthographic and phonological primes yielded no statistically significant difference (unsurprising, given the mere 4 ms spread between the two); however, subject error rate was significantly higher for items preceded by phonological primes compared with the orthographic primes:  $F_{sub\ error}=4.97$ ,  $P<0.035$ , suggesting that, while orthographic processing may not be *faster* than phonological processing, it may well be a more *accurate* strategy for word processing for these students. Post hoc analysis revealed a couple of interesting notes. First, there were also strong orthographic prime facilitation effects for the rejection of non-words:  $F1=6.59$ ,  $P<0.02$ . Also, decreasing the error threshold for subject inclusion yielded a consistent, corresponding increase in the average time difference between the orthographic prime and the phonological prime categories (i.e., the better subjects performed, the more difference there was between their orthographic priming and phonological priming performance). Due to the limited subject field, at no point did the difference in time performance reach a point of statistical significance; however, it was an interesting trend, and would merit further study with larger sample groups.

## **General Discussion**

These results seem to indicate that the students in question have a solid command of both lexical and non-lexical pathways, and even evince some level of dominance via orthographic processing. This would suggest that the lack of semantic facilitation effects in my 2012 study on

Japanese learners stemmed from a problem other than deficiencies in their lexical route development. While the current study made no attempts to measure whether or not students were susceptible to semantic priming effects, the relatively robust nature of orthographic priming on display makes it abundantly clear that the learners' lexical pathways are operating just fine, albeit the students may still lack the ability to connect semantically related concepts directly within the L2. This interpretation makes much more sense given the advanced language proficiency of the learners.

### **Regional Implications**

While both lexical and non-lexical paths seem productively engaged in word identification, the higher subject accuracy for targets preceded by orthographic primes suggests a slight qualitative difference in the efficiency of the two routes. It could well be that L1 reading processes are exerting an influence on L2 word identification strategies, causing lexical route development to either precede non-lexical route development, or to develop slightly faster. Furthermore, the nature of the L1 effects being displayed seem to indicate that this pattern of reading development is potentially not confined to the Japanese nation and language, but rather, being driven by an orthographic feature of the Japanese language which is shared by both Chinese and (to a lesser degree) Korean-speaking populations, the results of this study could well have regional implications. Chinese character decoding is theorized to be performed via accessing three levels of representation – orthographic, semantic, and phonological – each of which is linked via two bi-directional pathways: the semantic pathway and the non-semantic pathway (Weekes, Chen, & Yin, 1997). When analyzing most characters, the reader will simultaneously use orthographic template matching to identify the semantic and phonological radicals from which semantic and phonological information is extracted to be used as the basis for the lexical search. Additionally, a whole character orthographic pattern search is conducted concurrently (otherwise it would be logically impossible to identify pictographs, ideographs, and any character which lacks identifiable semantic and phonological radicals), as are lexical searches (i.e., orthography based) of combinations using the relevant radicals. All of this is to say that orthographic template matching is highly engaged in the course of Chinese character processing. While semantic and phonological radical usage seem to be the dominant forms of Chinese character analysis by fluent readers (Williams & Bever, 2010 indicate that semantic processing is the default means of

character identification amongst L1 Chinese readers from PRC), the role of whole character matching seems to act as more of a fallback strategy when the primary strategy of using information extracted from the radicals or the orthographic form of the radicals themselves to locate whole characters in the mental lexicon fails to function. The significance of this “last resort” aspect of the processing strategy comes into focus when we return our focus to the case of EFL learners. Due to the structural differences in the languages’ respective orthographies, obviously strategies of mining radicals for specific semantic and orthographic cues will not work in English. My previous study with Chinese learners indicates that Chinese L1 learners of English can exhibit severe problems with English reading due to failure to understand the combinatory phonetics system inherent to English orthography, and thus they revert to the “backup system” dictated by their L1 – whole word orthographic pattern analysis. In my case study of low-proficiency Taiwanese EFL learners (Williams, 2010), the results suggest that these students may well have failed to make the connection between alphabetic characters and phonology, and thus were trying to learn English solely based upon orthography – i.e., memorizing the “shape” of each word, without any connection to other information: phonological, morphological, or semantic. If students are not explicitly instructed in the principles underlying an L2 orthography, it is somewhat intuitive that they would, at least initially, be inclined to make use of their L1 literacy strategies in attempts to read, no matter how poorly those strategies actually suit the L2 orthographic system.

The major difference between Japanese and Chinese script, however, is that Japanese has a mixed-script orthography. While it does make extensive use of the Chinese character system, it also makes use of two home-grown syllabaries (systems where graphemes directly represent syllables). As such, one could well assume Japanese students (and Korean students, whose language’s native orthography likewise encodes syllables directly, as well) would be much more prone than Chinese students to making the connection between graphemes and phonemes at early stages of the L2 acquisition process. While it is true that Japanese would be familiar with principles of graphemic representation of speech sounds, it is still not directly comparable to English orthography. First, as alphabets (typically) represent sound at the phonemic level, rather than the syllable level, additionally, and more critically, the relatively complex, combinatorial system of English graphemic-phonetic representation (wherein certain phonemes require letter combinations, e.g., *ch-* or *th-*, and some letters are ignored whereas other letters can produce

phonemic changes earlier in the word, e.g., the *–e* in *bathe*), it may be more difficult for Japanese students to recognize any semblance of a coherent system. Certainly English spelling is orthographically *deep* compared with the transparency offered by Japanese *kana*. The lack of clear, unambiguous pronunciation patterns (standing in such contrast to their L1 script) could predispose these students towards subconsciously treating the task of reading English more like that of reading *kanji* (i.e., Chinese characters). As the phonology of the *kunyomi* (native Japanese pronunciation) in *kanji* is not represented directly within the grapheme, this would not be an illogical comparison for a student who is having trouble grasping the system of English phonological representation to make. Orthographic template matching *would* become the default beginning strategy of any such reader.

