



Language Use as a Resource: E-Communication Dimensions of Register Variation in a Professional Context

Mohammad Awad AlAfnan

Liberal Arts Department, American University of the Middle East, Eqilah, Kuwait

Abstract

The recent development in [critical] genre analysis moved the focus more into the institutionalized and conventionalized practices of the place discourse community; yet, examining the textual artifacts and register variations maintained their vital importance in the analysis. Using a functional multi-dimensional framework, this study examined register variation in more than 350 electronic messages that were exchanged in a professional context to explore register variations in the emails. The study revealed that the corpus of emails, if examined as a single genre, included instances of the seven dimensions of register variation. However, if it is examined as four types of genres based on the intentions of the communication, as in AlAfnan (2015a), it becomes apparent that the four types of email genres belong to different registers. The register of the emails that were parts of long strings discussing work related issues is 'overtly argumentative' and 'narrative discourse' registers. The register of the emails that intended to request information and/or respond to requests is 'involved production' register. The register of the emails that intended to inform recipients about general interest issues is 'abstract style' and 'informational production' registers. The register of the emails that intended to deliver attachments is 'non-narrative discourse' register. This study also revealed that the communicative purposes influenced language use, word choice, grammatical patterns and the syntactical structure of the emails.

Keywords: Register Variation; Language Use; Electronic Communication; Professional Communication; Genre Analysis.

1. Introduction

The use of the Internet boosted all over the globe. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in 2008 alone more than one billion people used the Internet worldwide. In Malaysia, around 15 million people used the Internet in 2008, that makes 59 per cent of the overall population, in a compound annual growth rate of 19.9 per cent from 2002-2007 (Internet World Stats. com). Wellman and Haythornthwaite (2002), who conducted an online survey about the usage of internet in workplaces, found that 29 per cent of full-time workers worldwide have access to the Internet at their workplace. The Internet occupied workplaces in the corporate world as well as in the developing world and it exceeded all the other communicational devices. In Microsoft, for example, around 99 per cent of communications go through emails; it was said that the telephone there does not ring (Kinsley, 1996).

These days, in addition to messages, it is possible to send pictures, videos, sounds, and attachments through the email. The concept of distance has lost its actual meaning. Replies on letters that took weeks or even months in regular mail, take a click these days. Contacting colleagues from the other side of the universe, is just like contacting next door offices, all what it takes is a single click. It is widely believed that this communication technology development, in general, and computer and the Internet development, in particular, are the grass root of globalization that without them, globalization was not even a possible approach.

When companies grow big and multinational, a common language is needed. This common language these days is English. According to Crystal (1997), Graddol (1999a/ 1999b) and Svartvik (2000), business and globalization are the main reasons of the universal use of English. Therefore, English is no more the property of its native speakers; it is the property of its users whoever they are. In Asia, for example, English is increasingly used as the corporate language in several countries and some local English dialects were recognized and studied like Malaysian English (Menglish) (Lowenberg, 1994), Singaporean English (Singlish) (Platt, 1994), and Indian English (Kachru, 1986).

Beneke (1991) estimated that approximately 80 percent of interactions that take place in English are between non-native speakers. It was even suggested that native speakers of English, in addition to their English language classes, should also take courses in English as a lingua franca in order to prepare themselves to communicate with non-native users of English worldwide (Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002, p. 25).

In the Malaysian context, according to Venugopal (2000), the lingua franca between Malaysians (Malay, Chinese, and Indians) has traditionally been Malay, which is the national language of Malaysia as well. However, under the New Education Policy (1971), which emphasized English as an important second language, more Malaysians could learn English as English has become assessable to all (Asmah, 1982). It was even noticed that “more Malaysians speak English today than during the time of the colonial period” (Vatikiotis, 1991, p. 28). These days, English is widely used in Malaysia, and it has increasingly become the corporate language of Malaysian business especially in Kuala Lumpur (the capital city), and Selangor. Therefore, a big in-depth study of English use in business communication is much needed.

Business communication, in general, and email business communication, in particular, has attracted a number of researchers in the last three decades (e.g., AlAfnan, 2014a, 2015a, 2016, 2017; Baron, 1984; Ferrera et al, 1991, and Herring, 1996). However, it did not take long for researchers to realize that computer mediated communication (CMC) and emails have affected cultural value, workplace environment, and language use (AlAfnan, 2004b, 2015c, 2016). In fact, Naomi Baron was among the first researchers who pointed out to the effects of CMC on language use (Baron, 1984). Baron’s (1984) article was followed by other researchers like Ferrera, Brunner, and Whitmore (1991), AlAfnan (2015b) Herring (1996), and Crystal (2001). Having said that, the main purpose of conducting this study is to investigate register variation of workplace emails in one Malaysian workplace in Kuala Lumpur, and add another contribution.

2. Email Business Communication

Previous studies on the linguistics of email and CMC draws three main categories. Some researchers view the textual features of CMC and email as part written and part spoken (AlAfnan, 2015,b, c); DuBartell, 1995; Holmes, 1995; Murray, 1996; Lee, 1996; Baron, 1998), others like Baron (1998) and (2000) consider its linguistic nature as developing in the new medium, while the rest argue that it is a new linguistic form.

These three categories of CMC are derived from different types of discourse such as discussion group, chat and email. Several studies view email as a mixture of speech and writing (AlAfnan, 2015b); Baron, 1998; Hale and Scanlon, 1999; Yates and Orlikowski, 1993). Baron (1998), for example, while viewing the social dynamics of email as a predominantly writing, views the lexicon and the style as predominantly speech. Where the format and the syntax are mixed of writing and speech (see figure 1). Clement et al. (2003) remarked that CMC is closer to speech than writing. They found that using sound imitation, capitalization, repetition, and having a lot of grammatical and spelling mistakes are common features in CMC. Gimenez (2000), in addition, argues that email discourse is more of unplanned spoken discourse than planned written discourse. These findings were also supported by genre studies, as in AlAfnan (20014c) and Gruber (2001), who views the genre of email as a mix of written and oral genres. It was said that the flexibility, formality, style and the register of email is more of speech genres than the written ones. Gimenez (2000) found that using abbreviations, short sentences, straight forward syntax, and elliptical forms are common features of email. Gains (1999) reached the same conclusion; he found a high degree of informality in business emails. In a more recent study, Gimenez (2005) studies embedded emails in business communication. He found that the genre of email became more complex, but the lexicon of email still simple.

<u>Linguistic Components</u>	<u>Email Most Like</u>
Social dynamics	predominantly writing
Format	(mixed) writing and speech
Grammar	
Lexicon	predominantly speech
Syntax	(mixed) writing and speech
Style	predominantly speech

Figure 1: Overall linguistic profile of email (adapted from Baron, 1998. P.155)

Crystal (2000) endorsed that lexical and syntactical simplification in email is a result of time and space restrictions. Baym (1996) stated that email is attributed to direct agreement and disagreement. Davis and Brewer (1997) looked at email as a new mean of communication that changes frequently by visual and web linkage. Baron (2001)

,however, noted that the above mentioned linguistic features of email comes as a result of the American education revolution and a fall off the public face's concern in the last few decades. Murray (1988) noticed that the context of situation of the email determines the structure and the discourse of the email. He noticed that in the first few business email it is possible to have formal writing style. Gimenez (2005) reached the same conclusion when viewing embedded business email in and between organizations. He found that that the emails sent from one organization to another are more complex in terms of lexicon and syntactic structure than those sent within the organization.

This study investigates register variations of business emails. Drawing on Afnan and Mohammad's (2014) and AlAfnan (2015a) four types of email genres, on the one hand, and Conrad and Biber's (2001) multi-dimensional framework of register variation, on the other, this study examines register variations in the four types of email genres.

3. Methods of Analysis

3.1. Lexico-Grammatical Framework

Biber (1988, 1995) presented seven basic dimensions for register variation in English. These dimensions are "involved vs. informational production", "narrative vs. non narrative discourse", "situation-dependent reference vs. elaborated reference", "overtly expression of argumentation", "non-abstract vs. abstract style", "on-line informational vs. edited not on-line informational", "tentative interpretation" dimensions. To examine register variation, Biber (1988, 1995) presented 67 linguistic features that are classified into grammatical and functional categories. Researchers, according to Conrad and Biber (2001), do not need to examine all the features; they may select the features that better reflect the use of language in the text genre. Biber suggested examining the occurrences of the linguistic features using software, their occurrences in this study, however, were manually counted.

Stemming from this viewpoint, the instigation into lexico-grammatical features of the email corpus was carried out by investigating ten main lexico-grammatical features that represent all the dimensions in Biber's (1988, 1995) framework. The investigation into the lexico-grammatical features in this study examined the use of grammatical mood (declarative, imperative and interrogative), tenses (simple present, simple past, present perfect, present continuous, simple future), passive voice (agentless passive and 'by' passive), public verbs, suasive verbs, cognitive (private) verbs, pronouns (first, second, and third person singular and plural pronouns), demonstrative pronouns, hedges (general hedges, seem/appear), modal verbs and place and time adverbials. These features were selected as they better reflect language use in the email messages, on the one hand, and as they provide a fuller view about register variation in the email messages in relation to Biber's (1988, 1995) seven dimensions, on the other.

3.2. Email Genre Framework

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3.2. Email Genre Framework

After investigating 522 email messages in their institutional context, AlAfnan (2015a) found that the emails belong to four types of genres that are the discussion, enquiry, delivery and informing email genres.

Discussion email genre, According to Al Afnan (2015a), is used to debate or negotiate an issue. The writers used this email genre to discuss issues related to granting exemptions, extending assignments submission, establishing a new course, selecting the content of a module, submitting marksheets, setting up a marking scheme or new semester and examination timetables. The generic structure of this type of email genre included nine moves that were three content and six framing moves. The content moves included the obligatory 'discussing issues' and two reiterational moves that are 'referring to previous contact' and 'providing extra information'. The framing structure of this type of email genre included the use of one obligatory, 'identifying topic', three optional, 'salutation', 'closing' and 'signature', and two reiterational, 'opening' and 'pre-closing' moves. The framing structure of discussion email genre was influenced by the direction of the message, the relational factors between the interlocutors, and the position of the message in the chain. The emails that were exchanged internally within the institution mainly included clearly and broadly informative and uninformative identifying topic moves, signed off using the first name of the sender and included formal and informal salutation and closing markers depending on the relationship between the communicators. The emails that were sent to external partners and students mainly included clearly informative moves, signed off using an auto signature, and included formal salutations and closings especially in the first few emails of the chain.

