

Editor's Comments

Theoretical relevance

This contribution expands genre analysis by including schema theory notions. This expansion is important because it gives genre analysis and document design a common basis. Many studies on the design of informative documents use the insights from schema theory to decide which information to include and which to leave out. Zhu Yunxia uses schema theory to analyze the genre of letters of invitation. Sharing a theory will make it easier for insights developed in genre analysis to be used in document design, and vice versa.

Practical relevance

In an increasingly globalizing world, companies have to operate in many different countries. For the success of their operations, they depend for an important part on the quality of their documents. Document quality may depend on cultural differences. That is, what is a high quality document in one culture may be considered a low quality document in another culture. Therefore, studies such as the one by Zhu Yunxia are important to gain insight into whether cultural differences exist, and what they look like. Anyone operating in a global economy will benefit from such insights.

ZHU YUNXIA

Comparing English and Chinese persuasive strategies in Trade Fair invitations

A sociocognitive approach

Keywords: English and Chinese trade fair invitations, sociocognitive perspective, persuasive orientations, knowledge structures

This paper aims to compare the persuasive strategies used by English and Chinese letters of invitation to trade fairs, from a sociocognitive perspective mainly based on genre study (Swales, 1990) and schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980). Cross-cultural persuasive strategies involving ETHOS, LOGOS, and PATHOS are compared in a top-down process. In this approach, a corpus of forty letters of invitation (twenty in Chinese and twenty in English) was examined. It was found that although the English and Chinese letters share the ultimate goal of inviting the reader to the trade fair, they exhibit different preferences as to whether they appeal to emotion or to logic. The English invitations were found to appeal strongly to logic. The Chinese invitations, by contrast, tended to emphasize an appeal both to logic and to the emotions; the latter is characterized by a formal and respectful register.

Letters of invitation to trade fairs sent to prospective attendees are a popular form of promotion prevalent in both English and Chinese business practice. An understanding of different persuasive strategies employed in trade fair invitations may help communicate effectively in business communication cross-culturally, and may also provide valuable

clues to highlighting different promotional strategies when we design documents in international business. The following two excerpts from English and Chinese invitation letters provide a contrast. The English letter goes:

Dear Mr Jones,

Here's your personal invitation to join 6000 fellow retailers and 280 leading industry suppliers in enjoying the Christmas Stocking Faire experience.

A Chinese letter starts with these lines:

Dear Respected Mr Lin,

1998 arrived with hopes, opportunities and challenges. However, where are the opportunities and challenges? Please come and attend our 1998 Foreign Trade Expo. This event will be held December 1-3 in Beijing.

These two letters employ different persuasive strategies to invite the reader. The English letter reads rather informally by identifying itself as a personal invitation while the Chinese seems to be formal by addressing the reader as "respected". In addition, the Chinese letter is also characterized by an introduction with some background information relating to the general challenges the year 1998 brought before the actual event is mentioned, and the reader invited.

Cultural differences are often an important topic in the study of intercultural business communication. The differences in these letters give rise to the following questions:

Why do these letters differ in choice of persuasive strategies? Are these strategies culturally defined?

In order to answer these questions, this paper aims to compare persuasive strategies used in English and Chinese letters of invitation to trade fairs from sociocognitive, intercultural and pragmatic perspectives. This type of approach has been used before in professional genre studies. For example, Bhatia (1993) explores English promotion genres and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) adopt a systematic approach to explore English scientific genres. A recent development is found in Trosborg (2000) which represents a clear deviation from the traditional rhetorical approach, and focuses on uncovering the rich dynamic aspects of genre knowledge. Similar tendencies along this line are also evident in cross-cultural studies in particular in Europe (such as Louhiala-Salmiinen, 1997; Ulijn & Li, 1995; van der Wijst, 2000; Yli-Jokipii, 1997). Relevant findings from these works provide a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural persuasive text than the traditional rhetorical model alone. The major reason is that their focal point pertains to communicative intent rather than stylistic features alone.

This paper will therefore follow a similar thrust to compare persuasive strategies in English and Chinese trade fair invitations. Above all, because it is important to explore knowledge structures in persuasion, this paper will be based on genre study (Swales, 1990) and schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980). However, traditional rhetorical theories will also be referred to because they are very pertinent to the exhibited preferences in persuasive orientations. In addition, intercultural and sociolinguistic theories such as politeness principles will be incorporated in order to enrich this genre-based approach.

Specifically, this paper will first explicate the approach by recapitulating a number of research areas as mentioned earlier, and a four-stage method of analysis will be proposed. Second, the research method will be explained, and data based on forty authentic letters will be discussed. Third, specific comparisons will be conducted at various levels of the text. In addition, business managers' views will be incorporated where relevant. Finally, implications for further

study in cross-cultural business persuasion will be highlighted.

Persuasion across cultures

Persuasion strategies across cultures need to be discussed first as an important mind-set to help understand the sociocognitive approach to be introduced later. A relevant illustration of these strategies can be found in classical models from both the western and the eastern rhetorical tradition (e.g., Aristotle, 1991; Liu Xie, 1959).

Aristotle (1991) points out three means of influencing belief and action: *ethos* (character and standards), *logos* (reason and evidence) and *pathos* (emotion). According to him, these three elements are inseparable in persuasion, although they may not enjoy the same level of priority. The preference for particular elements within a certain culture has drawn researchers' attention. Moran and Stripp (1991) found that some cultures such as the Japanese tend to stress an emotional orientation, while others such as the American tend to be characterized by logical or dogmatic orientations in business negotiations. In a similar vein, Campbell (1998) found that English business writing tends to exhibit an appeal to logic while Chinese business writing uses emotional and logical appeals simultaneously.