While these advanced Japanese learners of English obviously didn't have any problem making the connection between graphemes and phonemes, the prior Williams (2012) study did suggest that it takes a *long* time and high proficiency for the phonological (i.e. non-lexical) route to become productive. It is thus probable that the lexical route becomes capable of identifying words effectively via orthographic matching very early on. It would be extremely interesting to conduct testing at earlier stages in language development so as to determine just when the specific routes becomes active (or, at least, susceptible to priming effects) amongst Japanese EFL learners. It would be productive to perform similar tests in regular, Japanese language-medium universities in Japan, and in so doing to establish a baseline for “average” learners’ relative susceptibility to phonological, orthographic, and semantic priming effects. It would also be useful to attempt replication of these studies amongst Chinese and Korean student populations to determine whether this is indeed a regional phenomenon. Given the long latency period before the emergence of phonological processing, it seems entirely plausible that EFL learners learn to use orthographic processing strategies *before* mastering the phonological (otherwise, how would they read). The direction of the effect is likely L1-dependent. Chikamatsu’s (2006) findings were with L2 Japanese learners from English 1 backgrounds, and their Japanese literacy progression (i.e., processing dominantly through phonology, and then orthographically as their reading skills develop) mirrors normal English literacy development. I, likewise, in a study on character reading processes by English L1 advanced learners of Chinese (Williams, 2013), found the L2 learners to exhibit strong inhibitory L1 interference effects on L2 Chinese character processing strategies. These students attempted to use phonology for character decoding in neutral reading

tasks, even though their semantic decoding skills were much more highly-developed (and despite the fact that, according to the results of tests on Chinese natives in Williams & Bever, 2010, this would have been the more typical native speaker reading strategy). Japanese, due to its 3 separate written scripts, poses more of a conundrum in describing “typical” literacy development; however, as early *kanji* literacy consists of orthographic template matching (until students learn to break down *kanji* into its constituent parts, and thereby access phonological and semantic cues), this pattern might certainly be applied to the L2 as well.

Examining the results of this study, it is encouraging to see students actively engaged in word identification processes, but it is more interesting to note that an order of acquisition in the L2 word identification processes of Japanese learners of English starts to emerge, which suggests some regionally-shared characteristics in early L2 English development, which in turn could be of help in producing more scientifically grounded L2 pedagogies for the vast East Asian EFL literacy-development market. Given the increasing prominence and importance of EAP training in the East Asian tertiary market as more and more programs (and entire universities) teach academic content through English-medium instruction, it is increasingly vital to have a clear, theoretically grounded view of the literacy acquisition process, to enable instructors to manage realistic expectations of student performance while productively helping them to advance in reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension. As the order of lexical and non-lexical route development become clearer, we are able to picture an ideal course of L2 literacy instruction informed by this natural development of L2-English learners. In the beginning, learners would study the L2 orthography, and engage in whole word recognition based upon shape and spelling (i.e., beginning to open up the lexical route). While use of Phonics-based instruction has been increasing throughout the region in the last decade or so, there is still a decided trend to simply teach the alphabet to beginning students and then to move on to words and sentences. Given the potential for L1 reading strategy interference, it needs to be enshrined as a curricular goal (and given the appropriate emphasis by reserving instructional time specifically for this purpose) to deliver explicit instruction in the orthographic principles underlying the English spelling system so as to minimize the amount of confusion and L1 interference. The teacher’s goal would be to assist learners through explicit instruction to recognize and to internalize the pattern rules of English linking spelling to phonology (thus assisting the construction of the non-lexical route). Finally, as learners advance, instructors would seek to strengthen L2 connections between

vocabulary (focused vocabulary study wherein vocabulary items are grouped by topic are an effective introductory method, but ultimately, this will likely only be effectively developed through extensive reading), thereby triggering susceptibility to semantic effects, and constructing a more L1-like lexical retrieval modal, and thereby to reach greater potential in their L2 literacy acquisition.

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**Where the Difference Lies: British and Iranian rhetorical choices in English  
business request letters**

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**Abstract**

This study employs the genre analysis method which explores rhetorical differences in business letter writing between British native English speakers and Iranian non-native English speakers. Rhetorical analyses are based on two corpora, authentic samples from Iranian non-native English speakers (N= 30) and British English native speakers (N = 30). Two norms, the concept of move (a meaningful element in linguistic form leading to the communicative goal of a text) and

linguistic features, are applied for rhetorical analysis, accompanied with analysis of data from interviews with 10 Iranian and British participants. The results showed that in the Iranian letters, a deference face system with more emphasis on rapport-building strategies is common. On the other hand, in the British business letters, a solidarity face system with the presence of face-threatening moves was found to be more frequent. The implications of the findings are also presented in this research.

**Keywords:** English for Specific Purposes, genre analysis, letters of request, rhetorical moves, structural moves

## **1. Introduction**

According to Poggi and Mango Caldognetto (1999), business communication can serve as a purposeful social activity to manifest an intent, and this can happen through words in business writing genres such as emails, faxes and letters. Considering the goal-oriented feature of all human communication, the self-assertive feature of manifesting intent verbally, and the manipulative character of business dealings in general (Vergaro, 2004, p. 181), we may infer that the common pragmatic purpose of a business letter is to persuade the addressee, i.e. getting the addressee to comply in some way. Reaching this persuasion in different cultures through medium of business letters can lead to successful communication because by incorporating addressees' cultural values in rhetorical choices, businessmen can create more interconnectedness with other people in the globalized world.

In the context of globalization, where English is used as a lingua franca for business purposes, understanding a basic knowledge of genre and its competence are very important in business communication in which transactional dimensions also play a crucial role in such successful communication. Business negotiators in the global business community need to go beyond the traditional presumed norms attributed to national cultures and write letters in lingua franca English that will be evaluated by readers based on a set of standards. The expansion of EIL (English as an International Language) along with technical growths has led to interconnectedness among business cultures and because of blurry national and cultural borders,

letter writers need to mediate national cultures with corporate cultures in their rhetorical choices to achieve persuasion in communication. Incorporating the socio-cognitive tradition of genre and cross-cultural consideration can help communicators to be more successful in intercultural communications (Connor, 2011, Zhu, 2013). In other words, in the globalized world, business communicators need to mediate national cultural values with corporate cultural values to achieve success in communication. Indubitably, such mediation can affect rhetorical choices in commercial correspondence. This paper specifically compares English business request letters written by British English native speakers and Iranian non-native English speakers. Business request letters are one of the communication mediums of business communication.

Despite their importance and extensive use in daily business transaction, business request letters have received marginal attention from nonliterary discourse analysis. There have been various studies on letters (Bhatia, 1993; Flowerdew & Wang, 2006; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013; Upton & Cohen, 2009), but this kind of letter as tactic genres have special features:

1. The “communicative purpose” (Swales, 1990) - the purpose why the letters are written is significant. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) consider a business request letter as “a legitimate attempt by the writer to get the reader to perform an action required by the business circumstances through evoking the reader’s need for compliance on the grounds of corporate and personal motivations such as necessity, duty and goodwill” (p. 640).
2. A comparison of linguistic and rhetorical realization of business requests across different cultures represents itself as a researchable area. The circumstances in this business setting are much more specific, and the failure to understand these differences could have detrimental consequences. It can also cause the loss of a lucrative business deal.
3. The want to be accepted and the want to be unimpeded are really important in this setting. As an act threatening the addressee’s negative face, request in any situation is usually softened with politeness strategies, the choice of which is

determined by three variables: power, social distance, and the weight of imposition. Knowing how to use the suitable strategy to be involved in the world business is very important to have more effective results in commercial correspondence.