Enquiry email genre, According to Al Afnan (2015a), is used for requesting and responding to request. This type of email genre was used mainly to request information, such as the due dates for submitting examination papers, assignments and marking sheets, and actions such as sending a document to an employee, registering a student or paying the fees. The replies to these requests mainly presented the information or confirmed carrying out the actions. The main purpose of joining the 'requesting' and the 'responding' moves into a super move in a type of email genre is the formulaic method of carrying out these two communicative purposes in the corpus of email messages. The requesting email almost always created a reply. The two emails were short and precise unless some explanations were required, which was carried out in the 'providing extra information' move. The communicative purpose of the 'responding to request' move was hard to identify if it was taken in isolation of the chain. The requesting and responding to requests occurred in two patterns that were comparable to turn-taken in conversations that are 'request-reply-thanking' (RRT) or 'request-request-reply-thanking' (RRRT). The second request in the second patterns occurred as a result of forwarding the initial request to the employee in charge of the issue.

The delivery email genre, According to Al Afnan (2015a) is used mainly to supply a document or file. The generic structure of this type of email genre included ten moves that are four content and six framing moves. The content moves included the use of the obligatory 'indicating enclosure', the optional 'providing extra information' and two reiterational, 'requesting confirming receipt' and 'offering help if needed' moves. The framing structure included the obligatory 'identifying topic', three optional, 'salutation', 'closing', and 'signature', and two reiterational, 'opening' and 'pre-closing' moves. The generic structure of this type of email genre reflects a more frequent use of the supporting move 'providing extra information' than in the discussion and enquiry email genres. This is the case as delivery email genre is a solitary-type genre that does not usually require a reply. As such, the writers make sure that the addressee is fully informed about the issue. Similarly, the writers of this type of email genre also used two follow-up moves to express availability and request endorsing the taken action. These moves were not used in the discussion and enquiry genres because responding to the emails was an expected practice in these types of email genres.

The informing email genre, according to Al Afnan (2015a), is used mainly to update, notify or advise the recipients about general interest issues. The generic structure of this type of email genre included nine moves that are four content and five framing moves. The content moves included the obligatory 'informing about issues', the optional 'providing extra information', and the two reiterational 'requesting confirming receipt' and 'offering help if needed'. The framing moves included the use of two obligatory, 'identifying topic' and 'salutation'; one semi-obligatory, 'signature'; one optional, 'closing'; and one reiterational 'pre-closing'. This reflects the very high framing formality of this type of email genre, which is comparable to business letters. This type of email genre is the only type that is directed to a number of recipients at the same time. This practice minimized the influence of relational factors that influenced the framing formality of the other types of email genres. This type of email genre mainly intended to notify or update the recipients about important due dates, the rules and regulations, change in the exam venue and new intake and examination timetables.

4. Analysis

4.1. Grammatical Mood

The grammatical mood carries the interpersonal function of the clause (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). It can be divided into imperative and indicative clauses. The indicative clause can also be divided into declarative and interrogative. The interrogative clause can be divided further into yes/no questions and 'Wh' questions. The identification of the grammatical mood depends on the 'subject+ finite'. If the subject was placed before the finite, the sentences is declarative that meant to express information, however, if the finite is placed before the subject, the

mood is interrogative that mainly functions to ask a question (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). If the subject is “absent” (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1997), the sentence is imperative that meant to direct or request (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Fantin, 2010). As such, the investigation of the grammatical clauses provides a fuller view about the interpersonal function in the rhetorical moves.

Investigating the main content moves of the email messages shows that email writers used declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses. The declarative clause was the most common clause in the emails messages, which reflects that exchanging or giving information was the main function of the email messages. This clause was particularly common in ‘discussing’, ‘informing’ and ‘responding to requests’ rhetorical moves. In the ‘discussing’ move, the declarative clause was used mainly to express ideas and provide opinions. In ‘informing’ move, however, the declarative clause was used mainly to present information and generalize facts. These functions seem in line with the main communicative intention of these moves.

Ex1: 6.46. The class scheduled on Saturday, 22nd May 2010 at 11am to 1pm is cancelled.

Ex2: 6. 39. I recommend that you have breakout groups and presentations. You would also need to include learning outcomes for each class as well.

Ex3: 2.43. I'm afraid the syllabus is not yet available and will not be published until July.

As example (1) and example (2) show, the use of the declarative clause intended to communicate information regarding the two attributed issues. In example (1), which is an ‘informing’ move, the writer intended to notify the students that the class was cancelled. The use of the declarative clause was meant to provide information. In example (2), a ‘discussing’ move, the writer intended to provide recommendations and suggestions to the recipient. The use of the declarative clause here intended to express opinion. In addition to the frequent use of the declarative clause in ‘discussing’ and ‘informing’ rhetorical moves, the writers of the ‘responding to request’ sub-move made use of 62 declarative clauses as they intended to provide information regarding the requested issue. The use of declarative clauses was also a very common practice in ‘providing extra information’ supporting move as the writers were mainly involved in further explaining the points in the main content move.

The second most common clause type in the email messages was the imperative clause. Imperative clauses were used in 80 out of the 378 main content moves. This clause type was particularly common in ‘indicating enclosure’ and ‘requesting’ rhetorical moves. Imperative clauses, according to Fantin (2010), are usually used for directing, however, by adding a mitigation device in front of the verb, the clause, according to White (1993), becomes a request. Investigating the use of the imperative clauses in the emails shows that the writers have used this clause type to request and direct. As example (4) below shows, the writer, who is the head of studies, directed her administrative staff to ‘call’ the lecturer, as he did not submit the assignment yet. In example (5) below, however, the imperative was used to request or solicit an action from the recipient. In addition to these functions, the writers of the emails, especially in ‘indicating enclosure’ rhetorical move, used the imperative clause to seek “horizontal intertextuality” (Johnstone, 2008, p. 139) by directing the attention of the recipient to the attached documents or files. As example (6) below shows, the writer used the linguistic construct ‘please find attached’ to direct the attention of the recipient from the body of the message to the attached file. This imperative clause, which was identified as ‘indicating enclosure’ move, was usually used as the only move in the body of the emails. Even though the use of the imperative mood is the most direct method of requesting (Carrell and Konneker, 1981), the writers mainly used a mitigation device such as ‘please’, ‘kindly’ or ‘please kindly’ in front of the verb to weaken the imposition (Treece, 1994).

Ex4: 3.52. Regarding Mr. GS, **call him**. He should have submitted the assignment by now.

Ex5: 4.32. **Please inform** Mr VK that i wont be able to teach CS from June onwards.

Ex6: 4.26. Please find attached

The use of the imperative clause was also used in ‘informing’ and ‘requesting confirming receipt’ moves. In the ‘informing’ move, the writers used the imperative clause to express information as in ‘please note that’. This clause was almost always followed by ‘that clause’ to state the information or express the obligation. The writers in ‘requesting confirming receipt’ move, however, mainly used formulaic constructs such as ‘kindly confirm receipt’ to solicit an action from the recipient. As it is shown above, the construction of the imperative clauses almost always involved a public or a suasive verb such as ‘confirm’, ‘submit’, ‘inform’, ‘write’, ‘give’, ‘find’, and ‘attach’ to express the direct or indirect speech acts (Quirk et al, 1985) in the imperative clause.

In addition to the declarative and imperative clauses, the writers of the emails also used the interrogative clause. The use of the interrogative clause was uncommon as it occurred in 45 rhetorical moves that were mainly ‘requesting’ and ‘discussing’ moves.

Ex7: 3.3. Do you have a USN for him?

Ex8: 2.7. When and where the reports were sent?

The use of the interrogative clause was divided into the use of 'yes/no' and 'wh' questions (see example 7 and example 8 above). The 'yes/no' questions, according to Halliday (1967), are questions about unknown polarity, that is, the answer of 'yes/no' questions are either the positive polarity 'yes' or the negative polarity 'no'. In example (7), the writer asks whether the recipient has the 'USN' or the matrix number of the student or not, which means that the polarity is unknown. In this case, the answer could be the positive 'yes' or the negative 'no'. In example (8), however, the polarity is known that is the date of sending the reports and the address. As such, the question is about a missing piece of information (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The interrogative clauses in the email messages were mainly 'wh' questions that occurred in the 'requesting' sub move, and 'yes/no' questions, which occurred in the 'requesting' and 'discussing' moves. The use of the interrogative clause in 'discussing' move intended to ask for clarifications. This practice, however, was uncommon as the writers mainly used the declarative clause to exchange options or negotiate an organizational or academic issue.

The investigation of the grammatical moods showed the type of interactions between the writer and the reader of the email messages. In the 'discussing' move, the communicators were mainly involved in exchanging ideas and sharing opinions using the declarative clause. In 'informing' move, the writers were involved in generalizing facts and giving information. In the 'requesting' sub-move, the communicators were involved in asking for a missing piece of information, and giving or sharing information in the 'responding' sub-move. Finally, in 'indicating enclosure' move, the writers were mainly involved in directing the attention of the recipient from the body of the message to the attached document. This was usually carried out using the formulaic construct 'please find attached'.

4.2. Tenses

As previous section showed, the writers of the email messages mainly used the declarative clause, which indicates that the emails were mainly concerned with expressing and exchanging information. In this section, the temporality of the actions in the email messages is investigated (Biber, 1988). The use of past tense, for example, indicates referring to past events, which reflects narrative writing (Biber, 1988); the use of the present tense, however, indicates immediate circumstances and reflects non-narrative informational writing (Biber, 1988). The use of the present perfect tense indicates narrative writing as the writer refers to past event that has current relevance (Biber, 1988; Harder 1996). Thus, the investigation of the tenses reflects the time in which the actions took place (Downing and Locke, 2006), which also indicates the type of writing, whether it was a narrative or non-narrative discourse (Biber, 1995).