A similar model can be found in Chinese rhetoric in Liu Xie (1959) who wrote *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, a work on Chinese rhetoric and persuasion, around AD 500. The influence of this work still permeates Chinese writing theories up to the present day. Liu Xie notes that persuasive styles are closely related to logic and emotion as manifested in the interpersonal relationships between the writer and the reader. Styles vary dramatically when talking to the King as compared to a friend. As a result, three major genres arose in Chinese business writing: *xiaxing* (the superior writing to the subordinate), *pingxing* (equals writing to each other) and *shangxing* (the subordinate writing to the superior). Although these genres involve different levels of *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos*, there is also strong evidence on the use

of politeness principles. For example, the writer tends to use a direct style when addressing subordinates, such as giving *xiaoxing* orders, and tends to employ polite registers when writing to equals or superiors. Generally speaking, in the application of these genres, there seems to be a clear stress on combining *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* as discussed in Zhu's (1999b, Inpress a, Inpress b) analysis of Chinese sales genres.

The above classical models may point to the universality of persuasion principles. However, persuasion styles may vary with respect to the emphasis placed on different principles. For example, it has been argued (Campbell, 1998, p. 38) that "professional writing in this century has been anti-rhetorical and has mistrusted appeals to *ethos* and particularly to *pathos*". Campbell's claim can be easily backed by citing the rules prescribed in business communication textbooks which tend to stress clarity and conciseness clearly pertaining to *logos*. A similar principle may well be applicable to trade fair invitations as one type of business writing.

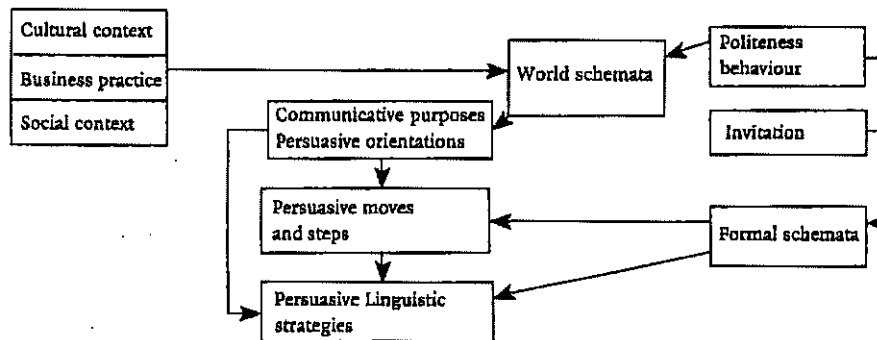
Chinese scholars seem to prefer to address *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* at the same time, in particular the *logos* and *pathos*. According to Chen Wangdao (1947) one of the important criteria of good writing is to utilize both *qing* (an emotional approach) and *li* (a logical approach). These principles

continue to be well accepted in Chinese writing theories and are, for example, reiterated in Li (1996). The explicitly preferred *qing* can be seen as part of the Confucian values relating to harmony, consensus and relationship building as noted by Hofstede and Bond (1988). This issue is further explored by Campbell (1998), who found that this principle could even be applied to Chinese scientific writing.

Identifying *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* are not the ultimate objective of this paper. These categorizations, however, may help understand the persuasive orientations and purposes of the trade fair letters.

The knowledge-based approach to persuasion

The approach to be discussed is a further-developed variant of Zhu (1999a), and is a model based on a number of theories such as genre analysis (Swales, 1990) and schema theory (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980). This model is used mainly because of its relevance to the use of appropriate knowledge structures to understand the persuasive orientations in the trade fair invitations. The model can be illustrated in Figure 1.



Based on Zhu's model of genre study (1999a)

Figure 1 The model of studying persuasion orientations in the Expo Letters

As shown in Figure 1, a number of theories contribute to this approach. First and foremost, the approach is solidly based on knowledge structures as indicated by the terms 'world schema' and 'formal schema' (Carrell and Bisterhold, 1988; Cook, 1994). One can only understand communicative purposes or persuasive orientations with appropriate knowledge structures. Here world schemata and formal schemata can be defined as the sociocultural knowledge and textual and linguistic conventions shared by the relevant discourse communities. Although the term 'schema' derives from schema theory, there is a clear difference: the schemata here are conceived of as knowledge at the discourse level rather than being confined to knowledge at the individual level which is a concept discussed by the schema theorists (such as Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1980). Within this point of view, different cultures may share different schemata which can be defined by specific sociocultural contexts and rules of politeness.

Second, this model uses Swales' (1990) communicative purposes and moves as indicated in the top-down processing of information in which purposes are realized in multiple lower levels of the text such as moves and steps. A move is defined by Zhu (1999b) as a communicative event. Moves are composed of steps which indicate a further lower unit under a move. In this top-down process, the most important components are the communicative purposes and persuasive orientations; the lower levels of the model are merely strategies to realize them. Sociocultural and economic contexts are the subordinate information to help understand the purposes. Relevant sociocultural contexts will be discussed later in this paper.

This process can be applied to comparing the persuasive strategies in the English and Chinese invitations. The comparison can be conducted at three different levels:

- Comparing the sociocultural contexts
- Comparing the communicative purposes and persuasive orientation
- Comparing the rhetorical structures

These three stages of comparison can be seen as a top-down process of comparing the communicative purposes and persuasive orientations across cultures. The basic knowledge about the relevant sociocultural contexts composes the prerequisite world schemata for the second stage of the analysis. Without this type of knowledge, an appropriate understanding of the second stage of comparing the persuasive orientation can hardly be achieved. The third stage, comparing the rhetorical structures, is a further realization of the relevant set of purposes and persuasive orientation. Here the comparison of rhetorical structures mainly refers to the analysis of moves and specific persuasive strategies embedded at a lower level of the text.

This model tries to depict the cognitive structuring of the text (Bhatia, 1993), although I am aware that in reality the specific analysis of the three levels may be interwoven and an attempt can be made at a lower level of analysis to further confirm the intent. These three levels, however, may very well represent the general tendencies of text structuring (Swales, 1990), and will be closely followed in our discussion.

As shown in Figure 1, politeness behavior and invitation, a speech act involved in a trade fair invitation, are closely related to both types of knowledge structure building. They are, therefore, worth our particular attention.