The analytical approach selected for this study is that of genre in the tradition of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). The study sets up categories (moves) that reflect the communicative purposes in texts and then analyses the typical lexico-grammatical realizations of these moves. We will also present an ethnographic perspective by collecting information through some Iranian and British participant interviews.

## **2. Literature review**

### ***2.1 Contrastive Rhetoric and Genre Analysis***

Robert Kaplan (1966) was the first one who defined contrastive rhetoric as an area of research in second language acquisition that detects ongoing problems in composition met by second language writers. He tried to clarify the problems by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language. According to Connor (1997), the focus of contrastive analysis has recently expanded beyond essay writing to examine academic and professional writing for specific tasks. The importance of cultural elements recognized by “formulaic” language can never be ignored by businessmen (Canagarajah, 2002, Connor, 2011, Zhu, 2013). Connor (2011) defines intercultural rhetoric “as the study of the discourse between and among individuals from different cultural backgrounds” (p.1). Connor (2011, p. 2) also refers to “intercultural rhetoric” as an umbrella term that includes cross-cultural studies (comparisons of the same concept in culture one and culture two) as well as studies of interactions in which writers from a variety of linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds negotiate through speaking and writing. The most important premises of cultural rhetoric can be the place of texts in their full contexts, interaction of small and large cultures in complex ways, and accommodation and negotiation in intercultural communication.

Interest in genre analysis has been motivated by the tendency to extract the rhetorical-functional structure of discourse, especially of written discourse, in order to provide authors with consistent patterns of producing texts of different types, including business letters. Genre analysis is ‘a system of analysis that is able to reveal something of the patterns of organization of a genre and the language used to express those patterns in the light of communicative purposes’ (Dudley-Evans, 1997, p. 351). John Swales (1981) can be claimed to be the first who introduces the term genre analysis in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Following Swales, this tradition has been applied by many other scholars in studying academic and professional genres (Bhatia, 1993, 2004, 2008, 2012; Bremner, 2008; Flowerdew, 2004, 2012; Swales, 1990, 2004, 2012; Upton & Connor, 2001; Yeung, 2007; Zhu, 2000) to reveal the generic features and conventions of the texts which have been created by their expert users. Genre analysis, as an interactive offshoot of linguistics, sociology and psychology, can help to remove the shortcomings of the earlier linguistic analyses and provides a powerful and extremely useful tool to arrive at significant form-function correlations. The socio-cognitive aspect of genre analysis helps in the exploration of genre knowledge, institutional contexts, and the discourse community, thus offering an in-depth analysis to genre. The socio-cognitive perspective can also be an essential component for cross-cultural persuasion.

A beneficial explanation of genre in the area of contrastive rhetoric is offered by Swales (1990):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (p. 58).

This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. The key concept here is the notion of ‘discourse community’, which is a form of socio-rhetorical network and enables us to share some common rhetorical goals. The language activities of such community have a communicative purpose which can be considered as social behaviors in order to improve the knowledge of the group and also initiate new

members. Language plays a significant role in turning a set of communicative events into a genre with specific goals.

In a similar vein, Bhatia (1993) describes genre as having these characteristics: (a) Genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s); (b) It is identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs; (c) Most often it is a highly structured and conventionalized communicative event; and (d) It is bound by some constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. The genre analysis model developed by Bhatia (1993) is process-oriented and consists of seven steps:

1. Placing the given genre-text in a situational context
2. Surveying existing literature
3. Refining the situational/contextual analysis
4. Selecting corpus
5. Studying the institutional context
6. Levels of linguistic analysis which is divided into three sub-levels which are analysis of lexico-grammatical features, textualization and structural interpretation of text (move analysis)
7. Specialist information in genre analysis

Considering a cross-cultural point of view, it should be mentioned that genre analysis can help individuals use language to become members of a discourse community, to cement relations with the community, or to determine and define who they are and what they believe within the community. Using authoritative literature and imitating appropriate models, with the aim of becoming part of the establishment and its literature, in turn, can really be helpful to be a member of a community with special goals.



## ***2.2 The Notion of Genre and Business Letters***

According to Bakhtin (1986), learning genres is “a fundamental part of language development, and it is our ability to predict the compositional structure and length of genres that enable us to communicate” (p.60). Business letters as part of society’s economic activities play an important role in the world of business and commerce. Clear and effective correspondence is an important part of running an efficient business and can lead to successful commercial relations. Unclear or confusing correspondence, on the other hand, can cause many problems and result in misunderstanding, delays, failure in business and poor relations between individuals, departments and companies. The need to produce people who are literate and can communicate in the world of business is an essential issue in the modern world.

Research into business genres has shown that texts belonging to a particular genre share features with respect to the organization of information and the lexico-grammatical realization of functional text units (Flowerdew & Wang, 2006). Bhatia (1993) provides a number of examples of the genres used in sales promotion letters in order to show their move structure. Bhatia identified seven rhetorical moves in sales promotion letters:

1. Establishing Credentials
2. Introducing the Offer/ Candidature
  - a) Offering the Product or Service/Candidature
  - b) Essential Detailing of the Offer/ Candidature
  - c) Indicating Value of the Offer/ Candidature
3. Offering Incentives
4. Enclosing Documents
5. Soliciting Response
6. Using Pressure Tactics
7. Ending Politely

Following Bhatia, Upton (2002) identified seven similar rhetorical moves in 242 direct mail letters. In a more recent study, Upton & Cohen (2009) analyzed ‘successful’ and ‘unsuccessful’

birthmother letter genre in terms of the rhetorical moves structure. Flowerdew & Wang (2006), in a similar study, explored the rhetorical move structure of tax computation letters. Considering business letters, according to Van Nus (1999) most of the elements in a business letter are fixed units (e.g., letterhead, closing, signature), and the problem is the main body of the letter. In the present study, it is not these elements which are problematic, but rather the main body of the letters which follow a less predictable form.

In the case of Iranians, where English is widely used as a foreign language in business correspondences, genre analysis of correspondence (letters and emails) has received marginal attention, and it can be attributed to lack of access to the needed data in business communities and even the difficulty of collecting data. There are some instances of research which have worked in this area (Abbasian & Tahririan, 2008; Arvani, 2006; Jalilifar & Beitsayyah, 2011; Mehranpour & Mehrzad, 2013).

Swales (1990) defines genre repertoire, that is, a group of genres, as one of the important characteristics of a group. Following Swales (1990), Van Nus (1999), explains that genres may evolve to form genre repertoires because of the needs that are reported with a set of recurring activities. Different genre repertoires such as requesting, promotion sales, complaints, and so on can be distinguished within "business letter" genre. In the context of our corpus, a business request letter as tactic genre can be defined as "a legitimate attempt by the writer to get the reader to perform an action required by the business circumstances through evoking the reader's need for compliance on the ground of the corporate and personal motivators such as necessity, duty, and good will" (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996, p. 640).