Investigating the use of tenses in the rhetorical moves shows that the writers mainly used the simple present, present perfect and simple past tenses, which means that the emails included narrative and non-narrative writing discourse. In addition, the rhetorical moves also included instances of present continuous and simple future tenses, which reflect discussing upcoming events or unfinished business.

As Table 1 shows, the use of the simple present tense was common in the four main content moves of the emails, which reflects non-narrative discourse. The simple present tense was used a method of generalizing fact, expressing opinions and giving information. The second most common tense was the present perfect tense. This tense was used as a method of referring to past events with current relevance. As Table 1 shows, it was mainly common in 'discussing', 'responding', 'providing extra information' and 'informing' rhetorical moves. The use of the simple past tense, however, was used in 'providing extra information', 'discussing' and 'responding' rhetorical moves alone with a single occurrence in 'informing' move. This reflects the narrative type of writing in discussing, providing extra information and responding to request rhetorical moves as they referred to previous events. In addition, the writers in the 'discussing' rhetorical move also made use of the present continuous tense mainly to highlight unfinished business and the simple future tense to refer to an upcoming event.

Table 1: Tenses in the content moves

Tenses Moves	Simple Present	Simple Past	Present Perfect	Present continuous	Simple future	Total
Referring to previous contact	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discussing	49	16	29	4	15	113
Requesting	8	5	0	0	0	13
Responding	27	12	17	0	0	56
Indicating enclosure	15	0	4	1	0	20
Informing	17	1	7	0	0	25
Providing extra information	28	19	12	5	7	71
Requesting conforming receipt	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offering help if needed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	144	53	69	10	22	298

The type of the email message (solitary or chain) influenced the type of discourse used in the email messages. As mentioned earlier, the communicative intention of ‘discussing’ and ‘requesting-responding’ rhetorical moves was usually exchanged in a number of email messages. The writers of the initiating email usually established a discussion or placed a request for information or action. The recipients of these emails responded by giving an opinion or a suggestion. This usually sealed the chain, especially in the emails that included the ‘requesting’ move. The reply to the ‘discussing’ move, however, usually became the subject of a following email that further discussed or negotiated the issue. This exchange of emails continued in a number of out-going and in-coming email messages until an agreement was reached between the communicators. This practice has obviously influenced the type of discourse used in these rhetorical moves as they included narrative and non-narrative discourse. The use of non-narrative discourse was mainly associated with current issues such as deadlines, timetables, exams, marksheets and venues. The use of the narrative discourse, however, was associated with past events such as exam results, conversations, applications or actions that have current relevance. As example (9) shows, the writer of the email advised the part-time lecturers about the deadline of submitting the marked assignments using a simple present tense.

Ex9: 1.9. The deadline for submission of these marked assignments and answer scripts to Ms Lxxx, Academic Manager and Chief Moderator of NCC Malaysia, is 28 May 2010.

Ex10: 1.1. I **have printed** out the hardcopy of the marking scheme and **will give it** immediately to Ms NS who is the lecturer and examiner for the VB module.

Ex11: 1.11. As **I am still waiting** for the payment to come through for the 2 new students, I will not be able to...

Ex12: 2.31. **I asked** Mr. HS and **he told** me that **he sent** your application 10 days ago.

In example (10) above, the writer updates the external partner about the latest actions taken regarding the attributed issue using the present perfect tense to refer to the previous action and linking it to the upcoming action, using the simple future tense. The main purpose of using the present perfect tense in example (10), not the simple past tense, was the writer’s intention to explain why he had not delivered the marking scheme to the Ms. NS. In example (12) above, the writer used the simple past tense three times in a single sentence. The main function was convincing the student that his visa application was sent and awaiting approval. This email was a reply to an enquiry from the student regarding his visa application.

In addition to these narrative and non-narrative discourses in chain-type messages, the writers of the ‘discussing’ move used present continuous and simple future tenses. The usage of the present continuous tense in the ‘discussing’ move was mainly associated with unfinished business. As example (11) shows, the writer does not literally mean that she is sitting down waiting for the payment; it is a reminder that the payment was not received yet. That is, ‘I did not receive the payment for the 2 new students’. The usage of the first person singular pronoun

'I' and the present continuous tense in example (11) above, in fact, reflects an interesting technique some participants used to avoid imposition in their correspondence. As the content of the email shows, the writer wanted to remind the recipient that the payment is not received yet; however, she did not 'want' to sound direct and imposing. Therefore, the reminder was presented indirectly by referring to her current situation, using the first person pronoun 'I' and the present continuous tense, followed by the simple future tense, which explains the possible consequences. All this was made indirectly without referring to the recipient or declaring openly that the payment was not made. The use of the simple future tense in this move functioned as a method of referring to upcoming actions. In example (10) above, the writer related a present perfect action to future action to ensure the recipient that the issue was attended.

The writers of 'informing' and 'indicating enclosure' moves, however, mainly used non-narrative discourse. They mainly used the simple present tense to generalize information, present facts or refer to the rules and regulations of the institution. In 'informing' move, the writers mainly used the simple present tense to inform about due dates, class cancellation, replacement classes, and general updates regarding administrative and academic issues (see 13 & 14).

Ex13: 3.68. **This is an invitation** for the Business Research Methods Presentation (Viva/Oral)

Ex14: 6.27. **This little note is** to serve as a reminder to you on the examination...

In example (13), the head of studies sent this email to all MBA students inviting them to attend an oral defence in the institution. In example (14), the writer wrote the email to remind the students about the rules and regulations for the exams. The use of the present simple tense in both moves meant to show the immediate or the current relevance of the issues. As such, the moves above are associated with informational rather than narrative writing. They meant to bring to the attention of the recipients the two communicated issues. In the 'indicating enclosure' move, however, the use of the simple present tense was associated with presenting the given action. As example (14) above shows, the writer used the simple present tense to inform the recipient about the taken action. As explained in previous section, the writers of indicating enclosure move mainly used the directing-like-requesting formulaic expression 'please find attached' to direct the attention of the recipient to the enclosed file. The agent in that expression was always 'absent'. In example (15) below, the writer also meant to direct the attention of the recipient to the enclosed file, however, using a simple present active voice sentence.

Ex15: 1.4. I, herewith, forward to you the attached softcopy of the marking scheme for the VB exam.

The investigation on the use of tense in the rhetorical moves reflected the type of discourse used. The writers of 'informing' and 'indicating enclosure' moves mainly used non-narrative discourse, which reflects the current nature of the issues involved. The writers of 'discussing', 'responding to request', and 'providing extra information' rhetorical moves, however, made use of narrative and non-narrative discourse. This reflects discussing or referring to current, past remote and past relevant issues. This means that the writers of 'informing' and 'indicating enclosure' moves were involved in informational discourse, whereas the writers of 'discussing', 'responding' and 'providing extra information' moves were involved in informational and narrative discourse. All these instances were used in active voice, which reflects an obligation on the agent (Biber, 1988, 1995).

4.3. Passive Voice

Passive voice is used for abstract presentation of the information (Biber, 1988). This includes agentless passive, which is used when the agent has no role in the discourse and 'by' passive, which is used when the action maker or the agent has a role in the discourse (Biber 1988). According to Biber (1988, 1995), the use of agentless passive voice reflects 'informational production' in texts, that is, the use of the agentless passive reflects information-oriented discourse. This type of production is opposed with the "involved production", which reflects involvement between the communicators. In addition, Biber (1995) stated that the use of the 'by' passive and agentless passive reflect abstract style. That is, their use reflects less interactivity between the communicators. According to Biber (1995), the use of 'by' passive reflects logical relations among propositions, the agentless passive, however is used to "promote an inanimate referent and demote animate referent" (p. 164).

Investigating the use of passive voice in the content moves carrying the communicative intentions of the email messages shows that the writers used 73 passive voice times, 38 of which were in 'informing about issues' rhetorical moves, 17 in 'providing extra information' supporting move, 16 in 'discussing issues' move, and two occurrences in the 'responding to requests' rhetorical move. Passive voice was not used in any of the 'indicating enclosure' main content move. These 73 instances were 13 'by' passive and 60 agentless passive.

Table 2: Passive voice in the content moves

Moves \ Type of passive	'by passive	Agentless passive	Total
Informing	6	32	38
Discussing	3	13	16
Responding to request	0	2	2
Indicating enclosure	0	0	0
Providing extra information	4	13	17
Total	13	60	73

As Table 2 shows, the writers of 'informing about issues' move made use of 32 agentless and 6 'by' passive clauses, which, according to Biber (1988, 1995), reflect an informational rather than involved production. The writers of these moves intended to draw the attention of the recipient to the presented information in which the agent has no role to play. The majority of passive voice instances in 'providing extra information' and 'discussing about issues' and the two instances in 'responding to requests' rhetorical moves were also agentless passives.

6: 1.47. It has been found that the June 2010 IT Skills Examination paper, tion B, Question 1 (Spreadsheets) is missing.

7: 1.22. I know what you mean, don't worry. The Exam Papers will be sent e we finalize them.

In example (16) above, which is an 'informing about issues' rhetorical move, the writer intended to inform the recipients about the missing section in the IT paper regardless of the animate agent. This practice was also used in example (17) above, which is a 'discussing issues' rhetorical move. The writer used the agentless passive to promote an inanimate referent, which is the 'exam', and demote the animate agent, who is the person who will send the papers.

In addition, the results showed that the writers used the agentless passive to distant the self and minimize imposition. As example (18) below shows, the writer informed the recipient that the application of one student was held pending because no qualifications were submitted. He did this using the agentless passive without stating who held the application pending and why. It is obvious from the content that the sender held the application pending as the addressee did not send the qualifications. However, to distant the self and minimize the imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987), the writer used the agentless passive.

Ex18: 4.13. The application for Mxxx Kxxx has been held pending because no qualifications were submitted

Investigating the use of the 'by' passive shows that it was used mainly to inform about the agent when required. As example (19) below, which is a 'discussing issues' move, shows, the writer used the 'by' passive to identify the channel in which the delivery will take place. As mentioned earlier, the use of the 'by' passive was an uncommon practice, as the majority of the passive voice instances were agentless passives.