Politeness behavior in invitations

Politeness behavior in invitations across cultures may further explain the preference of *logos*, *ethos*, or *pathos* in persuasion. An invitation is a directive and politeness behavior relating to this will be examined in the light of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Austin's major contribution lies in his conceptualization of speech acts as comprising both locution and illocution. What is of vital importance is the illocutionary force of the utterance which is the performing of a speech act, such as an invitation. According to Searle (1969), an invitation is a directive used to get the addressee to do something. Politeness behavior in invita-

tions, as in those to a trade fair, can thus be related to the use of appropriate language forms to achieve higher illocutionary force.

Leech (1983) contends that polite illocutions are likely to be seen as minimizing the addressee's cost and maximizing his/her benefits, and the opposite is true for the addresser. Politeness behavior can also be further explained in the light of Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory. Many actions we do with words are potentially face-threatening acts, such as requests and invitations (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The addresser is thus often confronted with negative face and has to address it by applying Leech's (1983) principles, in which maximizing the addressee's benefits is the dominant strategy to gain politeness.

However, the way in which one strives to maximize the addressee's benefit can be culture-specific. According to Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998), people from low-context cultures such as the United States and New Zealand are characterized by a need for an individual public self-image, while people from high-context cultures such as China tend to stress a collaborative public self-image. In the case of trade fair invitations, the American or New Zealand writers tend to stress individual autonomy, and therefore reducing imposition upon the invitee is likely to be the major persuasive strategy. The Chinese writers, in contrast, prefer to be seen by others as collaborative, host-like, sincere, and respectful. Accordingly, they may adopt relevant persuasive strategies, such as showing respect and establishing host-guest relationships, besides imposition reduction, all of which are in congruence with the emphasis on *qing* (emotional appeal). Research findings (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Hu & Grove, 1991; Kirkpatrick, 1993; Ulijn & Li, 1995) so far have substantiated the importance of *qing* and relationship building in Chinese culture in contrast to the emphasis on individual achievements and transit goals in western culture.

Chinese textbooks on the writing of trade fair invitations also indicate a strong combination of both *qing* and *li*. Invitations are often described as a type of *liyi xin* (letters of etiquette), or *shejiao xin* (letters of social contact). The meaning

of *shejiao* (social contact) is readily apparent; however, *liyi xin* needs some explanation. According to Zhuge and Chen (1994, p. 361), *liyi* means etiquette and ceremonies. Thus, Chinese sales invitations are treated as a form of etiquette for building relationships in which *qing* plays an important role as indicated by the honorific address term Respected Mr Lin in the excerpt of the Chinese invitation.

Data

The data consists of forty authentic letters of invitations to trade fairs: twenty were collected from the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, and twenty from mainland China. Using authentic data is a tradition in discourse analysis or genre study such as in Bhatia (1993), Kirkpatrick (1993), and Zhu (1997, 1999b, In press b).

This paper employs an interpretive approach. According to Hymes (1974) it is effective to explore cultural differences by examining native speakers' attitudes. A similar stress is clear in Ulijn and St. Amant (In press) who claim that one's interpretation of cultural differences is confined by one's own perspectives of understanding the world, and that a more accurate perspective can be acquired by considering native speakers' views. Native speakers' views were elicited in the following manner. Five effective letters from each genre were chosen based on a pilot research study conducted in China and New Zealand. The five letters from each genre were given to both the Chinese managers and the New Zealand managers to grade; each group consisted of twenty people. A scaling system from 1–5 was used with 5 as the highest score and 1 as the lowest. The two most persuasive letters were those that got the highest mean scores. The most persuasive English letter received a mean score of 4.25, and the most persuasive Chinese letter had a mean score of 4.05. The reasons and explanations for the grading were also solicited from the raters. These two letters will be compared in detail and the raters' views will be incorporated in the discussion as well.

Stage 1. Comparing the social and cultural contexts

A comparison of sociocultural contexts may help understand communicative purposes and persuasive orientations. In particular these contexts may indicate the need for different strategies across cultures. This is why it is necessary to compare business practice between China and the western countries.

English trade fair invitation letters have a long history as a written genre to promote products, as a market economy has been a dominant feature in the western economic structure. Faced with overwhelming competition to sell similar products, the strategies employed in the letters can be characterized by the so-called AIDA model, which involves a series of mental activities: attracting the reader's attention, stimulating his/her interest and desire to buy the product, and calling for action. The strong business orientation is thus at the root of the need to use the AIDA model as a major persuasive principle.

The social context of Chinese business practice is, however, rather complicated and therefore deserves more attention. According to Zhu (1999b) this genre only started to be used after the economic opening-up in 1978, although invitation letters in general have a long history.

The year 1978 marked a transition to the market economy. The previous practice of public ownership came under attack. The structure of selling has since changed fundamentally and every enterprise is involved in the competitive market economy. This has led to the increasing popularity of trade fair invitations, and also to the use of sales promotional strategies (Chen, 1991). As Lu, Zhang and He (1993, p. 189) explain, the purpose of a trade fair invitation is to "increase friendship and develop trade." Lu et al. thus note the importance of developing trade, but at the same time they also call attention to 'friendship', which goes beyond a business partnership, and implies an intention for a long-term relationship.

Stage 2. Comparing the communicative purposes and persuasive orientations

Both the English and Chinese trade fair invitation genres tend to have multiple communicative purposes. With the appropriate knowledge structures indicated in Figure 1, one can ascertain these purposes and persuasive orientations. We refer here also to Bhatia's (1993) analysis of English sales letters and Zhu's (1999b) study of Chinese trade fair invitations. Specifically, the relevant purposes identified in these two genres are shown in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the similarity exhibited in English and Chinese trade fair invitations lies in the fact that purposes can be divided into two kinds: to invite the reader to the trade fair or show and to advertise the products. These two types of purposes are related to the *logos* and share the basic appeal to logic as part of the persuasion.