### ***2.3 Politeness in Business Letters***

The notion of face was first introduced by Goffman (1981), and it was further defined by Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987, 2011), positing that we have two social faces: positive and negative. These are the need to be accepted or unimpeded by others. A request is usually mitigated by politeness strategies in order not to threaten the writer's negative face. Brown and

Levinson (1987, 2011) believe that three main variables should be taken into account when deciding how to word a face-threatening utterance such as request or challenge:

1. The power differential between reader and writer, which is amount of equality or inequality
2. Social distance, which shows closeness or distance between the writer and the reader
3. The degree of imposition of the content of the utterance.

Scollon & Scollon (1995) define two strategies of involvement (deductive strategy) and independence (inductive strategy). Presenting a request before justification can be an example of involvement strategy. It is used especially when the reader wants to be accepted within a group of common membership. For example, business correspondents who are in contact with each other for a long time usually use involvement strategies to show in-group membership and bilateral benefits. On the other hand, independence strategies are usually used in order not to impose on the reader. Most businessmen usually in their first meeting use independence strategy in order to respect each other's negative face and not to create an imposition on the reader. As it has been mentioned above, both deductive and inductive strategies can be used by people based on different situations and by considering politeness variables.

Over the years, Brown and Levinson's theory has been widely used to analyze face and linguistically-realized politeness in written discourse, such as persuasive texts (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris 1996; Chakorn 2006; Anthony & Gladkov 2007). It can be claimed that all researchers acknowledge the importance of commercial correspondence (both letters and emails) in the global business world. Business English communication can also be an important issue in ESP teaching. It can help businessmen to perform a particular genre in the most effective way to meet the purposes of a community. Studies like this can have great value for future ESP/EBP course designs.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

This paper reports selective findings from an investigation into the elements that constitute effective business letter writing. The study adopted a contrastive approach, investigating the differences between the discursive features of English business request letters written by British native English speakers and Iranian non-native English speakers. The research questions were the following:

1. What are Iranians' rhetorical strategies in business request letters in a business correspondence course? How and why are they different from those in British native English speakers' business letters?
2. What are participants' perceptions of the underlying factors that shape their business writing?
3. How are politeness strategies signaled in business request letters written by British native English speakers and Iranian non-natives speakers?

### **4. Method**

In light of the principles stated by Bhatia (2004), the present corpus study tried to explore the context where the genre was used in two sets of letters. This corpus data consist of 60 English business request letters which were chosen out of 121 authentic letters. Thirty letters had been written by British native English writers, and the other 30 by Iranian non-native English writers (sample of letters can be seen in appendices C & D). The selected letters were from the "sent" files of e-mails or e-mail attachments and were in the routine request category as categorized by Charles (1996). The term letter is used in this study to refer to a genre in which the writer includes a greeting, an opening, and a closing sequence, and signs off. These letters exchanged between five companies in Tehran and Karaj in Iran and their counterparts in seven companies in England. To choose the corporate participants, we first approached five businessmen who were attending commercial correspondence courses in a Tehran business trading center affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce. They were all purchasing managers of their companies in promoting international trades. We requested their permission for their business request letters. The sample

letters they contributed provided a good source of rhetorical choices for contrastive analysis of business request letters. All the participants were experienced in dealing with business correspondence and the sample letters they contributed reflect rhetorical choices and patterns that are typical of daily business correspondence, and provide a rich set of rhetorical choices for contrastive analysis in business discourse. The letters were also evaluated by two independent raters. An inter-rater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency among two raters. The inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be  $Kappa = 0.87$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), 95% CI (0.506, 0.868).

The criterion for selecting moves was functional in that it was based on the communicative purposes they served in recognizing the communicative purpose of a genre as a whole. As routine business request letters, they were all written for the purpose of obtaining some information such as sales catalogues or a price list. The letters were all requests for information or action which the receiver of the letter should give or take. Halliday (1985) believes that written form of language differs in the ratio of content words to function or grammatical words. Grammatical words include things such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles and finite verbs while lexical words include nouns and verbs. Lexical density talks about the number of lexical or content words per clause. In the present study, based on Halliday's notion of lexical density, the number of lexical, grammatical and total words in the letters and the lexical density of them were computed using Textalyser software ([textalyser.net](http://textalyser.net)). Then, the letters were analyzed in terms of their macro and micro rhetorical move structure. Finally, by employing Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness, the politeness strategies in the corpus were all identified.

After collecting letters, five Iranian writers of business request letters and five British native English writers participated in a 30-minute individual interview. Each was requested to talk about letter writing, using a technique recognized as a "discourse –based interview" (Hyland, 2004). The main purpose of the interviews was to explore linguistic choices in the texts and the combination of them in writing business request letters. They were also asked about the effects of their own culture in business communications. Concerning research ethics, the business participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time during the process of the study.

Participants were assured that all the data collected were just for research only, and their confidentiality was protected during the study. All the names in this study are pseudo names chosen for participants.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. *The Surface Features of Business Request Letters*

The corpus in this study comprised 60 business request letters written by British native English speakers and Iranian non-native English speakers. They consist of a total number of 3,102 and 5,232 words respectively. The average letters of NEBLs has a length of 94, the longest 205 words and the shortest 68. In case of NonNEBLs these were 159, 318 and 72 respectively. The average lexical density of NEBLs and NonNEBLs were 44% and 55% respectively. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the number of words for two sets of data. There was a statistically significance difference in the number of words for NEBLs ( $M = 94.10$ ,  $SD = 41.29$ ) and NonNEBLs ( $M = 159.20$ ,  $SD = 67.23$ ;  $t(58) = -4.51$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). This difference suggests that British native writers are more direct and succinct in their letters compared with Iranian non-native writers who try to be more indirect and elaborate in their letters. Kumar & Sethi (2012), in an analysis of Indian business letters, also refer to this point that the West are more succinct and direct in letter writing compared with the East who put more emphasis on emotion and try to be more indirect and elaborate in their letters in order to convince their readers by giving more justification and explanation. In this study, it seems that Iranians are in favor of verbosity in their letters in contrast with British who follow succinctness. Table 1 shows the surface feature of the corpus:

**Table 1: Surface features of NEBLs and NonNEBLs**

Type of Letter	Number of Words	M	SD	Lexical Density
NEBLs	3,102	94.10	41.29	0.44
NonNEBLs	5,232	159.20	67.23	0.55

