CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the related literature and research are reviewed in order to obtain a theoretical framework for conducting a complete analysis of business e-mail genre in intercultural corporate contexts. The review is divided into three main areas: genre analysis, business e-mail messages, and factors in intercultural business communication. The concept of genre is introduced in the first part. The development of genre analysis in three traditions are compared and contrasted in order to determine the applicable method for the present study. Then, the past research on business genre analysis is reviewed. The second part demonstrates the evolution of e-mail as a mode of business communication and its role in contemporary business communication. In the last part, corporate and national cultures are exemplified to derive insights how theses factors affect written business communication. Subsequently, the framework of the study is designed and implemented.

2.2 Concept of Genre

Traditionally, genre was used to categorize the form and content of communication in the field of arts and literature such as poems, novels and dramas. The term "genre" is derived from the Latin word "genus" (Breure, 2001). People consider genre as a class because it has special characteristics. Until recent years, non-literary genre has been a popular issue in rhetoric and applied linguistics. As stated by Todorov (1990: 14), a new genre is always transformed from the previous one either by inversion, displacement, or combination:

> "The genres-of the-past have simply been replaced by others. We no longer speak of poetry and prose, of documentary and fiction, but of novel and narrative, of narrative mode and discursive mode, of dialogue and journal".

Within the field of linguistics, genre is a codification of discursive properties of a message or text type that recurs regularly in a community. Text types become conventional because people in a community develop expectation about them. Genres are authentic and enable people to understand discursive practice which develops dynamically in linguistic communication (Todorov, 1990; Bauman, 2001).

Inspired in large part by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), the 1990s have seen the rapid expansion of the use of genre analysis in educational contexts, especially in the teaching of ESP. According to Swales (1990), a "genre" is the "structure, style, content, and intended audience" which members of a specific discourse community share in order to achieve their communicative purposes.

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.
>
> Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action.... The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation (Swales, 1990:58).

The quotation reflects Swales's idea that if the participants in a communicative activity share a common focus on narrow rhetorical action and are similar in structure, style, content and intended audience, their activity represents a genre. Bhatia (1993) is even more restrictive. His approach differs from Swales's focus on the discourse community as a whole. Bhatia suggested that a communicative activity can only be called a genre if the participants acknowledge and understand its purpose and accept its governing conventions and constraints as their communicative pattern. He condensed and extended Swales's definition of genre:

> It is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s) (Bhatia, 1993: 13).

According to Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), the starting point for genre analysis is the writers' communicative purposes. Each move consists of the specific information that can be systematically subdivided into steps requiring different linguistic strategies to achieve this purpose.

However, the notion and concept of genre seem to be problematic owing to the vague definition of genre. Allison (1999: 144) accepted that "genre is easier to exemplify than to define". A lot of disagreement remains how a genre should be defined. According to Louhiala-Salminen (2001: 106), "the notion of genre seems to be an elusive concept, not easy to catch, describe and analyze due to the fact that the more people analyze genres, the more complex the genre theory and the concept of communicative purpose are going to be. Askehave and Swales (2001) revealed that communicative goal or purpose has often been used as a major criterion to categorize genres since the early 1980s. The problems of using communicative purpose as a primary criterion are that expert opinions about the communicative purpose of a genre may not always reach a consensus and a genre may be multi-functional and possess more than one communicative purpose. Many genre studies conducted in recent years mostly helped widen perspectives and deepen the understanding of functions of discourse in contemporary societies across cultures, but did not provide better criteria for the categorization of genres. Askehave (1998), therefore, suggested that one cannot avoid exploring the context as a secondary criterion in which the text belongs if one wants to discover and identify the purpose of a text. In Bauman's (2001) ethnographic study of genre on form, function, variation in a Mexican market, a request has been made for "a shift from the conception of genre as a framework for the classification of finished textual products with immanent formal properties to an understanding of genre as a framework for the comprehension of discursive practice" (Bauman, 2001: 58).

As "the relationship between texts and genres is a potentially complex one: a text may not be "in" a single genre, it may "mix" or hybridize genres." (Fairclough, 2003: 34), the author of this study thus determines the genre to the extent that the rhetorical structures and features of the text are rendered via a mode of communication to achieve the communicative purpose(s) in a particular context.

2.3 Genre Analysis

According to Bhatia (1993), the most important parameter that can distinguish discourse analysis is that of surface-deep analysis and genre analysis is considered as a deep-level discourse analysis. Bhatia criticized the approaches to discourse analysis in order to lead the way to the productiveness of genre analysis. Since the 1960s register analysis developed by Halliday et al. (1964) has been an approach to the description of varieties of language use at a surface level. Register analysis stresses mainly on the identification of statistically significant lexico-grammatical features of a linguistic variety, but not very much on how information is structured in a particular variety. In other words, it divorces linguistic features from their context and studies written language only at the level of the sentence. Grammatical-rhetorical analysis represents the second level of language description. Bhatia (1993:8) termed grammatical-rhetorical analysis "the writer's discourse" in that the analysis is carried out from the point of view of the writer. It explores how certain language choices are made by the writer and how his/her grammatical choice relates to rhetorical function. At the deeper level of language description, discourse in interactional analysis is viewed as the "reader's discourse" (Bhatia, 1993:8). The analysts consider not only the writer's view in actual production of discourse, but also the reader's interpretation since the nature of discourse is interactive. However, interactional analysis seems to undermine the notion of "socio-cultural, institutional and organizational constraints and expectations that shape the written genre in particular settings, particularly in the case of highly specific academic and professional genre" (Bhatia, 1993:10).