The similarity in advertising is related to the stress on AIDA marketing model. As can be seen from Figure 2, the shared purposes of both English and Chinese sales letters are largely reflective of the AIDA model. 'attracting the reader's attention', is related to 'attention' and 'interest'; 'giving positive appraisals' and 'persuading the reader' are related to 'desire'; and 'inviting the reader' is related to 'action'. This may indicate that western marketing strategies and business practice have been accepted and implemented as a matter of course in mainland China.

The *ethos* orientation can be related to the purpose of creating a positive image in these two genres, but there is also a difference. The English genre seems to stress a positive image as a sales company, while the Chinese genre has additional features stressing collaboration, which may be seen as consistent with the cultural values relating to harmony and respect.

Chinese sales letters seem to have one extra purpose, which is to establish a host-guest relationship with the reader, which exhibits stronger pathos compared to the English letters. In Chinese culture, a host is supposed not only to show hospitality and kindness, but also extend this to a

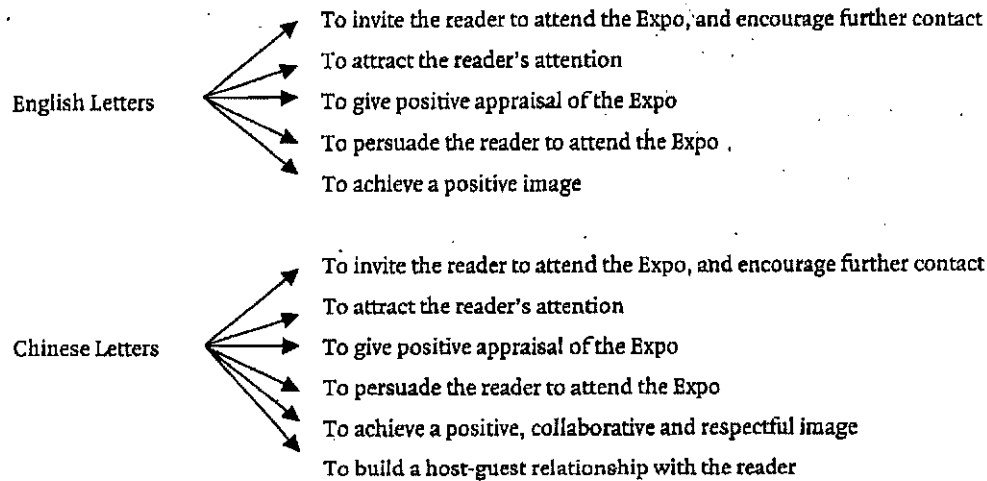


Figure 2 Communicative purposes of the English and Chinese Expo Letters

long-term relationship, which will help the promotion of the product. This finding corroborates Hall's (1977) observation on the value of long-term relationships stressed by high-context cultures.

Stage 3. Comparing text structures

The Most Persuasive Letters

In this section the two most effective letters are introduced and the solicited native speakers' views are presented. These two letters are then analyzed in detail. However, reference will be made to the entire corpus where relevant. The following English letter was graded the most persuasive:

Head [Date]
COMPUTER WORLD EXPO 2000
New Zealand's Only Business Technology Event
April 4-6 at Expo Centre, Greenlane, Auckland

Salutation Dear Mr McDonald,

Introducing It is our pleasure to remind you of your wish to pre-register for the 2000 event — as indicated when you registered last year. As you know, pre-registering for Computerworld Expo gives you the first opportunity to secure your place in cutting edge technology workshops.

Inviting This Computerworld Expo promises to be bigger and more influential than ever and we've made pre-registration easy for you. We have reactivated the registration information you gave last year and when you arrive at Computerworld Expo, if you are attending the exhibition only, all you have to do is go to the PRE-REGISTERED desk at Registration to collect your card. At that time you may correct any details that have changed since last year.

Incentives If you would like to go to one of the high-value, low-cost workshops you will need to complete the registration form in the brochure I have enclosed. It gives you the highlights of what is happening at Computerworld Expo this year.

Advertising For further details on Computerworld Expo exhibitors, seminars and workshops, check our web site: [omitted]. It will be updated regularly as the event gets closer.

Registration

Further contact

Polite closing .We look forward to seeing you again at the most influential business technology event in New Zealand.

Signature Yours sincerely
Alison Smith
Events Manager

This letter seems to be well structured and the purpose of inviting the reader comes across quite clearly. At the same time, the advantages of the trade fair are also advertised. A strong emphasis on clarity and precision is also quite evident in the managers' comments as summarized below:

1. "This is an excellent letter which starts straight to the point."
2. "This letter is quite clear in structure, and the writer gives necessary details and provides relevant reasons for writing the letter."
3. "The style of the letter is quite professional and yet calm. No flowery expressions and exaggerations are included."

The managers' comments further confirm the logical persuasive orientations uncovered earlier. The managers seem to like the style a lot, and the appeal to reason is clearly not a 'mistrusted' appeal. Rather this appeal can be related to current business practice which tends to focus on the clear purpose of promoting the trade fair. The managers' attitudes may also indicate the general preference for the appeal to logic in persuasion in the United States and New Zealand. Interestingly, no comments were made referring to an emotional appeal, which may further indicate that priority is given to logos as the persuasive orientation in western trade fair invitations.

The following Chinese letter was graded the most effective of the twenty in persuasion. Only the translation is provided here.

This letter illustrates the effective use of persuasive strategies in Chinese trade fair invitations. The writer stresses both the invitation to the reader and the promotion of the exhibits, and these two elements seem to be interwoven throughout the letter. This view is also explicitly expressed by the Chinese managers.