## 5.2. Macro-textual level: move structure analysis

Based on the analysis done, a 7-part schematic structure appeared as the generic formula of business request letters in the both corpora. What is presented here are the moves that are identified in business request letters as the constituents of the body or text of the letter. A list of the order of structural moves in both corpora is given in Table 2:

**Table 2: Order of moves in NEBLs and NonNEBLs**

<b>Order of Moves in NEBLs Potential</b>	<b>Order of Moves in NonNEBLs Potential</b>
Background	Background
Request	Reference
Reference	Justification
Justification	Request
Condition	Condition
Extra-request	Extra-request
Conclusion	Conclusion

The frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residuals) for the native and non-native writers' use of seven types of moves in business request letters can be seen in Table 3. While the former two indices are descriptive ones, the latter – Std. Residual – is an inferential statistic – based on which the two groups' use of each move can be compared. Any Std. Residual higher than  $\pm 1.96$  indicates significant differences between the two groups. Based on these results it can be concluded that the native writers ( $N = 24$ , 80%, Std. Residual =  $2.2 > 1.96$ ) significantly made more use of the “reference” moves in their business letters than the non-native writers ( $N = 6$ , 20%, Std. Residual =  $-2.2 > -1.96$ ). The native writers ( $N = 18$ , 100%, Std. Residual =  $2.9 > 1.96$ ) significantly made more use of the “condition” moves in their business letters than the non-native writers ( $N = 0$ , 0%, Std. Residual =  $-3 > -1.96$ ).

**Table 3: Frequencies, Percentages and Std. Residuals; Move \* Group**

			Group		Total
			Native	Non-Native	
Move	Background	Count	16	28	44
		% within Move	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-1.4	1.4	
	Request	Count	30	30	60
		% within Move	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.2	.2	
	Reference	Count	24	6	30
		% within Move	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	2.2	-2.2	
	Justification	Count	22	26.	48
		% within Move	45.8%	54.2%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.5	.6	
	Condition	Count	18	0	18
		% within Move	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	2.9	-3.0	
	Extra-Request	Count	5	9	14
		% within Move	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-.8	.8	
Conclusion		Count	20	28	48
		% within Move	41.7%	58.3	100.0%
		Std. Residual	-1.0	1.0	
Total		Count	135	127	262
		% within Move	51.5%	48.5%	100.0%

The results of the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 (6) = 34.67, p < .05$ ) indicated that there were significant differences between the native and non-native writers' use of the moves in their business letters.



**Table 4: Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	34.670 <sup>a</sup>	6	.000
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	42.420	6	.000
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	.041	1	.840
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	262		

a. Zero cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.79.

The results of the phi and Cramer's V tests (.36,  $p < .05$ ) showed that the chi-square value of 34.67 enjoyed large effect size.

**Table 5: Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approx. Sig.
<b>Nominal by Nominal</b>	<b>Phi</b>	.364	.000
	<b>Cramer's V</b>	.364	.000
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>		262	

### Background Move

The first of these moves, “background” move is regarded as a niche for a writer to introduce himself or herself and his or her company. It is an optional move, and it did not occur in all the letters in the corpus. Better and clear background can help the reader to understand the letter more easily. By giving “background”, the writer tries to provide essential circumstances for the reader to understand the case and make necessary decisions. When the subject is clear, the reader and writer can communicate in a more tangible way. In this research, background move seemed to be more present among NonNEBLs (63.6%) compared with NEBLs (36.4 %). The following examples illustrate the point in a tangible way:

#### Examples for Background move (NEBL)

*We are a large motorcycle retail chain with outlets throughout the UK.*

*We are a large record store in the center of Birmingham.*

#### Examples for Background move (NonNEBL)

*We, SAIPA Company, are a leading automotive related company in Iran.*

*We hereby introduce TAM Co as a sister company to Iran-Khodro manufacturer in the Middle-East.*

### **Request Move**

This move is where the overall communicative purpose of the letter is expressed in a simple statement. It can be regarded as a core move because the whole letter is written to make a request. Although this move is obligatory, it was the only obligatory move which occurred in all the letters in the two corpora in both native and nonnative letters. Request move is the second move in native English business letters but the forth move in nonnative English business letters. The writers of these letters usually use modality markers such as *could*, *would* or *might* with *please* to show more politeness to addressee. In very few cases the “request” appears by itself at the very onset of the text body of the text but in majority of the letters, “request” appears at a later stage in the letter. Sometimes, it is followed by “justification” and sometimes precedes it, which will be discussed more in “justification” move. A selection of request moves in letters by some businessmen characterizes their preferences:

#### Examples for request move (NEBLs)

*... and would like to know more about the re-writable and recordable CDs.*

*...and would be grateful if you could send us details of your iron fittings.*

#### Examples for request move (NonNEBLs)

*Would you please guide us in the way we can apply for this membership and tell us which steps must we take sequentially to reach it?*

*We would be grateful if you could send us your technical and commercial proposal for the above-mentioned project as soon as possible?*

## **Reference Move**

Reference move conveys where and when the writer of the letter has heard of the company or refers to previous correspondence. It can turn the reader's attention to the source of attention that has attracted the writer to write the request to appeal for something. In the current study, writing a request letter without making any reference seemed something odd for British native writers but it did not appear to be common among Iranian businessmen. Reference move was present in 24 out of 30 letters written by native British writers (80%) while it was just seen in 6 letters written by Iranians (20%). Some examples are as follows:

Examples for reference move (NEBLs)

*...you were recommended to us by our associates, BTS (wholesalers), for whom you recently installed 20 systems.*

*...you advertise in this month's edition of "Lectorn".*

Examples for reference move (NonNEBLs)

*...Referring to our visit performed by our colleagues from your stand in 2008, I hereby offer you a brief company profile of ours....*

*...we visited you in Tehran international book fairs.*

## **Justification Move**

Once "background move" and "reference move" were established to clarify the situation, letter writers proceed with justifying their request, which is usually supported by a reason. The reason

for the request is most often either before or after the request. The analysis of the data shows that this move is seen more in NonNEBLs (54.2 %) compared to NEBLs (45.8%). The main difference between NEBLs and NonNEBLs is the order of presentation of moves in the preferred sequence of JUSTIFICATION plus REQUEST or REQUEST plus JUSTIFICATION. Iranian writers prefer the pattern of justification followed by request while native English writers prefer the pattern of request followed by justification as it is mentioned by Schifffrin (1987) and Kirkpatrick (1992). The difference in discourse signaling should not be overlooked, since difficulty may occur in understanding each culture's writing when an extended piece of discourse with a number of embedded cause-effect pattern is involved.