Ex19: 1.22. the exams will be sent to you by email

Overall, the use of passive voice was mainly common in 'informing about issues' and 'providing extra information' moves, which reflects the abstract style and informational production in these two rhetorical moves. The use of passive voice in 'discussing issues' and 'responding to requests' rhetorical moves was an uncommon practice and was not used in the 'requesting' rhetorical move. As mentioned earlier, 'requesting' moves mainly included imperative and interrogative clauses to seek information or actions, whereas 'indicating enclosure' move mainly included imperative clauses to divert the attention of the addressee to the attached file. The use of passive voice in the emails mainly intended to emphasize the information and promote an inanimate referent. It was also used to demote or distant the animate agent from the imposition.

4.4. Public & Suasive Verbs

Public verbs reflect actions that can be observed publicly; they are "primarily speech act verb such as say and explain" (Biber, 1991, p. 242). According to Hinkel (2008), public verbs are also used to introduce indirect or reported statements. Suasive verbs, however, present a directive or the intention to bring some change (Biber, 1991, Hinkel, 2008). The importance of investigating these two classes of verbs lays in their ability to reflect the type of

discourse used in the email messages (Biber, 1995). The occurrence of public verbs reflects “narrative discourse”, whereas the use of suasive verbs reflects an “overtly argumentative discourse” (Biber, 1988, 1995).

Ex20: 3.116. I suggest that you record this....

Ex21: 6.39. I recommend that you have breakout groups and presentations’

Ex22: 1.55. Please arrange for the necessary and send us all the samples electronically

Ex23: 4.58. Here I attach the list of students

Ex24: 1.35. Kindly acknowledge receipt

Even though public and suasive verbs occurred in ‘discussing issues’, ‘responding to request’, ‘providing extra information’ and ‘requesting confirming receipt’ communicative moves, but this was not a very common practice. The employees mainly used ‘explain’, ‘suggest’, ‘write’, ‘give’, ‘offer’, ‘tell’ and ‘send’ public verbs to solicit an action from the recipient. As example (20) above shows, the writer used the verb ‘suggest’ followed by ‘that clause’ to present his input regarding the issue. The verb ‘suggest’ in this excerpt is a public and suasive verb (Biber, 1991). It is public verb as it reflects an action that can be observed, which is the suggestion followed by the ‘that clause’, and suasive verb as it intends to bring some change, which is the suggestion after the ‘that clause’ (Quirk et al., 1985). In addition to ‘suggest’, the writers of these moves also used ‘recommend’ (see example 21), ‘arrange’ and ‘ensure’ suasive verbs. In example (22) above, the writer, in this ‘requesting’ move, used the suasive verb ‘arrange’ to indicate the required change from the addressee, and the public verb, ‘send’, to indicate the required action. The main purpose of using these suasive verbs in the discussing issues move is to present a directive to change (Biber, 1991; Hinkel, 2008). Similarly, the writer of example (24) above, which is a ‘requesting confirming receipt’ move, intended to solicit an action from the addressee.

In the ‘indicating enclosure’ move, however, the writers mainly used ‘submit’, ‘enclose’ and ‘attach’ public verbs preceded by the first person singular pronoun ‘I’. The use of these verbs mainly intended to indicate the action that is carried out by the addresser in the email message. As example (23) above shows, the writer refers to her action, which is attaching the list of the students. Unlike the use of public verbs in ‘discussing issues’, ‘requesting’ and ‘responding to request’ moves, the use of public verbs in ‘indicating enclosure’ move did not explicitly solicit an action from the addresser. It was merely a representation of carrying out a task.

Ex25: 6.67. Please be informed that Introduction to marketing classes is scheduled as follows

Ex26: 5.55. You are required to follow the instructions in the future exam cycle

The use of public and suasive verbs was a common practice in ‘informing about issues’ communicative moves. The writers mainly used ‘require’, ‘inform’, ‘instruct’ and ‘advise’ as part of passive voice constructs to solicit actions from the addressee or present information. The construction of the passive voice took two formulaic forms that are 1) using the second person pronoun ‘you’ as a subject followed by the passive voice as in ‘you are required’ and ‘you are instructed’ or 2) using the formulaic expressions ‘you are informed that’ and ‘you are advised that’. As example (25) above shows, the writer used the signposting formulaic expression ‘please be informed’ to express information (Chin, 2011). This expression was always followed by ‘that clause’ to ‘indirectly’ specify the given information. The verb ‘inform’ is a public verb as it is used to introduce an indirect statement (Biber, 1991) and suasive verb as it is used “to bring about some change in the future” (Biber, 1991, p. 242). That is, the use of ‘informed’ as part of the expression intended to provide indirectly the amended schedule of the given module. In example (26) above, however, the writer used the passive voice construct ‘you are required to’ to indicate an obligation on the part of the addressee. A direct, firm and imperative statement that intended to emphasize a point always followed this construct. As such, ‘required’ is a public and suasive verb as it intends to indirectly enforce a change (Biber, 1991).

The use of public and suasive verbs in the email messages reflects email writers’ engagement in narrative and overtly argumentative discourse (Biber, 1991). In the ‘discussing issues’, ‘responding to requests’ and ‘informing about issues’ moves, the writers intended to indirectly introduce an issue to bring about some change using ‘suggest’, ‘recommend’, ‘inform’, ‘require’, ‘instruct’, and ‘advise’. The writers of ‘indicating enclosure’ move, however, make use of public verbs alone as in ‘enclose’, ‘submit’ and ‘attach’ to present actions that can be publicly observed (Biber, 1991).

4.5 Cognitive Verbs

Cognitive verbs, often referred to as psychological verbs, psychological predicates (Leech, 1983), or private verbs (Biber, 1988), are the verbs that are used to “denote the speaker’s psychological disposition” (Fetzer, 2008, p. 388, original emphasis). According to Palmer (1974), private verbs are “those that refer to states or activities that the speaker alone is aware of. These are of two kinds: those that refer to mental activities and those that refer to

sensations" (p. 71). As the main purpose of examining cognitive verbs in the emails is analysing the psychological disposition of the correspondence, the focus is drawn on the former.

Email writers have repeatedly used eight cognitive verbs in their email messages that are: know, think, find, understand, feel, hope, like, want and wish. A close look at these verbs shows that they may be divided into three semantic subcategories that are 1) private factual verbs: know, feel, think (Quirk et al., 1985); 2) private mental verbs that indicates an unfulfilled desire: like, want, hope, wish (Souter and Atwell, 1993); and 3) the mental state verb: understand.

The writers of 'discussing issues', 'requesting', and 'responding to request' rhetorical moves email were engaged in the three different categories of cognitive verbs. As they 'discuss' academic and organizational issues and 'request' and 'responded to requests', they mainly referred to their aspiration of achieving an unfulfilled action (feedback, explanation and request), presenting facts according to their own point of view or stating their mental position. The writers of 'informing about issues' move, however, mainly used cognitive verbs to present facts and state a tendency of achieving an action. The use of cognitive verbs in 'indicating enclosure' move was not a common practice. They occurred in seven 'indicating enclosure' moves to state facts and mental position. This shows that the usage of cognitive verbs in 'discussing issues', 'requesting' and 'responding to request' moves mainly attributed to expressing a desire to be fulfilled in the upcoming messages, whereas the usage of cognitive verbs in 'informing about issues' move is mainly attributed to presenting facts.

Examining the functional use of the factual verbs shows that they had the same function in all the rhetorical moves that is, expressing personal opinion regarding an issue in accordance with interactants' interpretations of the institutional rules and regulations. The function of the private mental verbs that indicate an unfulfilled desire, however, varied according to the move type whether a chain (discussing issues and requesting-responding to request moves) or a solitary (indicating enclosure and informing about issues moves) type move. In chain-type moves, for example, the usage of these private verbs has functioned mainly as an indication of a true future desire to obtain a feedback, explanation, more information, or response from the recipient of the email, whilst the usage of these verbs in the solitary-type moves referred backwardly to the presented information. That is, the desire in chain-type moves can stand as an initiative to acquire information or feedback, whereas the desire in the solitary-type moves stands as a desire that the provided information, updates, or explanations meet the expectations of the recipient. Therefore, the usage of the private mental verbs in chain moves motivated a response, but their usage in the solitary-type moves merely expressed a personal aspiration that the attributed issue is clear and concise.

Ex27: 6.44. I do hope that the above suitably throws light on issues of concern with regard to

Ex28: 5.26. I hope that ABE will assist me in this matter.

As the excerpts above show, the usage of the cognitive verb 'hope' has two different functions. In example (27) above, which is an excerpt from a 'providing extra information' move, the writer 'hope[s]' that the presented information in the previous move (informing about issues move) 'throws lights on issues'. That is, the information is already presented, and the writer hopes that the given information explains the attributed subject. In example (28) above, however, the writer 'hopes' that the reader of the email 'assist her' by providing the 'syllabus and the lecture guide'. That is, the hope will not be fulfilled, unless the reader of the email provides the requested information or further explains the issue.

The use of the private verb 'find' was particularly common in indicating the enclosure move. The writers mainly used this cognitive verb as part of formulaic expressions as in 'please find attached' and 'enclosed please find' to divert the attention of the recipient to the attached file. This private verb reflects a non-observable intellectual act. The act of finding the attached or the enclosed files, as such, should be intellectually carried out by the 'hidden second person'.

Ex29: 6.44. Please feel free to contact me for any further clarifications.

The use of cognitive verbs was also a common practice in 'offering help if needed' follow up move. The writers mainly used the cognitive verb 'feel' as part of a formulaic polite imperative construct to express availability. In example (29) above, the writer expresses availability to give further clarifications using the formulaic expression 'please feel free'. The use of this construct intends to give permission to the addressee to take certain actions or do the specified act, which is in this move is contacting the addresser regarding further clarifications.

As such, the writers of 'discussing' rhetorical move were equally engaged in presenting facts, expressing desire and explaining the mental statuses using 'understand'. The usage of cognitive verbs in the 'requesting' rhetorical move intended to express an unfulfilled desire, their use in the 'response' rhetorical move, however, intended to present a fact. In 'informing about issues' move however, the use of cognitive verbs was a technique to provide facts and re-emphasize the given points. Finally, the usage of cognitive verbs in 'indicating enclosure' move was particularly

common, especially the private verb of non-observable intellectual act 'find', which always occur as part of formulaic expressions.