Head	Banking China China Computer Show [date]
	Invitation
Salutation	Respected reader,
Background	The Chinese economy is developing rapidly. Every industry or business has to
Information	promote its technology so as to increase its competitiveness. In order to meet the needs
Introducing	of the industries and businesses concerned, Banking China and China Computer Show
Inviting	(this year) are to be held in December in Beijing. We sincerely invite your (H)* company to participate.
Advertising	This show is to be held on a grand scale. [Names of the participating countries omitted.] Internationally well known companies dealing with bank security, computers, telecommunications, and automation equipment will exhibit their latest advanced equipment for financial, banking, and other industrial and commercial enterprises.
	In addition, commercial councils from Australia, Singapore, and the state of Colorado in the United States will also organize delegations to take part. This show will exhibit all kinds of latest equipment and systems used in banking and financial enterprises. [Details of exhibits omitted.]
Incentives	By participating in this exhibition, your (H) company can meet more than seventy producers or suppliers from more than ten countries and districts, and talk about co-operative plans with them. (You are) welcome to leave the products you exhibit on site for sale. In addition to this, many technology exchange discussions will also be held so that visitors may have a further understanding of all the participants' advanced products.
Inviting again	Our company sincerely invites managerial and technical representatives from your
Registration	(H) company to visit (H) this Exhibition. Enclosed is an invitation card. Please bring this card with you when you come to the International Exhibition Centre to go through admission formalities.
Further contact	If you need further materials, you can contact the Beijing agency of Exhibition Services Ltd: Miss XXX Contact details [omitted]
Polite closing	Wish (you) good health (H)!
Signature and Date	XXX Exhibition Services Ltd. [Date]

The following are typical comments they made on this letter.

- (1) "This letter provides a good model for writing trade fair invitations. The reader is sincerely invited and the exhibition is well advertised. In addition, the paragraphing of the letter is good and it is easy to follow the main ideas."
- (2) "This letter represents a sincere and formal invitation to the reader which is exactly what trade fair invitation should be like."
- (3) "This letter provides essential details to describe the exhibition, and there is no waste of words in order to keep the reader interested. These descriptions are also very persuasive."

The above comments to a large degree reflect the managers knowledge structures and general expectations concerning the writing of trade fair invitations. The first comment gives a general impression of the good organization of this letter.

The second comment is about the formal and respectful register of inviting the reader as a guest. The last comment is about what is essential for advertising the exhibition. Compared to the comments on the English trade fair invitations, these comments stress appeals to the emotions as well as to the rational as persuasive strategies.

Detailed analysis of the most persuasive letters

General findings of the corpus relating to the rhetorical moves will be presented first as they may reflect the persuasion strategies at the text level. As already indicated in the above two letters, both genres tend to have a series of moves, which are summarized in Figure 3.

In Figure 3, the numerals in brackets represent the number of letters in the corpus that include the relevant moves or steps. The numerals in the left-hand column of each genre indicates the moves; most of the moves contain only one

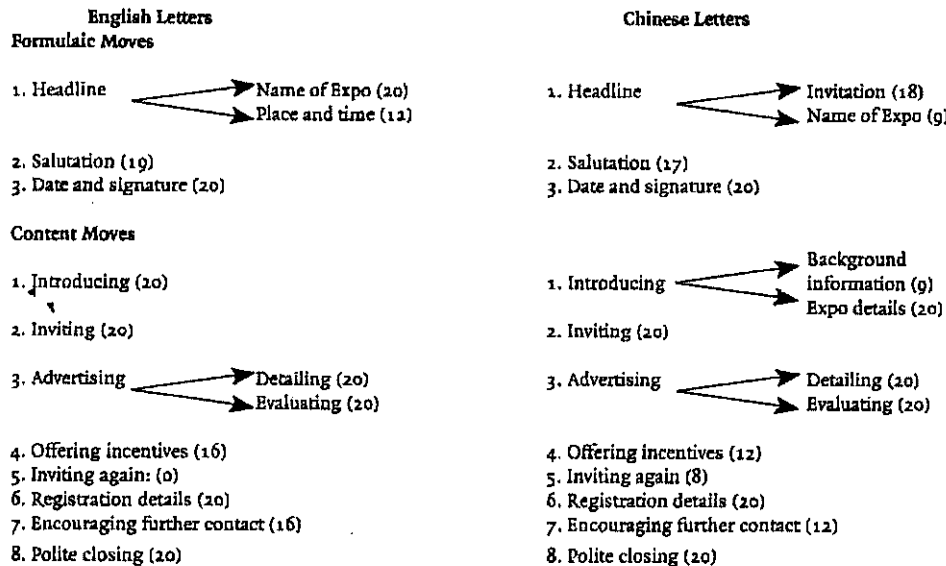


Figure 3 A breakdown of structural moves: English and Chinese Expo letters

step. Only the head, the introduction to the trade fair and the promotion of the trade fair have two steps. Both the English and the Chinese invitations appear to have very similar moves at the text level except that Chinese letters have an extra move: Move 5, inviting the reader again. However, other lower-level differences may exhibit themselves later as we unfold each move in detail. Generally speaking, there are two types of moves: the formulaic and the content moves. A formulaic move is a component that is required in the format of a letter, while a content move is found in the main body of the text where the major information of the letter is given. Both of these two kinds of move will be illustrated in detail later.

Comparing the specific forms of text structures is, in fact, closely related to applying different formal schemata at various lower levels of the texts. In the detailed analysis to follow, we begin with a general discussion of the formulaic moves. The focus of analysis is placed on the content moves and they will be analyzed one by one afterwards, because this is where the major intent and persuasive orientations reside.

The formulaic moves

The formulaic moves consist of the head, the salutation, the date, and the signature. Heads are used in different ways in English and Chinese trade fair invitations. English letters mainly include factual information such as the name, time, and venue of the event, as in the sample letter, and none have 'Invitation' as a title. This finding seems to be in accordance with the logical appeal preference. As indicated in Figure 3, all the heads in the Chinese letters, however, are characterized by the use of the word 'Invitation' in the title; only nine letters include the name and venue of the trade fair in the head. Here the formal schemata of the Chinese invitation vary from that of the English. As discussed earlier, invitation also involves respect besides *politely asking* in the Chinese context. This may be the reason why the forms relating to invitation are always used in the head, and some letters even use *Respectfully/Sincerely Inviting* in the head.