Some examples for justification move (NEBLs) can be seen below:

*...there is a large demand for your product in this area. So if your product suits our market, we can place large orders with you.*

*... There is an increasing demand for this type of machine and 15 featured in your catalogue would appear to suit our customers most.*

In the following examples requests are followed by justification:

Examples for justification move (NonNEBLs)

*We perform the designing, execution and commissioning of the automatic extinguishing systems; gas, water, foam or... depending on the nature of the fire itself and the client's consideration. **Now in one of our automatic water extinguishing projects, we need to procure the following equipment.*** (Request followed by justification.)

*In our last project with the IRAN KHODRO Company, we used... skid cleaning facility including pump, gun and protective presented to us by Company Name. Now for another project-without any contract with a foreign consultant - **we need a new system, and certainly based on our previous experience and your***

*reputation, your company is our first priority list for inquiry.* (Request followed by justification.)

### **Condition Move**

This move provides a good niche to state the condition and hint at future business. It may be realized by means of one or more of two steps:

Step1: stress the need to quote moderate prices or samples.

and/or

Step 2: mention the possibility of placing substantial orders afterwards if the places or samples are right.

The two steps are optional in trade inquiries. The examples of this move in the genre exemplars in our study were as follows:

*If we receive favorable offer. (Step 1)*

*We may be able to place large orders with you. (Step 2)*

In some cases, Step 1 preceded by Step 2.

*We may be able to place substantial orders with you. (Step 2)*

*...if your prices are competitive and your deliveries. (Step 1)*

One interesting finding is that none of the letters written by Iranian writers contains condition move. After the analysis of the data and the interviews with some Iranian businessmen, it seemed that Iranians feel that “making conditions” destroys the good “image” they want to create and this threatens their business relations. An absence of face-threatening moves and a greater amount of flexibility in the use of rapport-building strategies throughout the letters is

predominant in letters written by Iranians. On the other hand, in the business letters composed by native English speakers the occurrence of request is frequent and greater emphasis is on ideational content.

### **Extra-request Move**

This move is where other related information or services are requested. It is an optional move, and it appears when there are other related requests in the writer's letter. In this study, it seems that Iranians tend to use more this move (64.3%) compared to native British writers (35.7%) in the two corpora.

Examples of Extra-request move (NEBLs):

*We would also like to know if you offer any trade discounts.*

*Please also send us the shipment details as well.*

Examples of Extra-request move (NonNEBLs):

*Also, please mention your possible ways of mutual collaboration in future projects in Iran.*

*In addition, please send us the catalogue and price list of the new products.*

### **Conclusion Move**

The last rhetorical move in the genre of business request letters is conclusion move. It is the final move where we conclude the letter politely in order to thank the reader for reading the letter and considering our request. Bhatia (1993) and Upton (2002) call it "Ending politely". Phrases such as "Thank you", "Thanks for your cooperation", "Looking forward to hearing from you" are used to show the writer's gratitude towards the reader and end the letter in a polite and pleasant way. Although "conclusion" is an optional move in NEBLs (41.7 %), it is most often suggested in letter writing conventions in order to show respect or pleasantries to readers. In contrast with

NEBLs, "conclusion" move was found to be present in almost all NonNEBLs (58.3%), which suggests that offering respect to readers is very important for Iranian businessmen in commercial correspondence.

Examples of conclusion move (NEBLs):

*We look forward to receiving your quotations.*

*We hope to hear from you soon.*

Examples of conclusion move (NonNEBLs):

*I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.*

*Thanks for your cooperation.*

### **5.3. Micro-textual level: Politeness**

Undoubtedly, politeness is a key concept leading to language creation. Most of the research on politeness is on the basis of the concept of face, and how speakers try in launching, preserving and keeping face in communicative events. Micro-linguistic analysis of the two corpora mainly considered pragmatic use of mood and modality which can be seen in Appendix A and B. The use of formulaic expressions is more common in the letters written by Iranians but infrequent in native letters. Native letters show a more flexible expression pattern considering lexical and syntactic variation. For example, Iranian writers in request move employ subjunctive moods to convey the request while native writers use a wide range of expressions to present request.

An analysis of the differences of linguistic realizations in the two corpora is based on the use of politeness strategies. As Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011) mention, three important factors, namely social distances, power relations and degree of imposition, define the weight of face-threatening acts in communication process. Business request letters usually have an amount of imposition. As a result, positive and negative politeness strategies can help a lot to mitigate the face-threatening acts in communications.

In non-native English letters written by Iranian, writers try to convince the readers to meet their requests through regular use of subjunctive moods. In order to achieve this goal, the Iranian writer gives freedom of action to the reader by stating the “conventional indirectness” in the letters. Modals *would* and *could* are usually used with conventional polite marker *please*. Iranian writers are usually polite in conveying their request. Keeping a distance between the writer and the reader and trying to build rapport-building strategies are strongly emphasized in Iranian letters. The use of *please* along with modals is also seen in native letters but most of them display the use of *can* rather than *could* and *would* which seems a less deferential strategy. The use of direct requests is more common in native letters which can create face-threatening conditions.

Indirectness can be considered as a negative politeness strategy employed to show respect for the reader. Sentences that begin with words other than “I”, “you” or “my” can have indirectness sense. For example:

*Would you please inform us in the way that we can apply for this .....?*

(NonNEBL # 17)

*It would be kindly enough if you could send us the price list.* (NonNEBL # 6)

*Would you please send us the technical complementary information on the product?* (NonNEB # 21)

Directness sense can be seen in the following examples:

*You can meet orders over 1000 garment if your conditions interest us.* (NEBL # 3)

*As I mentioned on the phone, it is essential that work be completed before the end of February 20.* (NEBL # 14)

Restriction of freedom of action and maximizing imposition through the absence of modals of possibility is also seen in some native letters which is absent in letters written by Iranian.

*Please note the sailing of the consignment on ...* (NEBL # 11)



*We look forward to receiving your agreement by the date given (NonNEBL # 10).*

The face system used in non-native Iranian letters was seen to be deference system (Brown & Levinson, 1987, Brown, 2011), including the implementation of an inductive rhetorical strategy and an absence of face-threatening moves. In contrast, solidarity face system was found in most of native-English letters characterized by the employment of a deductive rhetorical pattern and frequent use of face-threatening moves.

#### ***5.4. Ethnographic Perspective: Iranians and British Attitudes towards Their Choices in the Selection of Moves***

Data from the interviews held with some Iranian and British businessmen helped to confirm and clarify the findings from the rhetorical analysis above. Participants were mainly concerned with their choices in the selection of moves and the effect of the influential elements in their writing in order to persuade the reader.

#### **Writing Education.**

When asked about commercial correspondence courses and the effect of these classes, most Iranian participants believed that classes never raised their awareness of varieties of genres and complications of the audience and framework of setting.

