

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the review of the methodology to obtain the results. A sample of 327 business e-mail messages written by Thais and Germans within profit and non-profit organizations (internal communication) from the last quarter of 2003 to the third quarter of 2006 was analyzed. Four profit organizations and four non-profit organizations participated in this research. By mutual consent from 71 e-mail composers, 166 e-mail messages from profit organization and 161 messages from non-profit organization were granted for the analysis. Of all e-mail messages, 165 e-mail messages were written by Thais and the other 162 messages by Germans.

The analysis of this study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The business e-mail messages were firstly framed within the linguistic analysis and finally within the context of national and corporate cultures. Within the frame of linguistic analysis, the e-mail messages were analyzed at two different levels. The first level was the e-mail format features. The second level included the rhetorical analysis of the move structures drawn on Bhatia's framework (1993). The comparison of the moves across cultures and organizations was displayed in quantitative patterns using a descriptive statistic analysis. The occurrence of the various moves in the corpus were counted and recorded in the tables of distribution using percentages. The significant relationship between the move structures and the nationalities/organizations of the e-mail composers was tested with Fisher's exact test. In addition to the textual analysis, this research also looked into the ethnographic dimension through the semi-structure interviews with the e-mail donors upon the completion of the analysis for the result verification. Hall's (1981) context of culture and Hofstede's (1984, 1997) study of national and corporate cultures were applied to support the discussion on the influence of national and corporate cultures on the patterns of the moves, linguistic forms and the politeness strategies.

The next part of this chapter reviews and discusses the findings from the above process in terms of variability in national and corporate cultures of the e-mail

composers. Finally, some guidelines for genre-based instruction and recommendations for further research are given respectively.

## **5.2 Discussion on Findings**

### **5.2.1 Business E-mail Message as a Genre**

Basic goals of business communication are receiver understanding, receiver response, favorable relationship, and organizational goodwill. Changes in communication technology from fax to telex and to e-mail create changes in individual behavior in organizations as well. Since technology is adapted to accommodate user requirements, it culminates in change as related to the messages delivered by fax and e-mail. Revolutionary changes are taking place in business communication, especially in internal communication where people are now becoming more and more dependent on e-mail. E-mail may appear to be a new genre which is transformed from an already existing discourse type. E-mail message makes use of a rather fixed template, which is in fact a borrowing from the written or typed memorandum. This corresponds to Todorov (1990) who noted that a new genre is always transformed from the previous one either by inversion, displacement, or combination. E-mail communication within a company is mostly two-way communication. A primary function of e-mail is exchanging messages within organizations, similar to memorandum (Zhang, 2006). The purposes of internal transmittal documents are to inform, to persuade readers to read documents, and to build an image and goodwill. Internal operations depend on the day-to-day exchange of information among employees. Performance reports, job instructions, financial data, customer orders, inventory data, operation problems and solutions illustrate the range of internal communication exchanged in the course of business. As stated by Krizan, Merrier, and Jones (2005), messages in internal communication can flow vertically, horizontally, or through a network. In vertical communication, messages flow upward or downward along the path referred to as the "chain of command." A horizontal message flow occurs between workers or units of a comparable status who need to share data or coordinate efforts. In network communication, information flows freely among those who have a common bond that goes beyond the

participants' role or unit within the organization. According to Fairclough (2003) who distinguished between two types of intertextuality, the nature of the e-mail messages sent and received by a computer involves the incorporation of oral language features in the written mode, so called "constitutive intertextuality". Besides, the e-mail correspondence often possesses "manifest intertextuality" as appeared in Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain. "Manifest" intertextuality is realized in references to previous communication. In many cases, the e-mailer uses the "reply" option and that function provides the previous messages at the end of the page. Consequently, a special characteristic of e-mail correspondence is intertextuality.

The business e-mail is showing a trend towards a reduced level of formality and uses a more flexible register. E-mail users tend to pay less attention to formalities, and show a greater tolerance towards the occurrence of spelling errors. Some messages written by Germans reflect an interference of German language on spelling and punctuation. For example, Germans wrote "copie" for "copy", "ist" for "is", and "programm" for "program" because these German words are very similar to English ones and, therefore, easy to make spelling errors. In German letter writing convention, the first alphabet after opening salutation is written in lowercase and Germans also transferred this typical feature to their English correspondence. Therefore, business English writing courses should teach the construction and creation of genres to enable learners to adapt more effectively in future workplace environments.

### **5.2.2 Move Structures of Business E-mail Correspondence**

Business e-mail correspondence consists of seven moves, namely Move 1 Opening Salutation, Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain, Move 3 Introducing Purposes, Move 4 Attaching Documents, Move 5 Soliciting Response, Move 6 Ending Positively, and Move 7 Closing Salutation.