4.6. Pronouns

The importance of investigating the use of pronouns in the text genre arises as it reflects involvement. According to Biber (1988, 1995), the use of the first and second person pronouns reflect great involvement between the writer and the reader. It also reflects the personal nature of the correspondence. The use of the third person pronouns, however, reflects the involvement of other participants. Given that the emails were exchanged in a workplace, the use of the first person plural subjective and objective pronouns, 'we' and 'us', may reflect inclusive or exclusive nature (Brawn and Levinson, 1987). The inclusive use reflects the writer and the reader, which also adds to the personal nature of the emails; the exclusive use, however, refers to the writer as a part of the institution, which is a common practice in business communication. As such, investigating the use of pronouns reflects the personal or institutional nature of the email genre types.

The use of pronouns was common in the corpus. The 378 email messages included 1763 pronouns. The emails included the first, second and third person singular and plural subjective and objective pronouns (I, me, he, she, it, we, us, they, them, it) and possessive pronouns (our, my). Interestingly, the first person singular subjective and objective pronouns, 'I' and 'me', and the second person pronoun, 'you', were the most commonly used pronouns in the corpus as they occurred in 609 and 543 instances respectively, which reflected great involvement between the addresser and the addressee in the email messages (Biber, 1988, 1995). The first person plural subjective and objective pronouns 'we' and 'us' occurred in 194 instances. The use of these pronouns as mentioned earlier may refer exclusively to the corporate contexts or inclusively to the addresser and the addressee. The possessive pronouns 'my' and 'our' occurred in 184 and 69 instances respectively. The reference to the third person was also common in the email messages as the animate third person singular and plural subjective and objective pronouns, 'he', 'she', 'him', 'her', 'they', and 'them', collectively occurred in 164 instances, which also reflects the high involvement of a third party in the email messages (Biber, 1988, 1995).

Examining the practice of using pronouns in the 'discussing issues' move reveals an interesting practice was carried out creatively by the writers of the emails. That was the shift-in-focus between the personal 'I' and 'my', on the one hand, and the plural organizational represented 'we' and 'our', on the other. Even though an auto signature that identifies the organizational position of the sender usually supported the usage of 'I', 'me' and 'my' in the emails, the acceptance of the decisions that were carried out using the singular personal pronouns was not always a straightforward process. Therefore, as a strategy of enforcing the decisions and giving a corporate value to the communicated issue, the writers shifted the focus from the personal 'I' into the plural exclusive 'we'.

Chain 1:

Ex30. 5.7. Dear VK,

For Axxx and can confirm that **he** is legible for entry to the Diploma level based on his Bachelor of Economics Degree from the University of Sindh , Pakistan **He** will be required to complete both part 1 and part 2 of the Diploma.

Ex31.5.8. Dear KL

The student keen to take Diploma 2. **He** said is waste for him to repeat the subject in diploma 1. There have few student was eligible take diploma 2 and advance diploma with same qualification from Pakistan. Anyhow, KL, **I** try convince him take diploma 1, if still **he** cannot make it, **I** will ask him take other programme.

Thanks for your advised.

Ex32: 5.9. Dear VK

We do not offer students direct entry to the Diploma part 2; **our** systems do not even allow this. Diploma students are required to pass both parts.

... It is not a waste of time for the student; the subjects in the ABE Diploma (level 5) are of a much higher standard than the subjects **he** did in his Degree (level 3). The assessment that **I** have made is correct and the offer is final.

...- this is something **he** may wish to look into if **he** wishes to apply elsewhere.

I hope this information provides clarification on the matter; thank **you** for your cooperation.

As the chain 1 shows, Mr. VK, the assistant academic director is involved in a discussion with Mr. KL regarding the assessment of a qualification. Mr. KL made his assessment, but Mr. VK and the student, obviously, do not accept the outcome. The personal presentation of the assessment using 'I' in 'I have received and assessed the faxed qualifications', seemed negotiable to Mr. VK, who challenged the initial assessment declaring that other students who have the same qualification were granted exemptions, and that, if this student does not receive the exemption, he will study another program. This response, as example (32) above shows, was taken as a personal challenge by Mr. KL, who re-emphasized his initial assessment, however, using the plural exclusive 'we' foregrounding the organization, and backgrounding the self, 'We do not offer students direct entry to the Diploma part 2'. To back up his assessment, he made a general reference to the rules and regulations, using the plural possessive pronoun 'our', 'our systems do not even allow this'. After explaining the issue and proving that his assessment is in proportion to the rules and regulations of his association, He foregrounded himself and backgrounded the organization to emphasize his initial assessment that was challenged earlier by Mr. VK, 'The assessment that I have made is correct and the offer is final'.

This shift-in-focus by foregrounding and backgrounding the self and the organization according to the communicative need was common in 'discussing issues' rhetorical move. As mentioned earlier, the overwhelming majority of employees preferred foregrounding the self, using the first person singular pronoun, 'I', in their discussions. However, if there were a point to be imposed or a point that needed to be taken seriously, the writers usually foregrounded the organization and backgrounded the self, using the plural 'we'. The same technique was used when referring to actions. Mainly, the reference to people, actions and communications was carried out using the singular possessive pronouns, 'my' as in 'my students', 'my email', and 'my findings'. However, if the issue needed general acknowledgment from the recipient, the reference to the same people or actions by the same writer was carried out on the corporate level as in 'our students', 'our email', and 'our findings'.

Additionally, the reference to a third party was exceptionally high in the 'discussing issues' rhetorical move. As mentioned earlier, third person pronouns occurred in 164 instances in the corpus, 101 (61 percent) of which occurred in the 'discussing issues' rhetorical move. The writers mainly discussed granting exemptions, registration issues, exam results, leave-related issues, renewing visas and suggestions given by governmental authorities or external partners. The 101 instances of referring to a third party occurred in thirty-four 'discussing issues' moves, which means that around 40 percent of the 'discussing issues' moves discussed a third-person, mainly students, related issues.

The use of first person plural pronouns, however, was the highest in the 'informing about issues' move. The average of using first person plural subjective and objective pronouns, 'we' and 'us' in this move was 1.1 pronouns per message. Examining the usage of these pronouns shows that the majority of them were used exclusively referring to the employee as part of the institution. Given that the 'informing about issues' move functions as a method of informing, notifying or updating the recipients about general interest issues, the choice of the plural 'we' intended to give a corporate value to the communicated issue.

Ex33: 1.23.

Examination Venue for IDCS global papers

Dear All

Please be advised that **we** have changed the exam venue for IDCS global papers to the following venue for the June 2010 cycle:

Name of the college

Venue

Best regards

Auto signature

In example (33) above, the first person plural pronoun 'we' refers to the institution. As such, this message is a formal notification regarding the change of venue of the paper. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the first person plural subjective and objective pronouns in 'informing about issues' moves exclusively referred to the institution or a group of people that does not include the addressee. The remaining occurrences were used to inform about activities that are planned internally where 'we' and 'us' referred to the writer and every recipient of the email as in 'I thought that we should pep up the semester with an activity that would benefit us', that is the writer and the recipient of the email.

The usage of pronouns in 'requesting', 'responding', and 'indicating enclosure' rhetorical moves was mainly constrained to the usage of the first person singular 'I' and the second person pronoun 'you', which reflects a high

level of involvement between the communicators (Biber, 1988, 1995). Interestingly, the occurrence of the first person singular pronoun 'I' and second person pronoun 'you' in the 'requesting' and 'responding to request' rhetorical moves enjoyed an equal frequency to the number of moves. The occurrence of these pronouns was 1.03 and exactly 1 pronoun per message occurred in these two moves respectively. Given that 'requesting' and 'responding to request' rhetorical moves are typically short, the match between the frequency of using 'I' and 'you' with the number of moves reflects the personal nature of these rhetorical moves. Noticeably, the frequency of using the plural 'we' and 'our' is less than using them in 'discussing' and 'informing' rhetorical moves with an average of 0.28 and 0.09 per move respectively, whereas the usage of the singular possessive 'my' was around 0.57 per message. This re-emphasizes the personal nature of 'requesting' and 'responding to request' rhetorical moves as the writers mainly personified the correspondence by foregrounding the self and backgrounding the institution as in 'my next semester', 'my timetable', and 'my requirements'. The reference to the absent other 'third person' is also uncommon in 'requesting' and 'responding to request' moves as it occurred in merely 4 of the 125 moves. As such, the usage of pronouns in these two moves reflects the personal nature of these moves as the communication was intentionally directed to reflect the self and the other on the personal capacity, backgrounding the organization.

Examining the usage of pronouns in 'indicating enclosure' move shows a low frequency of involvement between the sender and the recipient. Even though the two most frequent pronouns in 'indicating enclosure' move are the second person 'you' and the first person singular pronoun 'I', their average per message is lesser than one pronoun per message. The average of using all other pronouns collectively is around 0.8 per message, which also reflects a low frequency of referring to the plural context of the institution and the absent other. The most frequent reference in the 'indicating enclosure' move is the reference to the enclosure, 'please find attached', which enjoys a 100 percent frequency. Obviously, the core focus in this move is the attached files or documents. In fact, the 16 'indicating enclosure' moves did not have a reference to the self and the other, except in the 'From' and 'To' boxes in the formatting of the email, and another 22 moves included the reference to the enclosure and a short explanation about its nature.

The use of the first person singular and plural pronouns was also a common practice in 'providing extra information' supporting content move. The use of pronouns in this move highly depended on the tone of the main content move. For the emails that the writer was personally involved in the communication, as in 'discussing', 'requesting' and 'responding to request' rhetorical move, the use of pronouns in this move was mainly first and second person pronouns. However, if the writer used an informative abstract style as in 'informing about issues' move, the use of pronouns in this move was mainly first person plural pronouns. Nevertheless, some email messages including the 'discussing issues' move had two different tones in a single message. The writers were personally involved in the 'discussing issues' move, but constructed the supporting move, 'providing extra information', using first person plural pronouns. The main purpose of this switch in tone was putting an end to the on-going discussion by referring to the rules and regulations using the corporate 'we' and 'us'.