**Abbas:** *I remember my professor at university just gave samples and he emphasized formulaic expressions to be learned and we never considered the context of writing.*

**Ali:** *I have taken some letter writing courses but in none of them the complexities of the audience and the context of setting is considered.*

As Schneider and Andre (2005) mention, encouraging learners to consider the complexities of the audience and the context can help them a lot to be competent communicators in the future

workplace. British participants in our study also put emphasis on the context of setting in commercial correspondence course:

**Jack:** *Providing businessmen with the context of audience is a need and can help to be more successful in the globalized world.*

**Rose:** *We live in a globalized world where more emphasis should be on intercultural communication.*

### **Problems in Business Letter Writing.**

Iranian participants like native speakers had no problem in understanding writing tasks, but the main problem for them was producing the letter. Iranian writers faced difficulty in the selection of proper moves and linguistic features to succeed in communication process, one example of which is can be seen below:

**Armin:** *I should always try to use proper moves and linguistic features in order to communicate in a successful way. Choosing appropriate moves is really challenging for me because I always want to persuade my business partners in the best way and I'm not sure about the selection of appropriate moves.*

### **Writing a reproduction.**

Interviewees' responses revealed that most of them had the same opinion in presenting propositional content. Most of the participants usually introduced their company or referred to the former communicative events. Reza, Ali and Hossein mentioned the importance of presenting your company in a prestigious way. The "request move" was agreed to be an important move by all Iranian and native writers to clarify their request. An interesting point regarding the "condition moves" was that all Iranian writers believed that making conditions destroy the good image they want to create in communication while native speakers put more emphasis on ideational content and restriction of freedom of action was something common among native writers. A sample quote from one of the British participants illustrates this:

**Richard:** *We always set conditions for our audience in communication and it doesn't matter for our company whether they accept or not.*

Ending the letter politely was also important for all letters. Reza and Michael explained “Ending politely can be really important in order to impress the reader to consider our letter”.

### **Cultural standards in business correspondence**

Cultural knowledge as a missing component can affect the way businessmen write their letters. An interview with some of the letter writers showed Iranians tend to treat readers in similar ways or behave towards them under the influence of their own cultural assumptions. Ali admitted that he did not think that cultural beliefs can affect the rhetorical patterns of letters:

**Ali:** *In my letters, I treat all the readers in the same way. I have never focused on the readers in cultural terms but I think being familiar with the culture of the reader can be really helpful to have a more successful communication.*

Alex and Brian, on the other hand, believed that culture should be closely considered in business communication in the era of globalization:

**Alex:** *Today, we have Englishes rather than English. English is an international language, there are more non- native speakers of English than there are native so why should one variety prevail over others. If we want to succeed in this global village, we should know the culture of different people in the commercial world.*

**Brian:** *Becoming cognizant of the cultural gap and having training programs to enhance the cross-cultural skills of employees in interacting with others can help bridge cultural differences, mitigate problems, and assist in achieving more harmonious, productive relations.*

Hossein believed that being formal and deferential can be really effective in persuading the reader in commercial correspondence:

**Hossein:** *I always consider whether they are respected by us so they consider our letter. Being formal and polite can be really effective in communication.*

Dodd (1987), based on a worldview division, believes that the East accentuates people's relationships while the West stresses task accomplishment. Zhu (2013), based on Aristotle's findings, also found that *logos* (reason and evidence) is a major persuasive orientation in English faxes while *pathos* (emotion) and *logos* are both important for Chinese faxes. The same issue can be considered in case of Iranians who emphasize the relationship between the reader and the writer. They usually try to convince their business partners by giving more freedom to them through the use of "conventional indirectness". Affection, cognition and logic are all important elements which are closely and equally valued in rhetorical structures of letters written by Iranians:

**Meisam:** *Respecting my readers is very important for me because in our culture we are always suggested to respect our neighbors, friends, guests and I will do my best to impress my reader in this way in all communicative events.*

Philips's comments give more insight into the fact that British native writers are in favor of directness in their letters:

**Philips:** *British businessmen are usually direct, succinct and logical in their business communication in contrast with Asian and especially Iranians who are emotional and affective rather than instrumental. Iranians rarely stick to the agenda in business in contrast with us that state our intentions as clearly as possible.*

The abovementioned findings of this study reflect the importance of cultural awareness among writers and especially for students in writing classes. The starting point of any conflict can be

lack of cross-cultural skills which can be lessened by understanding cultural differences and this intercultural communication cannot be learned without intercultural understanding which is based on the knowledge of culture. Connor (2011, p.65) mentions that “contrastive rhetoric was never meant as a method for teaching; its contributions have served to bring to teachers’ awareness the potential for differences in writing and communicative conventions across cultures”.

## **Conclusion**

As shown in this article, English business letters written by British native English speakers and Iranian non-native English speakers reveal some differences in their information structure and organization. By using Swale's idea of move structure, we found that some moves are much more common in the Iranian letters than in English letters, whereas other moves are very rare or do not exist in the Iranian letters.

Considering the number of words in the two corpora, it can be seen that native-speakers produced fewer number of words compared to Iranians and this can reveal that British businessmen are usually more direct and succinct in business communication in contrast with Iranians who may be more emotional and affective rather than instrumental. Iranians rarely stick to the agenda in business in contrast with British writers who seem to state their intentions as clearly as possible.

The rhetorical part of the letters of request consist of "background", "request", "reference", "justification", "condition", "extra-request", and "conclusion". It should be concluded that some moves are very important and hence "obligatory" in the genre of the letters of request. "Request", "reference" and “justification” are obligatory moves in native English business letters. This could be further endorsed by considering the frequency of their appearance across the genre exemplars: 100%, 80% and 73.3%, respectively. However, the other moves are optional, though one would not usually end a request letter without offering some respect to readers. So, although "conclusion” is an optional move, it is most often suggested in letter writing conventions. Considering non-native English business letters written by Iranians, "background", "request",

"justification" and "conclusion" are obligatory moves with the frequency of 93%, 100%, 86.5% and 93% respectively. In contrast with native speakers, "conclusion" is an obligatory move in Iranian letters, and this shows that offering respect to readers is very important for Iranian businessmen.

In case of the presentation of moves, Iranian letter writers show an obvious preference for justification plus claim pattern while English writers exhibit a preference for the claim plus justification pattern. Sometimes, no justification was found in the request made in the English letters. Another interesting point about the occurrence of the moves in the two categories is that none of the letters written by Iranian writers contains condition move. One possible reason is that Iranians feel that "making conditions" may destroy the "good" image that they want to create in correspondence and this might threaten their business relations. Seen from the perspective of Iranian letters, it can be concluded that an initial request in business contexts is not simply a "request" on its own but an expression of sincerity as well as an initial commitment to future obligations.