Like postal mails, e-mail messages often begin with an opening salutation. In general, "Dear Name" (32.72%) and "Dear Title Surname" (16.51%) are the opening salutation mainly used between intimate and distant correspondents respectively. "Best regards" is the closing salutation most often used by Thais

(50.30%) and Germans (31.48%) in profit (45.18%) and non-profit organizations (36.65%). The e-mail donors reported that this closing salutation is generally used because it represents the moderate degree of formality and can be used to any person, in any situation. Remarkably, the closing salutations in this corpus are not necessarily aligned with the degree of formality in opening salutation, although it is conventionally understood that the closing should conform to the opening salutation,

Moving to the body of the message, the moves can recur more than once and are not linear. The writers may choose to omit a particular move or vary the order of the moves or steps to suit their particular communicative purposes. Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain is considered as an introduction to the message. Its functions are to further business relations and to build goodwill. It may be realized by means of either Step 1 Referring to the event/previous contact or Step 2 Acknowledging the existence of previous mail. Most of the business e-mail messages started with Step 1 Referring to the event or the subject of the messages. In many cases, the writer acknowledged the existence of the previous message by expressing thanks for the message and/or apologizing in case of late reply.

Move 3 Introducing Purposes is the heart of persuasive messages. It may comprise one or more of these four steps, namely Step 1 Providing Information, Step 2 Introducing the Offer, Step 3 Requesting and Step 4 Enquiring, to fulfill the function of Move 3 and the sequence of these steps is flexible. The messages exchanged within the organizations were multi-purposeful, but mainly to provide the information and to make a request. In persuasive messages, it is necessary to provide enough information in order to have the reader act and know exactly what to do. This step can be treated as a pre-request signaling the coming request. If the writer does not want to impose on the reader, he/she may offer an alternative to the reader after providing the information that supports the offer. While Step 3 requests for the action, Step 4 asks for the information in the form of indirect question, open-ended questions or discussion.

The detailed or additional information should be kept separate from the body of the message as an attachment in order to fit the message on the computer



screen for the convenience of the reader. Therefore, the writers sometimes applied this e-mail function as found in Move 4.

Move 5 Soliciting Response is optional and seldom found in the sample e-mail messages because the messages were exchanged within the organization and the sender and receiver are colleagues. Their relationship is an action drive by itself as the staff realizes that their response can affect future collaboration.

Move 6 Ending Positively is crucial and functions as a post-request. This move is generally realized by an expression of gratitude and goodwill.

Each move in the sample e-mail messages threatens the reader's face differently depending on its function. Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain threatens the reader's positive face. Move 3 - Step 2 Introducing the offer is a way to save the reader's negative face in the case that the writer does not want to impose on the reader by requesting as in Move 3 - Step 3 which threatens the reader's negative face. Move 5 Soliciting Response is considered as "positive politeness" because it expresses the writer's willingness to assist the reader. Move 6 Ending Positively can be treated as positive politeness strategies. Ending the message by expressing gratitude and goodwill favors the reader's positive face in the way that the writer shows his/her interest and optimism to the reader.

### **5.2.3 Influence of National Cultures on E-mail Business Correspondence**

Individuals from the same cultural backgrounds tend to display common patterns of thinking, feelings and reaction, in line with their cultural heritage. These patterns and styles can differ across national cultures, and also across companies with different organizational cultures. In no sense, could the "cultural action" taking place in any particular business setting be accounted for solely in terms of the national culture in which that business setting appeared to be located, as has often been done in the past (Connor, 2004: 292). As a result, the corporate cultures are taken into account to see how they interact with the national cultures as shown in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Move structure categorized according to the nationalities of the e-mail composers**

Rhetorical Structure	Thais						Germans					
	Profit (84)		Non-Profit (81)		Total (165)		Profit (82)		Non-Profit (80)		Total (162)	
Move 1 Opening Salutation	(84)	100%	(81)	100%	(165)	100%	(73)	89%	(76)	95%	(149)	92%
Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain Step 1 – Referring to the event / previous contact or Step 2 - Acknowledging the existence of the previous mail	(48)	57%	(33)	41%	(81)	49%	(10)	12%	(30)	38%	(40)	25%
	(27)	32%	(21)	26%	(48)	29%	(2)	2%	(4)	5%	(6)	4%
	(21)	25%	(12)	15%	(33)	20%	(8)	10%	(26)	33%	(34)	21%
Move 3 Introducing Purposes	(84)	100%	(81)	100%	(165)	100%	(82)	100%	(80)	100%	(162)	100%
Step 1 – Providing Information / Responding to the previous mail	(72)	86%	(75)	93%	(147)	89%	(80)	98%	(72)	90%	(152)	94%
and/or Step 2 – Introducing the offer	0	0%	(6)	7%	(6)	4%	(4)	5%	(4)	5%	(8)	5%
and/or Step 3 – Requesting	(72)	86%	(21)	26%	(93)	56%	(58)	71%	(54)	68%	(112)	69%
and/or Step 4 – Enquiring	(12)	14%	(24)	30%	(36)	22%	(26)	32%	(8)	10%	(34)	21%
Move 4 Attaching Documents	(12)	14%	(27)	33%	(39)	24%	(4)	5%	(14)	18%	(18)	11%
Move 5 Soliciting Response	(6)	7%	(15)	19%	(21)	13%	(8)	10%	(10)	13%	(18)	11%
Move 6 Ending Positively	(36)	43%	(54)	67%	(90)	55%	(24)	29%	(28)	35%	(52)	32%
Move 7 Closing Salutation	(84)	100%	(75)	93%	(159)	96%	(69)	84%	(72)	90%	(141)	87%