The use of salutations in these two genres also indicates some difference in formality. The English letters tend to include the reader's name, such as "Mr Jones"; the Chinese letters prefer to use personal titles or honorific forms such as "Respected reader" as in the sample letter.

Despite the differences, there is also one similarity shared by both genres: the head and the salutation set the tone and the *pathos* for the preferred persuasive strategies to follow, though a more emotional approach already makes itself felt in the Chinese corpus.

A slight difference in the date and signature compared to English letters is that the date of the Chinese letters is placed at the end. This rule applies to letter-writing in general.

Moves 1 and 2. Introducing the Trade Fair and inviting the reader

Move 1, Introducing the Trade Fair, occurs at the beginning in both letters. However, there is a structural difference. The English letter starts with an introduction to the trade fair:

It is our pleasure to remind you of your wish to pre-register for the 2000 event as indicated when you registered last year.

The above sentence can be seen as a realization of the first two moves: introducing the trade fair and inviting the reader. It is possible to introduce the trade fair as "the event" because the details have already been given in the head. The invitation is made by referring to "your wish to pre-register" without using the lexon 'inviting' or 'invitation', which is not uncommon in the English corpus. This type of inviting suits the personal tone well — the type of *pathos* stressed in English business letters. The personal touch is also shown in the use of the 'you approach', which is often emphasized as an effective strategy in English textbooks (e.g., Locker & MacLaren, 1995). On the whole, the above quote is a straightforward introduction to what this letter is about as pointed out by the managers.

The first two moves in the Chinese letters are more complicated, and Move 1, Introducing the Trade Fair, sometimes has two steps as in the sample letter:

- Step 1 Providing background information
- Step 2 Introducing the exhibition

The first step provides background information regarding the economic context in China, which demonstrates an urgent need to raise competitive ability. The trade fair is introduced this way:

In order to meet the needs of the industries and businesses concerned, Banking China and China Computer Show (this year) are to be held in December in Beijing.

The Chinese translated here as “in order to” is a formal written form often used in business letters; it has two functions here. The first is to introduce the general aim of the exhibition in the subordinate clause, which is to meet the needs named in the previous step. The second is to link this with the main clause, which provides the focal information about the name, place, and time of the exhibition.

This move helps achieve two kinds of purposes: to attract the reader’s attention and to achieve a positive collaborative image. Meeting the need of advancing competitiveness in the face of rapid economic development can be an attractive incentive for enterprises. The writer tries to achieve a desirable image for a collectivistic culture, in which the needs of industry and business in general, rather than of an individual enterprise, are put foremost. Compared to the English letters, the personal ‘you approach’ is much less in evidence in the Chinese letters. This is because of the Chinese persuasive orientations towards formality and respect.

Note that the move of inviting the reader is expressed explicitly through the phrase “sincerely invite your (H) company.” The lexical items “sincerely” and honorific second person pronoun are the key words for an invitation, which is quite common in all the letters in the corpus. Using honorifics is often stressed in business writing textbooks (Chen, 1991; Zhuge and Chen, 1994) as a specific illustration of the use of *qing* (emotional appeal). This phenomenon can be traced back to ancient times when various kinds of honorific lexical items were used to address kings and the elderly.

Move 3. Promoting the Trade Fair

As indicated in Figure 3, the move of promoting the trade fair consists of two steps: providing details and giving positive evaluations. This move in both genres is closely related to the AIDA principle as it helps raise the reader’s interest in the trade fair. Once again, the specific strategies used to achieve the intent are found to vary.

This move in the English letter can be seen as a split move. Trade fair details are only mentioned briefly in the third paragraph where the reader is informed where to find details. This brevity in style is one of the general findings in the English corpus. The preference for providing details in an attached document can be related to the formal schemata of stressing clarity and conciseness as indicated in the managers’ second and third comments.

However, there is no lack of positive evaluation throughout the letter; it is most conspicuous in the second and third paragraphs, such as:

This Computerworld Expo promises to be bigger and more influential than ever... The high-value and low-cost workshops...

The use of adjectives and their comparative or superlative degrees are effective formal schemata for advertising, and similar forms are also discussed in Bhatia (1993). Here “promises to be bigger and more influential than ever” serves this purpose well, and in the meantime, it may well indicate the particular feature of this trade fair, thus highlighting the *ethos*.

The Chinese letters, however, tend to include as many details as possible, as shown in the sample letter, which indicates that the working out of the AIDA model differs from the English letters.

The first step is realized in three paragraphs (from the second to the fourth), describing the scale of the exhibition and mentioning various exhibits. For an exhibition, the scale and variety of products can be a very appealing factor for the reader. The greater part of the second paragraph is discussed as an example to indicate the main features of this step:

This show is to be held on a grand scale. [Names of the participating countries omitted.] Internationally well-known companies dealing with bank security, computers, telecommunications, and automation equipment will exhibit their latest advanced equipment for financial, banking, and other industrial and commercial enterprises.

These details are introduced in a deductive manner, in which the idea develops from the general, "a grand scale," to the specific including the names of the participating countries, used to support the idea of the trade fair's being on a grand scale.

The second step, evaluating the trade fair, is scattered among the first step, a typical feature of evaluation in the corpus which is also very similar to the English letters. For example, the first sentence in the above example can be seen as a positive appraisal of the scale of the exhibition as being grand. Furthermore, the expression "internationally well-known" and the superlative degree of "latest" are used to give positive evaluations. This may be the reason why the managers thought this letter was 'realistic' in its persuasiveness, as noted in their comment No. 3.

Move 4. Offering incentives

Two kinds of incentives are found in the English letters: (1) gifts and prizes; (2) benefits the trade fair may bring. These incentives are used to push the reader to a quick decision, by helping stimulate the reader's desire to attend the trade fair.