Examining the use of pronouns in the main content moves revealed that 'discussing', 'requesting' and 'responding to requests' rhetorical moves mainly included the use of first, second, and third person pronouns, which reflected an involved style of writing (Biber, 1988, 1995). The 'discussing issues' move also included third person pronouns, which reflected narrative discourse (Biber, 1988, 1995). The use of pronouns in 'informing about issues' move, however, mainly included the corporate 'we' and 'us'. These pronouns were mainly used to refer to the addresser as part of a group. The use of pronouns in the indicating enclosure move, however, was not a common practice.

4.7. Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns, according to Biber (1995), stand "for an unspecified referent that must be inferred from the discourse or the situational reference" (p. 144). In English, there are four demonstrative pronouns that are 'this', 'that', 'these' and 'those'. The occurrence of these demonstrative pronouns in a discourse, according to Biber (1988, 1995), reflects "on-line information" style of writing opposed to the "edited" or the "not on-line informational" style.

Examining the use of the demonstrative pronouns in the email messages revealed the exceptionally high occurrence of the singular demonstrative pronouns 'this', which occurred in 124 instances and 'that', which occurred in 65 instances. The use of the plural demonstrative pronouns 'these' and 'those', however, was not a common practice, occurring in only 14 and 9 instances respectively. This reflects the exceptionally high reference to a single issue in the email messages. Remarkably, the overwhelming majority of demonstrative pronouns, singular and plural, referred to nominal entities (199 instances); the reference to animate referents was not a common practice, however, as it occurred in 13 instances only. This practice reflects great involvement regarding institutional and academic issues in the email messages. The employees used the demonstrative pronouns to refer to a list of students, receiving late payments, an explanation or a suggestion that was presented earlier, a point that need to be clarified, an attached file[s] or document[s] and a single or a number of personnel as in (i.e., this is Kxxx Oxxx).

Ex34: 1.25. Can you help me to check on **this**

Ex35: 2.22. **This** is due to one of the following reasons..

Ex36: 5.54. **These** are all small issues that can be sorted..

Ex37: 1.11. I found that **this** does not match with **those** on the Control Forms

Ex38: 7.29. **These** are the exam marks of ICCS and IDCS exam.

The demonstrative pronouns in the email corpus referred to text-internal, endophoric, and text-external, exophoric, elements. Endophoric referring or text-internal referring was used to refer to elements that were already mentioned in the email message, anaphoric referencing, whereas exophoric referring or the text-external referring was used to refer to elements that were not mentioned in the email message. The writers used the exophoric referring to bring a text-external element into the text of the email message, which reflects functional intertextuality (Devitt, 1991). In example (34) above, which is a 'requesting' move, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' is an endophoric referring to a text-internal element, which is the list of the students who registered for the exam that was mentioned earlier in the same email message. Additionally, in example (37) above, which is a 'discussing issues' move, the writer used two demonstrative pronouns 'this' and 'these' to compare between two text-internal elements that were mentioned earlier in the email. The comparison in this email is between the list of registered students that was received by the employee earlier and bank drafts on the control form that were mentioned earlier in the email message. In example (35) above, which is a 'responding to request' move, however, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' is an exophoric referring to a text-external element that is the problem the student mentioned in the previous email. Similarly, in example (36) above, which is a 'discussing issues' move, the writer used the plural demonstrative pronoun 'these' as an exophoric referring to text-external elements, which are the problems that students face to receive approvals. The occurrence of exophoric referencing in the email messages emphasizes the importance of placing the emails in their context as meaning is carried from one email to another.

All demonstrative pronouns discussed earlier referred to a specific endophoric or exophoric nominal entity. However, the writers of the emails also used the demonstrative pronouns to refer to an implicit entity that was not mentioned in the text or outside the text. The identification of the referent in this case depended on the context or the situation. In example (38), the employee used the plural demonstrative pronoun 'these' to refer to the attached files. Even though the nominal entity 'the attached files' was not mentioned in the email message, the situation reveals that, as the marks were not provided in the body of the email message, they were attached into it. The reference here is a horizontal reference as the "text builds on text with which they are related syntagmatically" (Johnstone, 2002, p.139).

The demonstrative pronouns were also used to refer to an abstract concept (Biber, 1988) that is not mentioned in the email message. As example (39) below shows, the writer used the plural demonstrative pronoun 'those' twice in the email to refer to inexplicit elements. From the context, the two demonstrative pronouns refer to 'students'. This is case as the demonstrative pronouns are followed by two relative clauses, which state that 'those' are 'seeking extensions' and 'those' are 'travelling'. Given that the email was sent by administrative staff in the institution to 'All' students, the two demonstrative pronouns, then, refer to 'the students' who are seeking extensions and going to travel.

Ex39: 6.47.

Dear All

Those who are seeking extension, kindly submit your reason in writing along with the assignment. **Those** who are travelling, please submit your travel documents also and the decision will only be made at the Examination Board.

Thanks.

IFF

The use of demonstrative pronouns was particularly common in the 'discussing issues', 'requesting', 'responding to request', 'providing extra information' and 'offering help if needed' moves. In the latter, email writers used the demonstrative pronouns to refer to previously mentioned nominal entities as in as in 'if you have an quires regarding this, please feel free to contact me', which reflects the on-line not edited style in these rhetorical moves. Even though the demonstrative pronouns were used in a number of 'indicating enclosure' and 'informing about issues' moves, their occurrence was not common as the writers mainly strived to use the nouns or the nominal entities as part of the text as in 'students who are sitting for the Accounting and Finance paper...', which reflects a "not on-line" "edited" style in these rhetorical moves (Biber, 1995).

4.8 Modal Verbs

The usage of modal verbs in the email messages was a common practice as the corpus of emails included 484 modal verbs. The importance of modal verbs lies in their ability to modify the verb occurring after them and presents a number of different pragmatic communicative intentions such as ability, permission, obligation, necessity, probability, etc. Their function intertwines, but with different degrees. The use of modal verbs, especially possibility modals, according to Biber (1988, 1995), reflects an involved style of writing.

According to Crystal (2003b), there are three different types of modalities that are: deontic modality, which is “concerned with the logic of obligation and permission” (p. 130); epistemic modality, which is “concerned with the logical structure of statements which asserts or implies that the PROPOSITIONS are known and believed” (p. 163, original emphasis); and alethic modality, which is “concerned with the necessary or contingent truth of proposition” (p. 18). “The car must be ready”, according to Crystal (2003b, p. 130), can be interpreted as “an obligation that the car be ready” in deontic modality; “it is metaphorically necessary for the car to be ready” in alethic modality; and “it follows from what is known that the car must be ready” in epistemic modality. Clearly, deontic modality is concerned with obligation, whereas epistemic and alethic modality are interconnected as they mainly look at two interlinked views that are speakers’ judgments, evaluations and the logical necessity of the truth (knowledge). Having said that, analysing modality in the four different types of emails can be examined in alignment with the three-made-two modalities that are the obligation, deontic modality, and knowledge, epistemic modality. However, as Crystal’s (2003, p. 130) example above shows, the use of the same modal verb in the same sentence could be interpreted differently according to the three-made-two modalities. As such, the interpretation of the modal verbs in the emails depended on the context of the email.

In example (40) below, the writer used the modality ‘will’ twice, and the modality ‘can’ once but with different functions. The first occurrence of ‘will’, ‘I’m afraid the syllabus is not yet available and will not be published until July’, is used as an epistemic modality, as the writer refers to his knowledge regarding the matter. As such, the modality ‘will’ is used in a predictive statement based on previous knowledge, and the statement is interpreted as ‘based on what I know, the syllabus will not be published until July’. In the second occurrence of ‘will’, ‘We are very sorry for the inconvenience and will ensure the syllabus is...’, however, the writer of the email is apologizing for the late action and he ‘oblige’ himself and the institution to deliver the requested material ‘as soon as it possible can’. The use of the statement ‘as soon as possible’ only makes the obligation to deliver the requested documents seems in the very near future, therefore, the writer chose to give himself an open option using the modal ‘can’. That is, he joined the possibility in ‘as soon as possible’ with the ability in ‘can’. As such, the whole obligation presented after the apology, ‘will insure the syllabus is made available...’ became a conditional obligation that depends on the ability. In this sense, the interpretation of the sentence becomes as ‘we are sorry for the inconvenience and ‘we oblige ourselves to delivering’ the syllabus as soon as we have the ability to do so’. Therefore, the second ‘will’ and ‘can’ are deontic as ‘will’ presents the promise and ‘can’ presents the conditional possibility, ‘when we have the ability to deliver the requested documents, we oblige ourselves to delivering it’. As such, the writer of the email used the first ‘will’ as an epistemic modality, whereas he used the second ‘will’ and ‘can’ as a deontic modalities.

Ex40: 2.43.

I’m afraid the syllabus is not yet available and **will not be published until July**. We are very sorry for the inconvenience and **will ensure the syllabus is made available as soon as it possible can**.

Examining the usage of deontic modality shows that the obligation was presented on the part of the addresser, see example (40) above, the addressee, ‘You may go to her and...’ and a third person singular and plural, ‘All diploma students must complete’, ‘I may send you my participation’. The use of these modalities intended to reflect necessity, ‘[I] must call all student before exam’, promises, ‘Ms. MA will call you by this week’, and evaluation, ‘it will be good for the college’. The usage of epistemic modality, however, mainly expressed speakers’ opinion about the attributed topic, as in ‘I am sure Ms BP would like to know...’, where the speaker shows certainty that Ms. BP wants to know the proposition.

Examining the actual usage of deontic and epistemic modality in the rhetorical moves shows that 55 percent of the modal verbs used were deontic and 45 percent epistemic. Even though these frequencies are close in occurrence, the actual average of using them per email message shows great deal of variation. The ‘discussing issues’ move, for example, has an almost equal percentage of using deontic and epistemic modality. The usage of modal verbs in ‘requesting’, ‘responding’ and ‘informing’ rhetorical moves was mainly deontic. The ‘indicating enclosure’ move, however, has the highest frequency of using deontic modality among all content moves.