An analysis of the differences of linguistic realizations in the two corpora showed that Iranians are more interested to use a deferential approach with more emphasis on rapport-building strategies while English native speakers employ solidarity approach with presence of face-threatening acts. It can also be concluded that Iranian writers give freedom of action to the reader by stating the "conventional indirectness" in the letters while the use of direct requests is more common in native letters which can create face-threatening conditions.

The influence of cultural differences on business communication were also considered in this study. As Connor (2011) mentions "intercultural rhetoric" is an umbrella term that includes cross-cultural studies as well as studies of interactions in which writers from a variety of linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds negotiate through speaking and writing. Business letter writers need to be provided with opportunities to get involved in real intercultural conditions and then try to deal with ongoing problems. This kind of approach can contribute a lot to our understanding of intercultural communications. Raising awareness of business negotiators

of international strategies in communication can help them a lot in selecting appropriate moves in the way of burgeoning businesses.

The results of this research also prove the claims that certain moves exist across the number of genres written by different groups of writers. This issues has already been mentioned by scholars such as Bhatia (1993), Swales (1990), Upton and Cohen (2009) that genres have special moves which fulfill the communicative purpose. Genre is composed of move shared by members of a community, and this can help even non-professional writers to know how to communicate with members of a group that share some commonalities.

Considering pedagogical implications of the finding of this study, Swales (1990) believes that explicit teaching of the rhetorical structure of a particular genre is central in academic reading and writing classes. Thus, explicit teaching of genre-specific features appears to be necessary and important in order to make at least some students aware of the features which will be dealt with in authentic texts. Charney and Carlson (1995), Duddley-Evans (1997) and Johns (1997) are among those who suggest the use of text models in the explicit teaching of rhetorical features of genre-specific texts for the purpose of raising students' consciousness about the formal features of the text. According to Duddly-Evans, this approach gives students a communicative ability to express their ideas in the ways assumed by the members of their discourse community. All approaches have something in common: all of them try to find out typical rhetorical and important linguistic features of the text and to make students aware of their features when reading or writing a similar text. By improving learners' discourse competence and helping the needed communicative competence through involving learners in real samples of written and spoken texts, the genre approach in teaching has opened new horizons for teachers, learners and material developers.

A detailed genre analysis such as this can, however, provide explanations of which linguistic choices illustrate relationships, how corporate culture influences and restricts written production, how communication networks are made up, and how English is used within company borders. This study can help language professionals not only to describe the context of use, but also explain linguistic choices – for both research and pedagogic purposes.

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## Appendix A

### Linguistic Realization of Moves in English business request letters written by Iranians

Function of Moves	Position	Linguistic Realizations
<b>Background Move</b>	<i>Most of times beginning of the letter</i>	<i>Use of indicative mood: “We are one of the main companies in.....”</i>
<b>Request Move</b>	<i>Usually beginning of the letter</i>	<i>A wide range of expressions: 1: Questions with modals: “Can you send us...?” 2: Subjective: “I would be grateful if you could...” 3: Imperative (with please) Please send...</i>
<b>Reference Move</b>	<i>Usually after request and sometimes in the beginning of the letter</i>	<i>1: Name or person as the sentence subject: “we saw, visited, heard” (Company) recommended you to us. 2: Prepositional Phrase: “with reference to” 3: Adjectival phrase: “We are interested in...”</i>
<b>Justification Move</b>	<i>Body of the letter</i>	<i>Use of perfect or present perfect continuous tense to show sales figures: “there has been need” “we have been gathering”</i>

<b>Condition Move</b>	<i>Body of the letter</i>	<p>1: Mental verb: “we hope, expect”</p> <p>2: Modals: “We have to/must emphasize”.</p> <p>3: Conditionals: “If your prices/goods are...”</p>
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<b>Extra-Request Move</b>	<i>Usually near the end of the letter</i>	<p>Imperatives: “please let us know” “Please also let us...”</p>
<b>Conclusion Move</b>	<i>The end of the letter</i>	<p>Flexible endings: “We hope forward to hearing from you.” Looking forward to hearing from you.”</p>

## Appendix B

### Linguistic Realization of Moves in English business request letters written by British English Native speakers

Function of Moves	Position	Linguistic Realizations
<b>Background Move</b>	<i>Usually the beginning of the letter</i>	<i>Relatively similar types of expression in all letters (beginning with “we”): We, SAIPA Company, are a leading automotive related company in Iran.</i>
<b>Request Move</b>	<i>Usually in the middle or near the end of the letter</i>	<i>Very limited range of expressions: 1: Use of modals could or would with please “Could you please send us.....?” 2:frequent use of subjunctive mood: “We would be grateful if you could send us...”</i>
<b>Reference Move</b>	<i>First paragraph</i>	<i>Limited use of similar structures Referring to the visit performed by our colleagues in your stand (place) 2012). We visited you in.....</i>
<b>Justification Move</b>	<i>Body of the letter usually before the request</i>	<i>Usually present tense “We are a leading automotive design that is the biggest manufacturing company...”</i>
<b>Condition Move</b>	<i>Body of the letter</i>	<i>NA</i>
<b>Extra-Request Move</b>	<i>Usually near the end of the letter</i>	<i>1:Use of Imperatives: “please also send me your schedule” 2:Use of subjunctive moods: “We would be grateful if you could also send us...”</i>
<b>Conclusion Move</b>	<i>The end of the letter</i>	<i>Flexible endings: Looking forward to hearing from you.”</i>

## Appendix C

### Sample of a Non-native English Business Letter written by an Iranian (absence of reference and condition move)

Background	
Reference (-)	
Justification	
Request Move	
Condition (-)	
Extra-request	
Conclusion	

*We, TAM CO., are leading automotive equipment design and engineering company in Iran. Our activities are focused on supply of automotive production lines to Iranian automobile companies.*

*In our last project with..... Ltd. for a car/hour paint shop (2008-2009), we used skid cleaning facilities including pumps, gun and protective presented to us by.....*  
*Now for*

*another project based on our experience and your reputation we need a new system.*

*Therefore, regarding the following information, you are also requested to offer us your technical proposal and prices for the system.*

*In case of any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.*

*Your reply is highly appreciated.*



## Appendix D

### Sample of a Native British English Business Letter

Background move	→	<i>Dear Sir,</i>
Request move	→	<u><i>We are a large store in the center of Manchester and</i></u>
Reference move	→	<u><i>would like to know more about your new designs</i></u>
Justification move	→	<u><i>which you advertised in this month's edition of "Model Designs".</i></u>
Condition Move	→	<u><i>There is a large demand for your product in this area. So if your products suit our market, we can place large orders with you.</i></u>
Extra-request Move	→	<u><i>As we usually place large orders, we would expect a 30% discount off net list prices.</i></u>
Conclusion move	→	<u><i>Please send us the shipment details as well.</i></u>
	→	<u><i>We hope to hear from you soon.</i></u>