Nevertheless, these approaches to text analysis have their own value. The work of register analysts has shown that the ability to use certain key grammatical features is vital in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) work. The work of rhetorical analysis introduced the idea that grammatical features found in specific contexts, such as a business letter, might follow the rules that in certain subtle ways differ from the general rules as set out in business communication textbooks. This work also stresses the predominance of rhetorical considerations in determining grammatical choice.

Genre analysis brings together the insights of these earlier approaches to text analysis, but also a greater sophistication in the examination of the writer's purpose. "Moves" and "steps" marry the textual awareness of register analysts with a much boarder view of how rhetorical considerations govern grammatical choice. The interest in how the expectations and conventions of different discourse communities mold the texts that they use has led to this boarder view and placed LSP research in a position where it can make a meaningful contribution to discussion of how ideas are disseminated and facts created in communities. Genre analysis has finally shifted the study of discourse from language description to explanation.

Genre analysis can be divided into three traditions as compared by Hyon (1996) and Coffin (2001), namely Language for Specific Purposes - LSP (e.g. Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Flowerdew, 1993; St. John and Dudley-Evans, 1998), New Rhetoric Studies - NRS (e.g. Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1993), and Systemic Functional Linguistics - SFL (e.g. Martin, 2001). Genre analysis has evolved as an important system of analysis in LSP over the last decade, notably following the ideas of Swales with work on article introductions (1990). According to Hyon (1996: 695), scholars in LSP have paid attention to genre as "a pedagogic tool for analyzing and teaching the spoken and written language to non-native speakers of English in both academic and professional settings". The researchers emphasize on the communicative purpose as a criterion for genre identification, but not very much on specialized functions of texts and their social contexts. Genre analysts in New Rhetoric, on the other hand, stress more on the situational contexts in which genres occur than on their forms. While genres in LSP are categorized mainly by communicative purposes within social contexts, those in New Rhetoric by social purposes or actions within situations. As New Rhetoric scholars have been interested in the functional and contextual aspects of genres, the ethnographic rather than linguistic methods have been applied for analyzing texts and referred as "sociocognitive theory of genre" (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1993; 1995). The sociocognitive nature of genres is characterized by dynamism (the change overtime based on cognitive needs), situatedness (situated cognition), form and content, duality of structure (reproduction of the structure), and community ownership (discourse community's norms).

Australian genre theory can be seen as an enhancement of Halliday's (1978) systemic functional linguistics because the genre theory in this tradition has been developed by some of Halliday's students, most notably Jim Martin. Halliday contended that language is functional, involved in the processes by which human beings construct social experience; and accomplishes its tasks in the context of situation which give rise to a communicative activity. In his view, the context of situation consists of its field (subject matter), its tenor (the relationship between participants), and its mode (oral or written). These denote the social context of a text in its environment. From the systematic functional perspective, genre is a conceptual combination of context and register. Under SFL's framework, Martin and his colleagues (Marin, Christie, and Rothery, 1987) defined genres as "the system of staged, goal-oriented social process" which people in particular cultures use to achieve various purposes in certain contexts and both text structure and sentence level register features have been focused in their genre analysis. The structures which shape and organize a text are typically referred to as "schematic structure." Eggins (1994:9) put it, "genre is a concept used to describe the impact of the context of culture on language, by exploring the staged, step by step structure cultures institutionalize as ways of achieving goals." As stated by Coffin (2001:111) "SFL genre theorists think of genre descriptions as probabilities rather than deterministic, as descriptions of staging and linguistic patterning typically drawn on to achieve particular social goals, rather than as rule-governed structures."

Yunick (1997), however, pointed out that genre analysis in LSP is also enlightened by Halliday's linguistic model, but has moved away for a more top-down ethnographic method and a mixture of various models of learning and discourse. These three traditions of genre analysis as discussed above aim to analyze the language use in relation to social function in particular cultural contexts and apply the results to language learning and teaching. While LSP works with moves in discourse structure, genre analysis in New Rhetoric emphasizes on the social purposes and Australian analysts study lexico-grammatical features as well as discourse structure to social function. Their linguistic analysis tends to reach greater degrees of grammatical delicacy than analyses carried out within the LSP tradition. As pointed out by Hyon (1996) and Yunick (1997), the difference of these three traditions also lies on the educational context. The educational context for LSP is focused mainly on university students who are non-native speakers of English whereas New Rhetoric is primarily on mother-tongue education at university levels and apprentice professionals. New Rhetoric research offers language teachers fuller perspectives on the institutional contexts around academic and professional genres and the functions genres serve within three settings. In Australia, genre-based applications are obviously different from those of LSP and New Rhetoric. The genre-based instruction has been introduced in primary and secondary schools as well as in adult migrant English education. LSP and Australian genre research provide language instructors with the insights into the linguistic features of written texts and guidelines for presenting these features in classroom.

