Analysis of Generic Structure of Business Letters Written by Native and Non- Native Employees: A Study in ESP Context

Shahla Qasim*
GC University, Faisalabad, Pakistan
Shahlaqasim1@hotmail.com

Aleem Shakir
G C University Faisalabad, Pakistan
almsha@yahoo.com

Zahida Hussain
GC University, Faisalabad, Pakistan
Zhussain844@gmail.com

Qurat-ul-Ain Arif
G C University Faisalabad, Pakistan
qurrat_shamim@yahoo.com

Abstract
The study aims at analyzing generic features of business correspondence transcribed by non-native and native employees. The purpose is to underscore mutual differences to develop business writing competence of the non-native employees presently working in a Pakistani organization but likely to be shifted in a foreign setting. The text comprised 20 Quotation call letters (hence forth, QC letters) collected from both present and target situation and analyzed by applying a genre-based approach established by Swales (1990) and Bhattia (1993). The specific moves and steps in both varieties of text were identified and classified separately. The rhetorical structure of QC letters written by Pakistani employees comprised three major moves: Quotation call - Item description - Terms and conditions, further realized in several steps. The rhetorical structure of QC letters of native variety consisted of four major moves: Quotation call - Item description - Technical specification - Terms and condition, and their realization in multiple kind of steps. Findings revealed remarkable dissimilarities in both varieties. QC letters written by native employees embraced more detailed, clear, and elaborated descriptions pertaining to the number and content of moves and steps, as compared to the Pakistani variety of text. The similarities and dissimilarities of the contextual patterns and strategies may be utilized systematically as ESP materials for the training of Pakistani employees.

1- Introduction
Correspondence is the most common communicative activity in any business enterprise. Written business communication by means of business letters has central importance in establishing and maintaining business relationship both within an organization and with external contacts. The people of international community belong to different cultural backgrounds and structure discourse in different ways (Valero-Graces, (1996); Vergaro, (2004). So the format and conventions of writing business letter vary from place to place and country to country. The employees working in one situation, though competent in certain aspects of business communication that are culturally shared throughout the world, are likely to face communicative hazards, if placed at a new organizational structure. So in order to communicate effectively and appropriately, they should have a sufficient command of the specific generic structure of correspondence incorporated at target situation.

The present study aims at exploring the diverse contextual pattern and generic features of Quotation Call business Letters transcribed by non-native and native employees. QC letter is written from a client or organization requesting for a quote, to the supplier or service provider supposed to send the quote amount. QC letter may be entitled as 'Letter of Quotation Request' at some business enterprises. Letter of Quotation Request and Letter of Quotation acceptance, both are termed as 'Quotation letters'.

This study has analyzed only the Quotation call Letters written by native and non-native speakers with a purpose is to investigate the differences in writing pattern to be used later for improving business writing competency of non-native employees, in case of working at a foreign situation. It is generally observed that non-native people, when appointed at a foreign country, find themselves in a fix due to their inability to cope with the cultural and linguistic conventions of business writing of their foreign counterparts. Although they are aware of the basic format of writing business letters but as stated by Neu (1980) 'there are certain cultural and linguistic patterns which are not always shared' (p. 42). Therefore an adequate awareness of norms and values of business

writing is imperative for non-native employees to fit themselves in a foreign organizational structure. The findings are likely to help Pakistani employees to develop familiarity with the contrastive rhetorical patterns of business correspondence in foreign situation and may be utilized systematically as ESP materials for the training of Pakistani employees.

2- Theoretical Background

2.1. Journey from register to genre:

Description of the nature of language to be mastered by the learners has been a potential subject of ESP need analysis. Since its emergence in 1960, ESP has gone through three major approaches of describing language. The earliest approach known as register analysis concentrated on differences in language and vocabulary at the level of single sentence. Its use was restricted due to its inadequacy to explain why certain linguistic and grammatical features are used more or less frequently in a specific variety. Register analysis was later replaced by discourse analysis which aimed at putting sentences together in socio-cultural contexts to represent specific communicative acts. Discourse analysis held sway for a few years until criticized by Bhatia (1993), for its insufficiency to demonstrate the essential relationship between constraints and conventions. These specific constraints and conventions are developed in a discourse community for its members to comply with. By discourse community, Swales (1990) referred to a group of communicators who has developed a set of conventions to be followed and the conventions are specific means used by the writer in order to keep his text within the constraints (Bhatia; 1993). If these constraints are violated, text will not belong to the genre it claims to be associated with.