Although the e-mail messages written by Thais and German have the same sequence of moves, each move in the e-mail messages written by Thais occurred more frequently than those written by Germans, particularly in Move 1 Opening Salutation, Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain, Move 4 Attaching Documents, Move 6 Ending Positively, and Move 7 Closing Salutation.

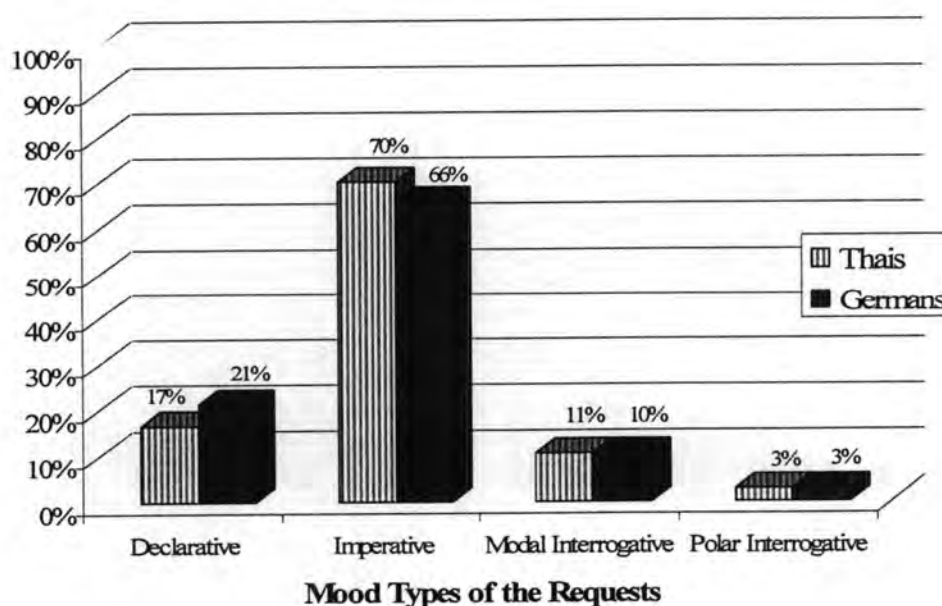
Interestingly, the opening salutation was omitted less frequently than closing salutation. Thais never omitted the opening salutation in their e-mail messages while eight percent of the Germans did so. In the case that the opening salutation was omitted, it can be assumed that the writer considered the message a memo. In the past, hard-copy memos were sent only to company insiders, and salutations were neglected. From the corpus, the evidence emerged that there were no noteworthy differences in the variety of opening and closing salutations used by Thais and Germans. Although Thais do not address each other by surname, Thais do address foreign counterparts by their surname. This is because Thais are familiar with the western culture and international business convention. Germans frequently greet each other using their

surname, even when they know each other very well. Titles are very important to Germans. Germans expect to be addressed by their full and correct title, no matter how extraordinarily long that title may seem to foreigners. Interestingly, Germans who are accustomed to the Thai culture also addressed Thai correspondents by “Khun” (Thai honorific title). This trend is essentially cultural-specific and considered unique to the Thai business context. Remarkably, only Germans addressed their Thai correspondents by their nickname (13.15%) regardless of their relationship and degree of formality due to the fact that Thai full name is not easily recognized by foreigners.

Half of the Thais always established the correspondence chain whereas only one fourth of the Germans did so. In order to establish the correspondence chain, Thais and Germans preferred different strategies to achieve the function of this move; Thais more often referred to the event or the previous contact while Germans acknowledged the existence of the previous mail. Thais seemed to be influenced by the corporate culture more than Germans. A case in point is that Thais working in different types of organization applied the patterns of moves at a different degree of frequency. Thais in profit organizations established correspondence chain (Move 2) more often than those in non-profit organizations as opposed to Germans.

The main purposes of e-mail messages written by Thais and Germans were to provide information and to make requests respectively.

**Figure 5.1: Mood types of the requests by Thais and Germans**



In making requests, Thais employed imperative mood more frequently than Germans while Germans used declarative mood more often than Thais. Germans made the requests more frequently than Thais and usually expressed thanks after their request were responded at the beginning of the follow-up message by acknowledging the response mail with thankfulness, but Thais always expressed gratitude in advance after the request was made and once again when their requests have been responded. Overall, the national cultures influenced the different move structures more than the corporate cultures. The messages written by Thais included every move at a higher degree of frequency than those written by Germans.