The overall usage of deontic modality in the four different types of email messages belong to different subcategories. The 'requesting' move, for example, comprised more directive modality as a way of presenting requests, commissive modality for expressing obligation mainly on the addresser, and volitive modality wishing or hoping assistance from the addressee. The 'informing about issues' move, however, used more commissive modality mainly willing the second and third persons to take an action. The usage of deontic modality in the 'discussing issues' move included commissive modality expressing obligation on the addresser, addressee and third person, while the usage of deontic modality in 'indicating enclosure' move was mainly commissive on the part of the addresser. The overwhelming majority of modal verbs in the emails that included the 'indicating enclosure' move were mainly deontic as they connote writers' commitment to do something as in 'Please kindly see me personally (please inform Ms Kamala also) so that I can brief you on this COMPULSORY electronic...', or explaining possibility as in 'You can also collect the printed hardcopy...'. The usage of epistemic modality in 'indicating enclosure', however, mainly dealt with writers' judgments regarding the proposition as in 'As per our conversation I have understood your direction and branding awareness is a must especially for newly change management'. As this excerpt shows, the writer confirmed her judgment regarding the issue as a technique to further explain the proposition.

The writers of 'discussing issues' move were involved in explaining the possibilities, informing about the necessities, giving permissions, expressing obligations, giving opinions, requesting more information, granting approvals, and offering help regarding the attributed topics and propositions. These actions involved the addresser, the addressee, and third person singular and plural, which reflect the high tendency of involvement and richness in this move (Biber, 1988, 1995). The 'requesting' move included more directive and volitive modalities (especially requesting and wishing response) than any other rhetorical move in the corpus. The 'responding to request' move, however, mainly included the commissive modality to express commitment as in 'I shall send the assignment soon'. The 'informing' move, however, had the highest frequency of using commissive modality in the corpus. Unlike the overall usage of commissive modality in 'discussing' and 'responding to request' moves that mainly committed the self, the other, and the third person to take an action, commissive modality in 'informing about issues' move was audience oriented. That is, the obligation was directed to the recipient or the institution that he/she represents. The usage of modal verbs in 'indicating enclosure' rhetorical moves, however, mainly expressed obligations on the part of the addresser and judgments regarding a given proposition.

4.9. Hedges

Hedges are "linguistic forms which express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about the topic under discussion" (Michael et al., 2010, p. 25). They are mainly used in oral communication (Carter, 1998); however, they are also used in written communication (Salager-Meyer, 1994). The actual usage of these linguistic forms functions as mitigation devices that facilitate interactions between communicators by making them more precise and compose. The occurrence of general hedges, according to Biber (1988, 1995) reflects involvement, whereas the occurrence of seem/appear hedges reflects tentative interpretation academic hedging.

According to Hyland (1998), hedging could be categorized into content-oriented hedges and reader-oriented hedges. Content-oriented hedges hedge "the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought to be like" (Hyland, 1998, p. 162). This type of hedge includes accuracy-oriented attribute hedges, which reflect writers' desire to be as precise as possible, which could be marked by the use of adverbs (e.g., approximately, on average, usually) (Hyland, 1998), and accuracy-oriented reliability hedges, which indicate the level of certainty or uncertainty of the writer about the attributed proposition. Reliability hedges could be marked by the use of some auxiliary verbs (e.g., may, can), phrases (e.g., I guess, I am sure), verbs (e.g., seem, appear), adjectives (e.g., possible, probable) and nouns (e.g., tendency, possibility). In addition, the content-oriented hedges also include what Hyland (1998) called the writer-oriented hedges, which intend to "limit personal commitment" (Hyland, 1998, p. 174). The reader-oriented hedges, however, acknowledge the readers' role in rectifying the claims and invites readers' involvement (Hyland, 1996), which establishes a dialogue between the communicators to consider different points of view and the thoughts of others (Hyland 2001; Koutsantoni, 2007).

Table 3: Hedges in the main content moves

Content moves	Hedges			Reader-oriented
	Content-oriented		Writer-oriented	
	Attribute	Reliability		
Discussing	28	18	12	99
Responding	18	5	1	75
Informing	4	2	28	12
Indicating enclosure	5	3	0	4
Total	55	28	41	190

As Table 3 above shows, hedging was a common practice in the email messages. The reader-oriented hedges were the most common as they occurred 190 times. The use of the content-oriented hedges likewise was a common practice but had a lesser frequency. Overall, the high tendency to use reader-oriented hedges reflects a great deal of involvement between the communicators in the email messages. This type of hedge was particularly common in the ‘discussing issues’, ‘requesting’ and ‘responding to request’ moves. It was also used in the ‘informing about issues’ and ‘indicating enclosure’ moves, however, with a lesser frequency. The reader-oriented hedges were mainly used to provide recommendations or suggestions, ask questions, suggesting alternative possibility and personal attribution (see examples 41, 42 & 43).

Ex41: 3.118. I also **suggest** that at the next staff meeting...

Ex42: 2.23. **If** this wouldn’t solve the problem, please contact ABE England to

Ex43: 3.92. According to **my records** we have not received any reports

The excerpt in example (41) above was taken from a ‘discussing issues’ move that debated an issue. The writer, in this excerpt, gave a suggestion to the recipient to bring up the issue in the meeting. It is up to the reader to take the suggestion or not. It depends on his judgment. In example (42) above, the writer hedged using the if-clause to suggest alternative possibilities. As the reader could not login to his account, the writer suggested a solution to the problem. However, as the writer is not sure whether this solution would work or not, she further suggested another possibility in case the given solution did not work. In example (43) above, the writer hedged using personal attribution. That is, she did not make it a fact that the reports did not arrive. She referred to her own records. The reports could have arrived, but she did not receive them yet. Alternatively, as she is in charge of the reports, this could also mean that the report did not arrive at all. This type of hedge appeared in the four main content moves in the email messages; however, it appears to be particularly common in the ‘discussing issues’ and ‘responding to request’ rhetorical moves, which reflects a great deal of involvement between the communicators.

The use of the content-oriented hedges, however, included the accuracy-oriented attribute, accuracy-oriented reliability and writer-oriented hedges. The use of the accuracy-oriented attribute hedges was the most common type. It occurred as the writers wanted to be as precise as possible by modifying the degree of certainty. This mainly occurred by the use of epistemic adverbs as in example (44) below.

Ex44: 4.9. Although post does usually take approximately three to four weeks to reach

In this excerpt, the writer provides the degree to which the attribute could be true. The use of the adverb ‘approximately’, here, is meant to reflect on the degree of variation, which was stated as from three to four weeks. The adverb ‘usually’, however, is an adverb of indefinite frequency that meant to communicate the degree to which the approximated time is regular. The writer of this excerpt hedged by giving an approximation, and the approximation was hedged by regularity, which is also subject to variation. That is, if the writer wrote ‘post does take approximately..’, this would mean that the approximation is accurate. However, by hedging the approximation, ‘post does usually take approximately...’, this means that the approximation may not be accurate, and the post may even reach the receiver later. In addition to approximately, the writers in the email messages used ‘generally’, ‘on average’, ‘quite’, ‘almost’ and ‘more or less’ adverbs or adverbials to reflect on their degree of precision. The use of the accuracy-oriented attribute hedge appears to be a common practice in discussing issues and responding to request rhetorical moves, which reflect the writers’ desire to be as accurate as possible.

Ex45: 6.44. I **guess** I spoke too soon,

Ex46: 6.60. I **am sure** Ms BP would like to know...

Examining the accuracy-oriented reliability hedges, however, shows that the writers used a number of verbs and tentative phrases (Lakoff, 1975) to hedge their opinions. In example (45 above), the writer used 'I guess' as she was reluctant to force her point of view. This, according to Lakoff (1975) is a tentative hedge meant to present the opinion in an 'extra-polite' form. That is, the use of 'I guess', does not literally mean that the writer is not sure, however; she used this phrase to weaken the effect of the upcoming sentence. The context of the email shows that the Ms. BP wrote this email to students who asked for extensions to submit their assignments. Ms. BP wrote to the students earlier regarding the rules and regulations of submitting assignments and that no extensions were allowed except in the case of having an emergency and this should be supported by a signed document. However, to weaken the direct and imposing tone in the sentence, she hedged using 'I guess'. In example (46) above, however, the writer of the email, who is Ms. BP's assistant, used 'I am sure' for the opposite purpose of using 'I guess'. This email was written in response to a request from a student to have an extension for submitting his assignment. However, as Ms. IFF does not have the authority to give extensions, as it is Ms. BP's responsibility, she clarified this to the student emphasizing that he must have a strong reason, as Ms. BP will definitely ask about the purpose of the extension.

In addition the verbal and tentative phrases, the writers also used auxiliary verbs (e.g., it 'may' be good for you to meet up with them tomorrow), verbs (e.g., it 'seems' that this student already has a transcript), and adverbs (e.g., some of the emails that may be repeated are 'possibly' those...) to form accuracy-oriented reliability hedges. These hedges are overall meant to communicate possibility or probability. The use of this type of hedge was particularly common in the 'discussing issues' rhetorical move, which reflects involvement as a result of writers' assessments of the level of certainty of the proposition. The use of 'seems', according to Biber (1988, 1995), reflects tentative interpretation academic style. This was used mainly in 'discussing issues' moves to reflect on a point that was mentioned earlier in the email.

The use of the writer-oriented hedges, however, was used to demote the agent so to minimize any personal involvement in the communication. This practice, according to Hyland (1998), is usually used by constructing passive voice clauses. As shown in section 5.3.3 above, passive voice occurred in 73 rhetorical moves that were mainly 'informing about issues', 'discussing issues' and 'providing extra information' moves.

Drawing on the findings above, the use of the reader-oriented hedges was a common practice in 'discussing issues' and 'responding to request' communicative moves, which reflects a great deal of involvement between the communicators in these rhetorical moves (Biber, 1988, 1995). Similarly, as the use of the content oriented attribute and reliability hedges was also common in the above-mentioned moves, this also reflects involvement in tentative issues requiring opinions that were subject to possibilities and probabilities. The use of the writer-oriented hedges was particularly common in the 'informing about issues' move, reflecting the content-oriented abstract presentation of the proposition (Biber, 1995) in this rhetorical move. The use of hedges was uncommon in the 'indicating enclosure' rhetorical move, reflecting the factual presentation of the proposition in this move. Overall, as the use of hedges is regarded as an informal feature in written discourse (Biber, 1988), the common use of hedges in 'discussing issues' and 'responding to request' rhetorical moves reflects an informal writing-like-speaking discourse.