* The sample letter uses the second type of incentive by offering further opportunities of "cutting edge technology workshops" in the first paragraph. The position of this move seems to be quite flexible, although it usually occurs at the end of the letter.

The Chinese letter adopts a similar strategy to stimulate the reader's desire to participate. Offering incentives is expressed across two paragraphs — the fifth and sixth paragraphs of the letter. This move details other opportunities the writer promises the reader, including opportunities for sales and potential cooperation with foreign companies in

the fifth paragraph. Another incentive is the opportunity to leave products exhibited on site for sale after the exhibition. This incentive is introduced by the verb "welcome", which echoes the writer's host-like attitude.

Move 5. Inviting again

As shown in Figure 3, the move of inviting the reader again is only applicable to the Chinese corpus. The non-existence of this move in the English letters reflects the differences in cultural values. Repeating invitations in Chinese is often seen as demonstrating warmth and hospitality towards the guest (Chen, 1991, p. 106). The second invitation is enhanced with more honorific lexical items in the sample letter:

Our company sincerely invites managerial and technical representatives from your (H) company to visit (H) this exhibition.

Besides using the same form of 'sincerely inviting' as in the first invitation, the writer shows more respect by using the honorific form of "visit". The repetition of inviting and the use of honorific lexis all contribute to a higher level of respect which is in alignment with the preferred strong *qing* in the established host-guest relationship. That the respect shown is of the appropriate level is also noted in No. 2 of the managers' comments.

Move 6. Providing registration details

Both genres tend to provide clear registration details. The English letter devotes most of the second paragraph and all of the third to these details. As a specific persuasive strategy, the writer starts to introduce the registration details with this line:

... and we've made pre-registration easy for you.

This strategy is frequently used in the corpus; a similar strategy is also found in English sales letters (Zhu, In press b). The preferred formal schemata here can be related to the purpose of reducing the imposition in an invitation, which also helps to minimize the reader's cost in terms of time. This tendency

echoes the *logos* of the English business letters. The common saying 'time is money' seems to be a dominant principle in persuasion in this low-context culture.

The Chinese letter also provides registration and contact details. The polite register indicated by a polite request with the softener "please" in the last paragraph but one matches the high respect level required by invitation letters.

Move 7. Encouraging further contact

Encouraging further contact seems to be quite important in helping develop future business deals. The English letter stresses the "updated" information provided by the web site details. The inclusion of similar high-tech information is quite common in the English corpus. This may show that technology has significant impact on the writing of English trade fair invitations. The managers seem to like this aspect as indicated in their comment No. 3.

In the Chinese letter, further contact information is included in the last paragraph. It is written in a conditional sentence to express a polite and non-obligatory request, which is also in accordance with the polite and formal tone throughout.

Move 8. Polite closing

Both genres include the move of polite closing. The English letters ends with:

We look forward to seeing you again at the most influential business technology event in New Zealand.

The lexical item "look forward to" is a very common closing in the English corpus. Note that the writer also takes this final opportunity to promote the trade fair as "the most influential business technology event in New Zealand". In this way the letter ends with the dual purpose clearly stressed: inviting the reader as well as promoting the trade fair, the focus of the whole letter.

In the Chinese letter, the polite closing is expressed using the extremely respectful form 'zhu da an' (wish great health). 'Zhu da an' is often used to address someone much senior in position or age and was even used in ancient times by subjects to address the emperor. Similar forms of closing are related to invitations such as 'inviting you (H) sincerely' and 'respectfully anticipate your participation (H)'. Polite forms are used here to lower the writer's position in order to achieve a respectful linguistic distance. Zhu (1999a) found these forms were quite effective in achieving a high respect level in a collectivistic culture that places importance on status.

In sum, both genres exhibit the *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* in order to achieve the major purposes of inviting the reader and promoting the trade fair. However, the stress varies: the English letters tend to stress the appeal to reason, whereas the Chinese ones place the focus on both logical and emotional appeals, and the host-guest relationship is accentuated throughout the letter.

Besides this, the two genres vary in the way they present the company's image as part of the *ethos*. An individualistic image is stressed in the English letters. By contrast, a collaborative image is stressed in the Chinese letters. This can be the reason why Chinese letters tend to include 'extraneous' information at the beginning of the letter. It is also worthwhile to note that the English and Chinese trade fair invitations differ in their specific ways of expressing different kinds of *pathos*. The English letters tend to have a personal and friendly tone while the Chinese letters use honorifics frequently to indicate respect and sincerity. The writers even extend the invitation more than once to further show this.

A similarity lies in the shared logical appeal relating to promoting the trade fair, and the AIDA model occurs in both genres. However, there is a significant difference in terms of relevant quantity of information: more details about the trade fair are found in the Chinese corpus, and less detailed information is given in the English corpus. As discussed, the major reason for this difference can be that English letters tend to relegate details to an attached document.

Conclusion

This study has adopted a sociocognitive genre approach to compare persuasive strategies used in English and Chinese letters of invitation to trade fairs. The strength of this approach is its focus on examining communicative purposes and persuasive orientations as a starting point. This approach can also be extended to comparing persuasive strategies in other cultures because of its consistent reference to relevant knowledge structures and sociocultural contexts.

Within this approach, the English and Chinese trade fair invitation genres were compared in detail. It was found that the English sociocultural context and business practice indicate the need for strong *logos*, while the Chinese contexts distinctly pose a need for both logical and emotional appeals in trade fair invitations.

These needs lead to different sets of persuasive orientations and purposes. The stress on reason is realized in the English letters by having the invitation to the reader to attend the trade fair as the focal communicative goal. The Chinese letters, while sharing this goal, have the additional purpose of presenting a cooperative image and proffering a long-term relationship, thus meeting the needs of businesses in a collectivistic culture in the midst of economic reform.

The differences and similarities in persuasive orientations between the English and Chinese trade fair invitations are also shown in specific strategies across moves, steps and

linguistic forms, which further substantiates our claim that persuasive strategies are culturally defined.