Concerning the relationship between national and corporate cultures, the differences between the messages written by Thai staff in profit and non-profit organizations indicate that Thais were affected by the corporate cultures more than Germans. The differences in the move structures presented in the messages written by Thais and Germans can perhaps be explained in terms of “high and low context cultures” respectively (Hall, 1981). In high-context cultures like Thailand, background information is implicit, and much of the message relies on how the words relate to that implicit information. High context national culture facilitates effective cooperative approaches. Directness is often considered rude and offensive in high context cultures. People place great importance on ambience, decorum, the relative status of the participants in a communication and the manner of message’s delivery. Business people from high-context cultures place more emphasis on win-win solutions because these cultures are more relationship-oriented. A focus on relationship building is a common style in high context cultures, similar to Hofstede’s (1984, 1997) collectivist culture. Therefore, by comparison with German messages, Thai messages contained almost every move at the higher degree of frequency and are unlikely to be direct to the point of discussion. Thais began negotiation with a general objective rather than with a specific strategy and the tone of their messages was more conciliatory and optimistic.

In low-context cultures, in contrast, context is less important; most information is explicitly spelled out. People in low context cultures, such as Germans, tend to be very direct and get right down to business with a minimum of pleasantries. However, in negotiations, the German approach is slow, logical, and analytical.



Germans pay attention to written communication, but information flow is minimal. According to Hofstede (1984, 1997), this context is more often characteristic of individualistic cultures.

When people from high-context and low-context cultures have to work together, problems often occur by the exchange of information. These problems can be categorized as differences in “direction”, “quantity” and “quality”. At differences in direction people from high-context cultures like Thailand adapt to their good friends, families and also to close colleagues (in-group members). They communicate with them intensively (quantity difference) and exchange specific/detailed information about many different topics. The result is that every in-group member is constantly up-to-date with the facts around the business.

In order to communicate successfully business people have to consider the cultural dimensions and the predominating communication process as well. The first dimension to be discussed here is individualism and collectivism. Thai organizations view other companies with less collectivistic philosophy as cold and not supportive. The policies and practices in Thai organizations do not apply to all as in German ones, and are subject to relations. In collectivistic cultures, a direct confrontation will be always avoided.

Even linguistically, there seems to be fundamental differences between how people view the world. Thais want to please and try not to say what the other might not want to hear. In Thailand it is out of the question to disagree with someone’s opinion in public. Thais will do that in a more private and personal atmosphere to protect a person from the “loss of face”. In a collectivist culture, group harmony and social stability take precedence over individual performance and needs. On the other hand, Germans exemplify cultures where individuality and personal autonomy are highly valued (Hofstede, 1984; 1997). People from individualistic cultures put forward their ideas freely and have quite ambitious plans for their personal development.

The second dimension is power distance. The distribution of power within organizations also varies from culture to culture. For example, Germans have a low power distance, and there is very little (overt) emphasis on status and role power.

In Thai culture, position and status play a more important role in working relationships. Scollon and Scollon (2001) suggested that power distance is interrelated to politeness levels. The shorter the letter, the less polite it is, the more power is kept in the hands of the writer. However, the degree of intimacy should also be taken into account. The shorter the letter, the less polite it is, the more intimate the correspondents.

Uncertainty avoidance can be reflected through thought processes. German thought processes are extremely thorough, with each aspect of a project being examined in great detail. This process is often very time-intensive to avoid uncertainty. However, once the planning is over, a project will move very quickly and deadlines are expected to be honored. Germans dedicate blocks of time to a particular task or meeting, and have a very low tolerance for interruptions and diversions. Germans do not like surprises. Sudden changes in business transactions, even if they may improve the outcome, are unwelcome.

#### **5.2.4 Influence of Corporate Cultures on E-mail Business Correspondence**

As countries have their own national cultural patterns, so do organizations have patterns of values, beliefs, and expectations shared by people and groups in an organization which control the way they interact with each other and with stakeholders outside the organization to achieve these goals.

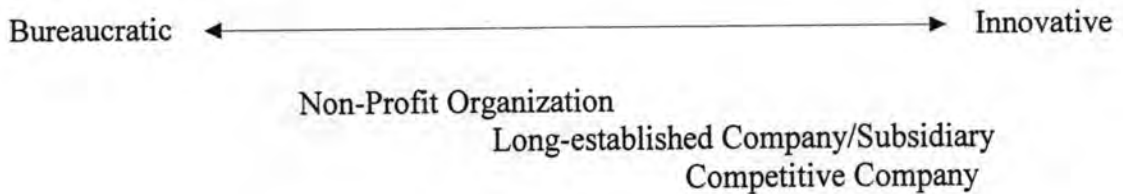
Basically, corporate culture is the personality of the organization. Members of an organization soon come to sense the particular culture of an organization. For example, the culture of a large profit corporation is quite different from that of a foundation which is quite different from that of a university.