The genre has provided a valuable framework for researching aspects of writing, and its pedagogical applications have been intended for teaching and learning in educational contexts. Martin (1984) presented a short but clear definition of genre, 'Genre is a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of specific culture' (p. 25). He identified the place of genre in a functional model of language and social context, and defined it as a recurrent configuration of meanings and culture, as a system of genres.

In the 1990s, genre has been given a special focus in applied linguistics. Swales (1990) provides a detailed definition of genre within the field of English for Specific Purposes:

> 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 rational shapes the schematic structure of discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. (p. 58).

Commenting upon the nature and scope of genre Bhatia (1993) remarked that each genre is an instance of a successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using conventionalized knowledge of linguistic and discoursal resources. Genres vary in terms of their complexity and rhetorical purpose and the mode or medium through which they are expressed, defined and used within discourse communities. According to Connor (1990), contrastive rhetoric examines differences and similarities in writing across the languages and cultures as well as across such different contexts as education and commerce. Hence text is not considered to be a static and stagnant subject but as a functional part of dynamic cultural contexts.

In the first thirty years the idea of contrastive rhetoric was mainly restricted to the analysis of students essay writing, but now it has taken new dimensions. Today the field of contrastive rhetoric takes into account the preferred pattern of writing in many English countries for specific purpose situation. It is premised on the insight that language and culture are cultural phenomena, different cultures have different linguistic patterns and rhetorical tendencies constrained by their norms and values.

2.2. Studies focused on business letters:

Business correspondence has a specific generic structure which is acknowledged and recognized across the globe. Bhatia (1993), examined promotion letters and job applications and identified a recurrent move structure to articulate different communicative purposes. Santos (2002), applied Bhatia (1993) and Swales (1990), model to study the business letters which she termed as "business letters of negotiations". She demonstrated the lexical-grammatical features and generic features. At the same time she emphasized the need of more effective interdisciplinary research in the field of genre analysis to understand diverse patterns of language resulting from social, cultural and technological influences. Jerkins and Hinds (1987) examined business letters belonging to three cultures: American – English, French and Japanese. They highlighted multiple differences in structure and pattern of writing business letters and simultaneously emphasized a significant issue that students should be well- informed of the cross-cultural differences prevalent in business writing across cultures. Maier (1992) conducted a comparative study of politeness strategies employed by native and non-native speakers of English and concluded that NNS were quite deficient in using politeness strategies in business letters as compared to the practices of native speakers.

Another study of substantial significance has been conducted by Gil and Pueyo (2009). They developed a web site tool to help Spanish enterprises staff to write their commercial correspondence in English.

For this purpose, they first collected the corpus of commercial correspondence written in English and later analyzed it generically by incorporating Bhatia (1993) and Swales (1990) model. After having a clear understanding of the rhetorical structure of selected English corpus, they designed a web site to improve business letter writing competency of staff working at Spanish organizations so that they could have effective communication and good working relationship with their English counterparts.

Present study aims at presenting a generic description of QC business letters written by employees working in a Pakistani .The analysis of the move structure and subsequent steps is carried out by applying Bhatia (1993) and Swales' models. Differences in rhetorical pattern are pointed out to be utilized later for the training of the employees of Pakistani organization, likely to be placed in a foreign country.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data comprised 20 sample Quotation call business letters: 10 written by non-native employees working in an organization located in Pakistan and the other 10 transcribed by native employees, sought through internet accessibility. From Pakistani organization, sample is collected personally by the researcher after getting formal permission from concerned authorities.

Generic description of data was carried out by applying a genre-based model established by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). First analytical step was to examine each letter individually to identify the rhetorical moves present in the communicative event indicative of a shared communicative function. The second step was to match the derived individual move structure with the rest of the corpus to trace out the distinct generic characteristic permeated in whole corpus. The sequence of moves and their realizations in varied steps were also identified accordingly.