The study may shed insight on an understanding of cross-cultural persuasive text in general. A sociocognitive analysis of persuasive orientations may provide us with relevant world and formal schemata to understand communicative intent and strategies in the business context. These knowledge structures may prove to be particularly important when dealing with situations in which *pathos* outweighs *logos* and vice versa. In addition, this principle can similarly be applied to business meetings and intercultural negotiations.

A good grasp of the above communicative intent and persuasive orientations will also help professionals to design documents effectively in cross-cultural business communication. In designing a document, we may take into consideration relevant cultural differences in persuasion and adjust our strategies accordingly in order to achieve our business goal, such as inviting the reader to a trade fair.

Further research needs to be done to compare other professional genres across cultures, and to solicit a wider range of professionals' views as well. Further research questions are: Are the strategies uncovered here practiced at the cultural level in general? Or are they only practiced in certain genres? Once such questions are answered, we will be better equipped, with a panoramic view of culture-specific as well as genre-specific persuasive schemata, to deal with cross-cultural situations.

Notes

1. Chinese letters in this paper are confined to letters written in mainland China and exclude those from Taiwan, Hong Kong or Singapore. The author is aware that there may be differences in style within these countries or regions as they are more exposed to the western business practice.

2. "H" here stands for the honorific form.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are given to Professor Herbert Hildebrandt for his feedback on the writing of English trade fair invitations. I also thank Mr. Peter Thompson for his comments on an earlier version of this paper, and thank the Chinese and New Zealand managers who volunteered to participate in the questionnaire.

References

- Aristotle (1991). *Aristotle on rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse*. (Trans. George A. Kennedy.) New York: Oxford.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berkenkotter, C. and Huckin, T. N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication*:

- cognition/culture/power. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, C. P. (1998). Rhetorical ethos: A bridge between high-context and low-context cultures? In N. Susanne, C. P. Campbell, & R. Dirven (Eds.), *The cultural context in business communication* (pp. 31-47). Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Carrell, P. L. and Eisterhold, J. C. (1988). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine and D. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 73-92). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen Wangdao (1947). *Xiucixue fajun* (An introduction to rhetoric). Shanghai: Zhongguo Wenhua Fuwushe. (First published: 1932.)
- Chen Wuyun (Ed.). (1991) *Shunxin daquan* (A comprehensive introduction to letter writing). Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaoyu Chubanshe.
- Cook, G. (1994). *Discourse and literature*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Ge Gao and Ting-Toomey, S. (1998). *Communicating effectively with Chinese*. London: Sage.
- Hall, E. T. (1977). *Beyond culture*. Garden City, New York: Anchor.
- Hofstede, G. and Bond, M. H. (1988). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16 (4), 4-21.
- Hu Wenzhong and Grove, C. L. (1991). *Encountering the Chinese: A guide for Americans*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (1993). *Information sequencing in Mandarin in Modern Standard Chinese*. PhD Dissertation, Australian National University.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. New York: Longman.
- Li Xiaoming (1996). "Good writing" in cross-cultural context. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Liu Xie (1959). *The literary mind and the carving of dragons*. (Trans. Shih, W. Yu-chung). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Locker, K. and McLaren, M. C. (1995). *Business and administrative communication*. Sydney: Irwin.
- Louhiala-Salminen, L. (1997). Investigating the genre of a business fax: A Finnish case study. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 34 (3), 316-333.
- Lu Peihe, Zhang Yesong and He Shaoxuan (Eds.). (1993). *Waimao yu shangmao yingyong wushu yuedu xizuo 200 ti* (Two hundred topics on reading and writing skills of practical documents in business and foreign trade). Guangzhou: Zhongshan Daxue Chubanshe.
- Moran, R. T. and Stripp, W. G. (1991). *Successful international business negotiations*. Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce and W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension* (pp. 33-58). Hillsdale, N. J.: Erlbaum.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trosborg, A. (Ed.). (2000). *Analysing professional genre*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Ulijn, J. M. & Li Xiangling (1995). Is interrupting impolite? Some temporal aspects of turning-taking in Chinese-western and other intercultural business encounter. *Text*, 15 (4), 589-627.
- Ulijn, J. M. & St. Amant, K. (In press). Mutual intercultural perception: How does it affect technical communication — Some data from China, The Netherlands, Germany, France, and Italy. *Technical Communication*, 47 (2), 220-237.
- Wijst, P. van der (2000). *Accommodating negotiators*. Paper presented at ABC European Convention: Multilingual Business Communities in a Multicultural Europe. Antwerp, Belgium, May 24-27.
- Yli-Jokipii, H. (1997). Power and distance as cultural and contextual elements in Finnish and English business writing. In N. Susanne, C. P. Campbell & R. Dirven (Eds.), *The cultural context in business communication* (pp. 121-144). Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Zhu Yunxia (1997). A rhetorical analysis of Chinese sales letters. *Text*, 17 (4), 543-566.
- Zhu Yunxia (1999a). Genre dynamics exhibited in the development of sales "tongzhi" (circulars). *Text*, 19 (2), 281-306.
- Zhu Yunxia (1999b). *Business communication in China*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Zhu Yunxia (In press a). Structural moves reflected in English and Chinese sales letters. *Discourse Studies*.
- Zhu Yunxia (In press b). The use of sales genres in Chinese business communication. *The Journal of Business Communication*.
- Zhuge Ruiying and Chen Xinghe (Eds.). (1994). *Duowai maoyi wenshu xizuo* (Practical writings in foreign trade). Beijing: Renmin Daxue Chubanshe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zhu Yunxia is a senior lecturer at the UNITEC, Institute of Technology. Her current research centers on Chinese and cross-cultural business communication, discourse analysis and genre study. She has presented papers at international conferences and has published papers in such international journals as *Text and Discourse Studies* and in the book on cross-cultural communication edited by Z. Bolebiowski and H. Borland. Her book on Chinese business genres was published by Nova Science Publisher, New York. Contact: zyunxia@unitec.ac.nz