One way to categorize organizational culture is as bureaucratic and supportive cultures (Chairsrakeo and Speece, 2004). Bureaucratic cultures tend to be rule intensive, non-innovative, non-cooperative, and slow to change. Bureaucracy is a system of official rules which is complicated. Bureaucratic organizations are less flexible and adaptable. The organization of an office is characterized by standardized procedure, formal division of responsibility, hierarchy, and impersonal relationships. In contrast, supportive cultures exhibit empowered, innovative, cooperative, and

adaptive conditions. Managerial control systems are based on socialization, interrelationships, and the internalization of norms which leads to mutual commitment based on mutual interests. Supportive organizations are more flexible and adaptable.

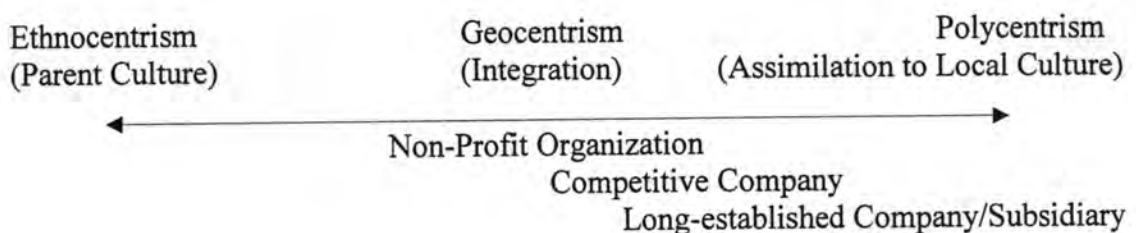
According to the interview concerning the corporate culture of each organization, the informants in non-profit organizations said that their organization leans towards bureaucratic style, but the staff in this type of organization is cooperative as opposed to Chaisrakeo and Speece (2004) who stated that bureaucratic cultures tend to be non-cooperative. The system of prescribed relations between the various offices involves a considerable degree of formality and clearly defined social distance between the occupants of each position.

**Corporate Cultures**



According to Perlmutter (1965), management styles in multinational business corporations can be classified into three types, namely ethnocentrism, polycentrism and geocentrism. In “ethnocentric” corporations, the organizational culture of the parent company is imposed on their subsidiaries abroad while in “polycentrism” the management relies on the local culture of its overseas subsidiaries and maintains only the international financial standard. The “geocentric” corporations provide the equivalence to their worldwide subsidiaries and to every employee regardless of the nationality. Management styles in each organization depend partly on its type of organization.

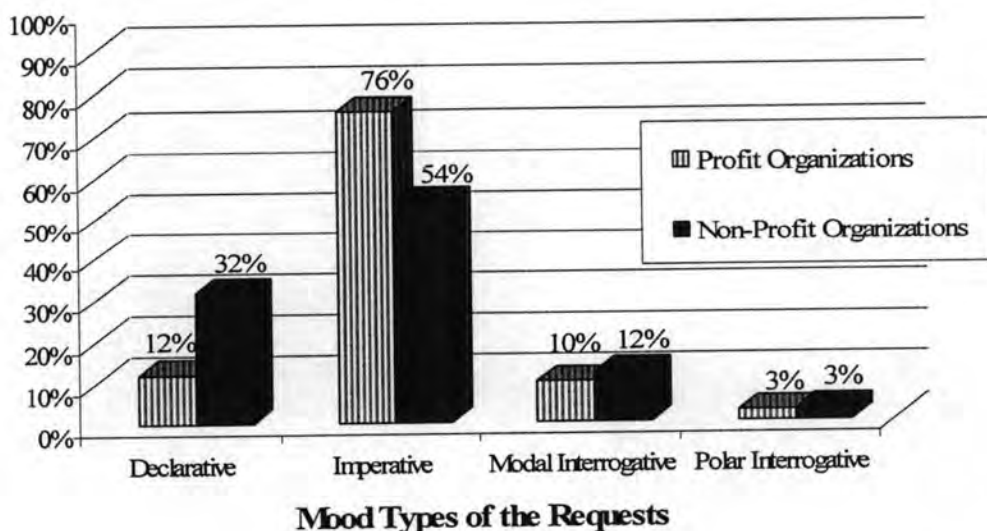
**Management Style**



The questionnaire inquiring about management style in the organizations of the informants has revealed that non-profit organizations provide the equality to every employee regardless of the nationality and do not have a particular management style. This type of organization can easily adjust itself to situations and surroundings and is not restricted by any particular culture. As for long-established subsidiaries in Thailand, it was found that they seem to assimilate into Thai culture.

From the corpus, it was discovered that the corporate cultures also influenced the structure of the messages exchanged within the organizations and their communicative purposes. The main purposes of e-mail messages exchanged in profit organization were to provide information and to make requests while the messages in non-profit organizations were exchanged in order to provide information rather than to make requests.