4.10. Place and Time Adverbials

The use of place and time adverbials in a text, according to Biber (1988, 1995), reflects a "situation-dependent" reference, which is opposed to an "elaborated reference". They, according to Biber (1988), serve as "deictics that can only be understood by reference to an external and temporal situation" (p. 110). According to Quirk et al. (1985), place adverbials could be distinguished to position, direction and distance adverbials, whereas time adverbials could be distinguished to position, duration, frequency and relationship adverbials.

The use of time adverbials was exceptionally high in the corpus. These time adverbials were used largely to state or mention a position in a certain time as in the use of 'today', 'tomorrow', 'yesterday', 'this week/ month/ semester', 'last week/ month/ semester', 'next week/ month/ semester', '[day] ago', 'in[month]', 'on [day]', 'this afternoon', 'immediately', 'soon', 'shortly', 'now' and 'after'. The use of these time adverbials of position, according to Quirk et al. (1985), reflects "fixed position on temporal scale" or "time as stasis" (p. 481). That is, the use of these adverbials in the email messages reflects the writers' tendency to refer to specific positions about when the action took place and when it applies (Quirk et al., 1985). The employees used these position time adverbials to refer to the time and date of replacement classes, the date and time of cancelled classes, the date of exams, due dates for assignments submission and registration (see example 49 below), the time or date of a previous action or communication (see example 48 below) and the time and date at which an action or a rule will be applied (see example 47 below). The use of position time adverbials was particularly common in 'discussing', 'informing', 'requesting', 'responding to request' and 'providing extra information' moves, which reflects the situational-dependent discourse in these rhetorical moves.

Ex47: 1.1. And will give it **immediately** to Ms. NS.

Ex48: 5.38. **Last week** I asked you about the syllabus for TTH subject..

Ex49: 4.53. IDCS student registration is due on **next Monday**,

The email messages also included instances of duration, frequency and relation time adverbials. Duration time adverbials were used as a method to extend “the point of time to which the speaker and hearer are oriented” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 481). In example (50) below, the part-time lecturer used the duration time adverbial ‘since’ to reflect upon the period in which she was involved in the action ‘checking her account’. Obviously, the employee promised the part-time lecturer to bank-in the payment on ‘Monday’, but the payment was not received until the time of sending the email. In addition to ‘since’, the writers of the email messages also used ‘for [time]’, ‘till’, and ‘until’ duration time adverbials to stretch the period of time of the referent. In regard to frequency time adverbials, the writers mainly used ‘sometimes’, ‘always’, ‘usually’, ‘never’, ‘normally’, ‘frequently’, and ‘every day/week’ to refer to the regularity of occurrence of the referents that were carried out in the email messages. In example (51) below, the head of studies used the frequency time adverbial ‘frequently’ to state ‘how often’ the telephone rings after 5 pm. Frequency time adverbials were used to state the degree of reoccurrence of certain institutional and academic issues. The use of duration and frequency time adverbials mainly occurred in the ‘discussing’, ‘requesting’ and ‘responding to request’ rhetorical moves to reflect on the degree of reoccurrence of issues.

Ex50: 2.4. I have been checking my account **since Monday** for the salary bank in

Ex51: 2.30. The phone rings **frequently** from 5pm onwards

Ex52: 3.41. I am **still** running a high fever and will not be able to make it to class **today**.

Ex53: 4.43. She **already** sent that packs on 14 May, but **till now** I did not receive them.

In regard to relationship time adverbials, the writers mainly used the time adverbial ‘already’, ‘still’, and ‘till’ to show the relationship between two different times (Quirk et al., 1985). In example (52) above, the part-time lecturer informed the head of studies that she cannot attend the class as she has a fever. In carrying out this communicative intention, the writer made use of two time adverbials that are ‘still’ to refer to the time of writing the email and the position time adverbial ‘today’ to refer to the class time. The use of these two time adverbials expressed the relationship between the two different times. That is, as the lecturer ‘still’ has a fever in the time of writing the email, she cannot attend the class ‘today’. Similarly, in example (53) above, the writer used two time adverbials to draw a relationship between two different times. The writer in this excerpt made use of the time adverbial ‘already’ to refer to a past accomplished action that is the sending of the packs and related it to the time of sending the email using ‘till now’. The expressed relationship in this excerpt is between a past action and current status. The use of relationship time adverbials was used mainly in the ‘requesting’, ‘responding to request’ and ‘discussing issues’ rhetorical moves to link past accomplished action or issues to current or future issues or consequences.

Ex54 3.118. DA, as you know, she is still new **in the department**.

Ex55. 4.40. I haven’t been able to meet Mr. VK **in NED**

Ex56. 6.65. Please be informed that Introduction to marketing classes is scheduled **as follows:**

Ex57. 6.53. The assessment for Human Resource module is **as below:**

The use of place adverbials, however, was particularly common in the ‘informing’, ‘discussing’, ‘indicating enclosure’ and ‘responding to request’ moves. The employees mainly used position and direction place adverbials to state the location and direct the addressees to the “directional path” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 480). In example (54) above and example (55) above, the writers used the position place adverbials ‘in the department’ and ‘in NED’ to state the locations or the position of the referent. The reference to departments, classes, in general or specific classes, and the institution was a common practice, especially in the emails that were sent to students informing them about the location of the referents such as exam venues. Stating the location in these emails intended to identify the site at which the referents took or will take place. In addition to these position place adverbials, the writers also make use of direction place adverbials to direct the addressees to the location of the referent. In example (56) above and example (57) above, the writers used the direction place adverbials ‘as follows’ and ‘as below’ to direct the addressees to the location of the new schedule and the assessment. These direction place adverbials were mainly used in the ‘informing about issues’ move as signposts to present the information.

Ex58. 6.50. Enclosed **herewith** the hotel reservation.

Ex59. 1.20. I **hereby** forward the announcement

The writers of ‘informing about issues’ and ‘indicating enclosure’ moves also used the place adverbials ‘hereby’ and ‘herewith’ to give an official and formal status to the carried task. The place adverb ‘herewith’ was always part of a formulaic expression in the ‘indicating enclosure’ move to divert the attention of the recipient to the attached files (see example 58 above). The use of ‘hereby’, however, was either part of an ‘indicating enclosure’ move as in example (59) above, that intends to give an official status to the act of forwarding the announcement, or an ‘informing about issues’ move as in ‘you are hereby informed that’, which intends to officially inform, notify, update the recipients regarding issues or present information to the recipients about a general interest issue

5. Conclusion

The corpus of emails included fourteen moves that are six framing and eight content moves. The eight content moves are the ‘identifying topic’ move, which stands as the ‘reference’ move in formal letters; two opening moves that are the ‘salutation’ and ‘opening’ moves, which intend to establish rapport, give deference and express politeness; two closing moves that are the ‘pre-closing’ and ‘closing’ moves, which also intend to give deference and express politeness; and the ‘signature’ move, which intends to create credibility and trustworthiness in the part of the addressee.

The eight content moves appeared to be main, supporting, intertextual and follow-up moves. The main content moves are the moves that carry the communicative intentions or the discursive practices of the email messages. This included ‘discussing issues’ move, which is used to elaborate or negotiate an issue. The communicative intention of this move was carried out in a number of “embedded emails” (Gimenez, 2005).

The second main content move is the ‘requesting-responding to requests’ move. As the ‘discussing issues’ move, the communicative intention of this super move was carried out in a number of email messages. The request in an email almost always created a reply. Therefore, it was decided to join the two moves into single super move that reflects the communicative purpose of the chain or the thread. This is the case as the request-response took structured turn-taking patterns.

The third main content move is the ‘informing about issues’ move, which was used mainly to notify, update, or advice the recipients regarding a general interest issue. It mainly included abstract style and informative production in addition to narrative discourse.

The fourth main content move is the ‘indicating enclosure’ move, which was used mainly to direct the attention of the recipient to the attached file in the email message. The employees also used a single intertextual move that intended to link the email to a previous email or a communicative event. This move was placed mainly after the salutation and the opening. In addition, the emails included a supporting move that mainly intended to ‘provide extra information’ about the main issue of the email message and two follow-up moves that intended to ‘request confirming receipt’ and express availability by ‘offering help if needed’.

The email messages included instances of the seven basic dimensions of register variation presented by Biber (1988, 1995). The “abstract style” and the “informational production” were mainly reported in the ‘informing about issues’ move as the writers of this move mainly used agentless passive and ‘by’ passive to demote the agent and highlight the action (Biber, 1988, 1995).

The “involved production” was reported mainly in the ‘discussing issues’, ‘requesting’ and ‘responding to requests’ rhetorical moves as the use of cognitive verbs, public verbs, first and second person pronouns, ‘Wh’ clauses, hedges and modal verbs was a common practice in these moves (Biber, 1988, 1995).

The use of the “narrative discourse” was reported mainly in the ‘discussing issues’ and ‘providing extra information’ moves as the employees used public verbs, third person pronouns and simple past tenses to construct these moves. The “non-narrative discourse”, however, was reported mainly in ‘discussing issues’, ‘responding to requests’, ‘informing about issues’ and ‘providing extra information’ as they included simple present tense (Biber, 1988, 1995).

The occurrence of the “overtly argumentative” style was reported mainly in ‘informing about issues’, discussion issues’, and ‘responding to request’ moves as the writers of these moves used suasive verbs and necessity modals (Biber, 1988, 1995). The use of the “online-information” style mainly occurred in the ‘discussion’, ‘requesting’, and ‘responding to request’ moves as the occurrence of demonstrative pronouns was a common practice in these moves.

The style of ‘informing about issues’ move, however, was “edited or “not on-line informational”, as the writers mainly used nouns or nominals to create a direct reference. Finally, the common use of place and time adverbials in the four main content moves reflects a “situation-dependent” discourse in the email messages.

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Author's information



Dr. Mohammad Awad AlAfnan is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics. His research interests include Business Communication, Computer-Mediated Communication, [Critical] Genre Analysis and Politeness. His research enquiry and analysis are heavenly influenced by his international experience as he worked in college universities and universities in Australia, Malaysia, Jordan and Kuwait. He is currently the Team Leader of the English Language and Communication Department at the American University of the Middle East in Kuwait.