3.1 Limitations and Delimitations:

This study is restricted to the identification of moves and steps which could reveal patterns of language use in Quotation call business letters. The analysis of lexico-grammatical features is not carried out.

3.2. Analysis of QC letters.

Two analyzed samples of QC letters written by non-native (Pakistani) employees are given below.

Table 1- Generic structure of QC letter written by Pakistani employee.

Move1: Quotation call.	The quotations are invited from concerned organization.	Step 1-referring to the required service
Move2 : Item description	For the printing of answer sheet, extra sheet and forms for BS and other classes 2014.	Step 1- Referring to the required item
Move 3: Terms and condition	The quotations should reach this office up to 10 January 2014 by registered post/ CS/ by hand in the name of registrar. The quotation will be open in the presence of university purchase committee in the office registrar on 12 January 2014. No quotation will be considered after due date.	Step1- Time binding constraints. Step 2- Detailing about the opening of quotations. Step 3: Fixation of due date.

Table No 2- Generic structure of QC letter written by Pakistani employee.

Move1: Quotation call.	The quotations are invited from concerned organization.	Step 1- referring to the required service
Move2 : Item description	For the purchasing of lab. Equipments Flame photometer: model: PFP 7, janway- UK , single Channal table top digital flame photometer Pipette: Fully autoclavable	Step 1- Referring to the required item
Move 3: Terms and condition	The quotations should reach this office up to 10 January 2014 by registered post/ CS/ by hand in the name of registrar. The quotation will be open in the presence of university purchase committee in the office registrar on 12 January 2014. No quotation will be considered after due date.	Step1- Time binding constraints. Step 2- Detailing about the opening of quotations. Step 3- Fixation of due date.

Table No 3: Generic structure of QC letter written by native employee.

Move1: Quotation call.	Sealed quotations with samples are invited from A grade mills for the supply of paper and printing of answer books. The quotation should be submitted in two different parts. Part A: Specimen of paper. Part B: Commercial Bid by 11.00 am on or before 25.06.2013..	Step 1: Specification of quotation bearer. Step 2: Specification of order. Step 3: Specification of quotation letter. Step 4: Time specification.
Move2 : Item description	Text/ Maplitho "A" grade paper in 17 reel form, 70 GSM with dandy water mark of ICAI logo. Quantity 110MT. Printing of answer books, 32 ,16,4 pages, quantity (13, 15, 757), (4,79, 584), (19, 58, 336) respectively.	Step 1: Quality of paper required. Step 2: Quantity required. Step 3: Printing detail.
Move 3: Technical specification.	The water mark should appear on paper in such a way that after printing and cutting of the same in the form of answer book of size 8x11 inches, it appears on each sheet of answer book.	Step1: Detailed technical specification of the required paper. .
Move 4: Terms and conditions	Any additional quantity of blank answer books shall be intimated on need bases. The standard wastage of paper for printing and cutting shall be at 2% of the paper used.Top sheet will be with back to back printing color light blue.	Step 1: Additional supply of paper. Step 2: Paper wastage conditions Step 3: Printing conditions.

Table No 4: Generic structure of QC letter written by native employee.

Move1: Quotation call.	We are interested in buying some equipment for our electronic laboratory. Kindly quote your lowest rate for the following items, giving full particulars and technical details. Please send your quotation on or before 15 Jan. 2013.	Step 1: Specification of quotation bearer. Step 2: Specification of order. Step 3: Specification of quotation letter. Step 4: Time specification.
Move2 : Item description	Transistor BC107 Q.2 Function generator Q.3. Multimeter Q.4	Step 1: Quality of equipment required. Step 2: Quantity required.
Move 3: Technical specification.	IC chips LM 339 IC chips LM 7400 Resister TK 5%.	Step1: Detailed technical specification of the required apparatus.
Move 4: Terms and conditions	Earliest delivery time. Guarantee period Tax inclusion Packing and forwarding charges Discount rate Contract term	Step 1: Assurance of timely delivery. Step 2: Assurance of guarantee period. Step 3: Assurance of safe transportations.

4- RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis has developed the pattern of rhetorical structure of Quotation Call letters written by Pakistani and native employees. Similarities and dissimilarities in the move structure and steps can be identified clearly. Tables 1 & 2, evidently display that the QC letters of Pakistani organization contains three major moves:

Move 1- Quotation call
Move 2-   Item description
Move 3- Terms and conditions

The first move quotation call contains one step which refers to the specific quotation demanded by the organization. Second move also comprises one step, the brief description of items required. Third move Terms and conditions is realized   through three steps referring to time binding constraint and declaring about the opening of the quotation in the presence of purchase committee.

As exhibited in Tables 3 & 4, the QC letters written by native employees contain 4 major moves:

Move 1- Quotation call
Move 2- Item description
Move 3- Technical specification
Move 4- Terms and conditions

These 4 moves are further realized through several steps. Move 1, quotation call comprises 4 steps. Step1   refers to the specification of the quotation sender. Step 2 is the specification of the order, i-e paper and printing of the answer sheets. Step 3 is about the specification of the quotation letter to be submitted in two different parts, Part A, containing the specimen of the paper and part B bearing the commission bid .Step 4 is about the time specification. Move 2, Description of items required, contains 4 steps referring to the prerequisite details of quality, quantity and printing obligation. Move 3 and 4 are about technical specification of the material and terms and conditions to be imposed upon the quotation sender.

The marked dissimilarities between the number and contents pertaining to the moves and steps of Pakistani and native QC letters can be clearly noticed. Move 1, Quotation call in both varieties seem to exhibit the same shared communicative function, i.e. to invite or request the interested firms and organizations to offer their quotes. Difference lies in the distribution of steps. Pakistani sample of QC letters in Tables 1 & 2, display that Move 1 is realized only through one step, 'Referring to the required service', on the other hand, Table 3 (native variety) shows a fully elaborated and comprehensive realization of Move 1, in four distinct steps clearly proclaiming details about the specification of quotation bearer, the required order, the specification of quotation letter and stipulated time constraints.

Move 2, Item description, is illustrated through one step (referring to the required item) in QC letters written by Pakistani employees, but bears three all-inclusive steps (required quality, quantity of paper and printing detail) in the native samples as evidenced in Table 3. An additional move, 'Detailed technical specification of required material' is identified in native sample, which does not exist in QC letters written by Pakistani employees. 'Terms and conditions', which constitute move 3 in Pakistani sample and move 4 in native QC letters is realized through almost similar steps pertaining to time binding, opening of quotation letters and

fixation of due date in former sample (Pakistani). In later (native sample), relatively different steps appear as terms and conditions about additional supply of paper, wastage of paper and printing conditions. QC letters written by Pakistani employees are found to be brief showing scarce details about required quality, quantity and form of the material demanded. Native variety of QC letters exhibited sufficiently detailed and clear descriptions of all moves and steps. The findings will be utilized for the training of non-native employees and students to choose the appropriate rhetorical pattern of business writing. The results go in line with Jerkins and Hinds (1987) and Neu (1986) who concluded that students should be kept fully aware of the different patterns of business correspondence across cultures to improve their adaptability to adjust in a foreign organizational setting.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has identified the move structures of the Quotation Call business letters written by Pakistani and native employees. Distinct differences are found in both varieties at the level of number and content of moves and steps. The comparative and contrastive analysis of the data will be helpful for Pakistani employees to develop their competence of writing business correspondence and to perform appropriately at target foreign organizational setup. The study may provide insight to the linguistic researchers and teachers that what kind of material should be added to the business courses taught to students. The students may be made aware of rhetorical and cultural dissimilarities in business writing resulting in a developed ability to adjust themselves in a foreign situation and to have effective communication with their counterparts.

The study has limited scope in the sense that only 20 quotation call letters, 10 from each variety, do not constitute a sufficient sample to obtain generalized results. Future research studies may be conducted taking into account more data and in-depth comparative analysis of lexico-grammatical features together with linguistic choices made by writers belonging to diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

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