**Figure 5.2: Mood types of the requests in profit and non-profit organizations**



In Figure 5.2, the bars representing profit organizations show great differences in the degree of frequency the requests were made in each mood. Obviously, the staff in profit organizations made the requests in imperative mood more often than the staff in non-profit organizations while the staff in non-profit organizations made the declarative request statements more frequently than the staff in profit organizations.



Even though the staff in profit and non-profit organizations seemed to follow similar sequence of moves, there were minor differences as shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2: Move structure categorized according to the organizations of the e-mail composers**

Rhetorical Structure	Profit Organizations						Non-Profit Organizations					
	Thais (84)		Germans (82)		Total (166)		Thais (81)		Germans (80)		Total (161)	
Move 1 Opening Salutation	(84)	100%	(73)	89%	(157)	95%	(81)	100%	(76)	95%	(157)	98%
Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain Step 1 – Referring to the event / previous contact Step 2 – Acknowledging the existence of the previous mail Or	(48)	57%	(10)	12%	(58)	35%	(33)	41%	(30)	38%	(63)	39%
	(27)	32%	(2)	2%	(29)	17%	(21)	26%	(4)	5%	(25)	16%
	(21)	25%	(8)	10%	(29)	17%	(12)	15%	(26)	33%	(38)	24%
Move 3 Introducing Purposes Step 1 – Providing Information/ Responding to the previous mail and/or Step 2 - Introducing the offer and/or Step 3 – Requesting and/or Step 4 – Enquiring	(84)	100%	(82)	100%	(166)	100%	(81)	100%	(80)	100%	(161)	100%
	(72)	86%	(80)	98%	(152)	92%	(75)	93%	(72)	90%	(147)	91%
	(0)	0%	(4)	5%	(4)	2%	(6)	7%	(4)	5%	(10)	6%
	(72)	86%	(58)	71%	(130)	78%	(21)	26%	(54)	68%	(75)	47%
	(12)	14%	(26)	32%	(38)	23%	(24)	30%	(8)	10%	(32)	20%
Move 4 Attaching Documents	(12)	14%	(4)	5%	(16)	10%	(27)	33%	(14)	18%	(41)	25%
Move 5 Soliciting Response	(6)	7%	(8)	10%	(14)	8%	(15)	19%	(10)	13%	(25)	16%
Move 6 Ending Positively	(36)	43%	(24)	29%	(60)	36%	(54)	67%	(28)	35%	(82)	51%
Move 7 Closing Salutation	(84)	100%	(69)	84%	(153)	92%	(75)	93%	(72)	90%	(147)	91%

The findings indicate that the national cultures also influence the corporate cultures as Thai and German staff in profit organizations did not use the same strategy to establish correspondence chain (Move 2). Although the staff in profit organizations equally employed Step 1 Referring to the event/previous contact and Step 2 Acknowledging the existence of the previous mail, the differences were found between Thai and German staff, i.e. in order to establish correspondence chain, Thais used both steps of Move 2 much more frequently than Germans. As for the Move 1 Opening Salutation and Move 7 Closing Salutation, Thai staff in profit organizations always greeted the reader and ended the message with a closing salutation whereas German staff did so by 89% and 84% respectively.

In the case of non-profit organizations, the staff applied Step 2 Acknowledging the existence of the previous mail more often, but Thais preferred

referring to the event/previous contact while Germans acknowledged the existence of the previous mail. To end the messages, Thai staff in non-profit organizations applied positive strategies more frequently than German one.

Overall, the frequency of moves appearing in the e-mail messages from profit and non-profit organizations was relatively similar. However, there were also some dissimilarities between the messages written by the staff in the same organization owing to the influence of national cultures. From the findings, the differences mainly result from the predominant frequency of moves in the message written by Thais in non-profit organizations.

#### **5.2.4 Conclusion**

This study intends to provide empirical evidence for a theory of genre analysis based on a view of language as a part of social process. The findings have not been based on a wide-ranging corpus. The views offered in this paper should be taken as suggestive rather than conclusive. In general, the move structures employed by the writers of the business e-mail samples appeared to be largely consistent and may be characterized as using the semi-formal tone of cooperative business colleagues.

In view of the above analysis it is likely that analyzing English business writing in isolation is not sufficient because of the potential influence of corporate cultures. Both national and corporate cultures can come through the individual via the learning process. The social and contextual knowledge of business people are shaped by the combination of national and corporate cultures. In communication, business people apply this knowledge differently depending on their communicative purposes. Different linguistic strategies such as move structures and linguistic forms within the moves as well as politeness strategies are required to achieve the communicative aims.

Thais and Germans both in profit and non-profit organizations seemed to follow the same sequence of moves. However, most of the moves could be found in the e-mail messages written by Thais whereas only some moves existed in the messages written by Germans. The study has shown that the written communication patterns are partly a product of corporate culture. The differences were found from

organization to organization. It is noticeable that the e-mail messages were exchanged within profit organizations quite often, like an instant written conversation, and many abbreviations were used such as "pls." for "please", "yr" for "your", and "adv." for "advice". On the other hand, the convention of letter writing remained in the correspondence from non-profit organizations. Opening and closing salutations were almost always used in the organizations, especially by Thai staff. The rhetorical structure in business e-mail messages was flexible. Some messages contained almost every move while the others had only a few moves. Sometimes, the e-mail message said only "Attached please find...". The detailed information or any other documents were needed to be downloaded. Almost every move could be found in the samples from non-profit organizations while there were only some moves in the e-mail correspondence from profit organizations. Remarkably, Move 3 step 2 Introducing the offer and Move 5 Soliciting Response rarely appeared in the e-mail messages from the profit organization. Move 2 Establishing Correspondence Chain and Move 4 Attaching documents seldom existed in the e-mail messages written by Germans in profit organizations whereas there was a dominance of Move 4 and Move 6 Ending Positively in the message written by Thai in non-profit organizations.

In conclusion, the findings show that both corporate and national cultures play an important role in intercultural business e-mail correspondence. The move structures of the e-mail messages reflect the national cultures of the e-mail composers which are governed by the corporate cultures because different organizations have different norms to achieve communicative goals.

### **5.3 Guidelines for Genre-Based Instruction**

The implications of genre analysis of business e-mail correspondence can be applied to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching to enhance teaching. Genre analysis stresses the importance of the cognitive function, i.e. convention, appropriacy, content, and socio-cultural context as well as the communicative function differentiating texts (Paltridge, 1994). A "move" is a text segment that can be identified by its particular linguistic clues. The move allows for a specific function within a text to be met and almost always signals the content of a particular discourse

within a genre. A genre, therefore, is constructed based on moves, with each move leading to the overall coherent understanding of the text. The moves and steps of the genre and the move structures may function as a reference to teachers in their instruction of business writing. The teaching of these moves allows students to better understand the genre, its cognitive structuring, and the social code used as well as enables students to be more aware of the various propositions expected within genres and thus avoid mistakes that might come from not fulfilling the expectations of a genre. The communicative and conventional functions of genre determine that genre conforms to a certain pattern which is to be followed by writers. Nevertheless, this does not mean that within each genre no room is left for the writer's creativity. Actually writers are permitted to take advantage of language resources to achieve special effects or personal attention without violating the conventions of the genre. A genre-based approach can therefore offer a way of looking at how a written product is used to accomplish its purpose in a social context. Xu (2005: 22) stated that in some countries such as Singapore, genre-based teaching approaches have been employed in the teaching of English for professional purposes like business communication and academic writing and have been proved effective in the teaching of professional writing.

The teaching of written business communication should be more flexible to changes in the choice of the media of corporate communication. A well-designed course can thus make students more sensitive to the characteristics and use of the communication medium, especially e-mail. Ideally, it increases students' awareness of the importance of cultural competence in the interaction. The course input needs to be updated so as to better equip the students with skills required in the future. Genre-based teaching approaches to business e-mail writing fall into two parts. Part one is concerned with the modes of presentation to students the findings of the generic analysis of business correspondence. Part two includes task-based activities to familiarize students with the genre and business conventions (See Appendix D for suggested activities). In order to be able to teach a genre effectively, teachers should be aware of linguistic features and how these linguistic strategies are realized in the moves of a genre. Language teachers should devote class time to instruct the students on business writing by providing students with samples of business correspondence



and discuss the reasons and logic behind the move sequences and the flexibility in the move structures motivated by its communicative purposes. Besides, teachers should provide students with optional strategies available to complete each move of business e-mail message.

After an explanation of the structure and motivations behind each move and step, teachers may offer students several sample e-mail messages with variations among their moves, steps or strategies used to achieve each move. Students need to work out the similarities and differences between these samples in terms of moves, move sequence and strategies used to realize each move. After that, teachers may display to students the structural formula of the business e-mail messages summarized by the linguists and illustrate it with those sample e-mail messages. In the case of intercultural business writing, teachers can impart to students the generic features of instruction by comparing the differences between the messages written by different nationals (See Appendix E for a sample of business letters across cultures). Students should be encouraged to pursue business English communication in a culturally appropriate fashion. Teachers should avoid interpreting function of each move according to their own attitudes and perceptions. Finally, students may be encouraged to write their own business correspondence under a given situation. Upon the completion of genre-based instruction, students should be able to write various types of internal and external business correspondence with effective introduction, body, and conclusion in an appropriate format for each medium of correspondence and, importantly, be able to communicate effectively through their writings.

The teaching of genre analysis can raise students' awareness of the implications of his or her writing in order to assist in students' pragmatic development, and, most importantly, to avoid costly mistakes that come from miscommunication (Pinto dos Santos, 2002). The implementation of tasks that involve active training through the use of authentic materials could represent one means to achieve this. Such activities should depart from simply the use of formulaic language learning and, instead, provide a bridge between the linguistic skills of learners and their professional knowledge goals. Due to all the reasons above, it seems apparent that using a genre-based approach to English language instruction would be valuable.

## 5.4 Recommendations

As the results of this study can 1) raise awareness of business people as well as interested persons on the effects of cultures on e-mail writing, 2) contribute to materials development, and 3) encourage further research, this section is divided into recommendations for business people, for materials development, and for further research.

### Recommendations for business people

The knowledge of a genre approach serves business people in at least three ways. Firstly, it saves them time by obviating the need to waste time thinking of what to include and how to organize the things that need to be included. Secondly, the existence of the convention provides their choice of content with the weight of the entire business community's traditional wisdom because the existence of the conventional or institutionalized form renders the individual writer a mere executor of traditionally-determined content and style. Thirdly, the spontaneity that the convention achieves in the selection and structuring of content leaves the writer with greater cognitive space for creative thinking.

Increasing competition, fostered by the reduction in trade barriers throughout most of the world, has drawn attention to the competency and competitiveness of companies both domestically and internationally. Cultural differences can interfere with the successful completion of business in today's multicultural global business community. Business people should be aware of the effects of cultures on the language use in business correspondence. When writing to Thais, for instance, some introduction to establish a relationship before discussing business is preferred. The messages written by Thais tend to be indirect and diplomatic, particularly when criticizing or refusing. In communication with Germans, in contrast, concise and precise messages are more desirable. Types of organization can also affect language production. An emphasis should be placed on social distance and respect when collaborating with non-profit organizations as this type of organization is bureaucratic and their people are scholars. Correspondence,

especially via e-mail, with profit organizations does not need to be formal. Prompt response is more crucial for this type of organization.

To achieve business goals and avoid cultural misunderstandings, business people should be culturally sensitive, creative, and motivated through a flexible management style and mutual respect. In communication either across cultures or organizations, business people should demonstrate an awareness of their counterpart's cultures. An effective use of intercultural communication can enhance the competitive position of organizations.

### **Recommendations for business English materials development**

Ideally, business English materials should provide a challenge and a support for users of all nationalities and educational backgrounds. However, in reality, the textbooks used in teaching Business Communication often lag behind. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of research into corporate e-mail. Business writing textbooks mostly provide general guidelines for business writing, but not specific. In the business textbook "Essentials of Business Communication" (Guffey, 2004), for example, the author stated that good e-mail messages and memos generally share certain characteristics such as structural elements and the organization of the message. The book suggested that the message should begin with the main idea, explain the main idea and provide detailed information, and close with action information. According to Nelson (2000), the language, including both structure and lexis, found in Business English materials is entirely based on the intuition and experience of their authors and does not correspond to authentic business communication. Yli-Jokipii (1994) studied the requests in business correspondence from different cultures and compared the presentation of requests in real-life correspondence with those in textbooks from both the UK and the US. She found that the textbooks provided less variation and sophistication than what real-life calls for.

A survey of books on business correspondence revealed a similarly disturbing lack of attention to cultural issues, yielding several volumes of "model letters" from which a user may choose (Maier, 1992:189). Business writing textbooks used at Thai universities also represent some problems when taking cultural aspects

into account. These textbooks are often editions of the textbooks written by, and for, native speakers of the language. Thus, some concepts such as directness, clearness, and courtesy in writing business letters may be perceived as vague for Thai learners. British and American text conventions should not be considered as international conventions as a genre is not universal across cultures and varies from one professional tradition to another. To address this problem, business English course designers need to place an emphasis on presenting intersectional aspects of languages and cultures into their syllabi. Business English materials designers need to receive more information directly from language researchers. Materials should present a real picture of the business world. The language taught in the textbooks should represent that used in actual business and the politeness issues should be matched with real-world experience.

### **Recommendations for further research**

Genre study of moves and steps, a recent development of discourse analysis, has concerned itself with describing the higher level organization and the structure of written or spoken texts. Today, genre analysis continues but expands its brief into analyzing intercultural differences. Genres have cultural expectations and when a writer moves between cultures with the same genre, some relearning of the genre must take place in order to correctly negotiate the cultural differences within the same genre. In this way, writing for a new cultural group presupposes the need to relearn the genre within that cultural group. At the level of wider socio-cultural practice, the spread of e-mail and the growth of the internet must be situated within research which focuses on the globalization of discourse practices. To date, very few publications have explored the role of e-mail medium in the establishment of an intercultural business communication among non-native speakers of English. Empirical research is needed to replace the intuitive approach of most Business English practitioners. Further research should be conducted cross-culturally or interculturally with regards to larger corpus analyses and a variety of issues being studied. Potential areas include rhetorical studies of correspondence in a particular field of business or in a particular event. Comparative studies may be conducted with the correspondence written by business people from different countries. If possible,



gender, age, and status of the writers may be taken into account. The empirical data collected must be large enough to offer a representative picture of the language it is studying. In order to create a data bank of sufficient size, the use of computer-based technology and corpus linguistic methodology is essential so that findings can be broadened and contribute to the effective genre-instruction.