2.4 Research on Business Genre Analysis

Within the last two decades, a number of researchers have been interested in genre as a pedagogic tool for developing language instruction. Genre research can be broadly divided into two phases. Earlier work was involved in structural move analysis. Later work has broadened the definition of genre analysis to look at how extra-linguistic features and more recently intercultural aspects have affected both form and sequence of language. In academic settings, a genre-based approach has been mainly used for the analysis of the research articles, e.g. the abstracts (Martin, 2002), the introduction (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1997; Samraj, 2002; Fakhri, 2004; Ozturk, 2007), the results (Brett, 1994), and the discussion (Holmes, 1997; Peacock, 2002). Only a few researchers have applied the move analysis to other documents, e.g. the dissertation acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004), the lecture introduction (Thompson, 1994).

Genre analysis has interested people studying organizational interaction as it provides clues about how organizational structure affects their work (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). Organizations adopt and modify genres to suit their coordination and collaboration needs. In business settings, the genre analysis has been used to investigate the letters in various disciplines, e.g. sales promotion letters (Bhatia, 1993; Vergaro, 2004), letters of application (Bhatia, 1993; Henry and Roseberry, 2001; Upton and Connor, 2001; Crossley, 2007), letters of negotiation (Pintos dos Santos, 2002), replies to customer inquiries (Van Mulken and Van der Meer, 2005), tax computation letters (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006), and letters to the editors (Magnet and Carnet, 2006).

Table 2.1: Related research on business genre analysis

Researcher	Sample & Sampling Group	Scope of Study
Bhatia (1993)	- **Sales Promotion Letters** **Letters of Application** across cultures	- Move analysis - Linguistic features of moves
Hiranburana (1996)	- **Sale Promotion Letters, Letters of Invitation, Letters of Enquiry, etc.** across cultures	- Turn taking - Move analysis - Linguistic features and expressions
Henry & Roseberry (2001)	- **Letters of Application** by native, non-native speakers of English, and Thais	- Move analysis and strategies - Linguistic features of moves - Key syntactic patterns - Word collocations - Word frequency
Upton & Connor (2001)	- **Letters of Application** across cultures	- Move analysis - Linguistic features of moves - Politeness strategies
Pinto dos Santos (2002)	- **Letters of Negotiation** across cultures	- Move analysis - Linguistic features of moves - Implication for genre-based instruction
Chakorn (2002)	- **Sales Promotion Letters, Letters of Request, Letters of Invitation** by native, non-native speakers of English, and Thais	- Move analysis - Rhetorical appeals: logos, ethos, pathos - Salutations and complimentary closes - Politeness strategies - Lexico-grammatical errors
Vergaro (2004)	- **Sales Promotion Letters** by native speakers of English and Italians	- Move analysis - Pragmatic use of mood, modality, reference system, and metadiscourse - Politeness strategies
Flowerdew & Wan (2006)	- **Tax Computation Letters** by native speakers of English	- Move analysis - Politeness strategies
Van Mulken &Van der Meer (2005)	- **E-mails Response to Customer Inquiries** by Americans and Dutch	- Rhetorical structures - Interpersonal strategies - E-mail features
Arvain (2006)	- **Follow-up Letters** by Iranians and native speakers	- Move analysis - Lexical-grammatical features - Politeness strategies

Bhatia (1993) applied Swales's model of genre analysis originally developed for the study of academic texts to business letters. He conducted genre analysis for the study of sales promotion letters and letters of application. The findings have shown notable similarities in the way both letters were organized. Seven-move structure was introduced as follows:

Move 1 Establishing credentials (obligatory)
Move 2 Introducing the offer/candidate (obligatory)
(i) Offering the product or service/candidature
(ii) Essential detailing of the offer/candidature
(iii) Indicating value of the offer/candidature
Move 3 Offering incentives (optional)
Move 4 Enclosing documents (optional)
Move 5 Soliciting response (obligatory)
Move 6 Using pressure tactics (optional)
Move 7 Ending politely (optional)

(Bhatia, 1993: 44)

According to him, Move 1, Move 2 and Move 5 are obligatory in sales promotion letters and letters of application because the purpose of these letters are to build goodwill, to convince the reader and to initiate new business relations while Move 3, Move 4, Move 6 and Move 7 are optional in all promotion efforts. Although Move 7 Ending politely is not an obligatory move, it is very commonly used.

Notably, the patterns of moves found in the later studies of sales promotion letters (e.g. Hiranburana, 1996; Zhu, 2000b; Chakorn, 2002) are similar to Bhatia (1993) presented above without any particular differences.

Henry and Roseberry (2001) studied the moves and strategies of the genre "Letter of Application" written by native speakers of English. Interestingly, a concordancer was used in this study to facilitate the analysis of the key syntactic patterns and word collocations as well as the word frequency in the corpus. Their corpus consisted of 40 letters of application from both academic and business settings. Eleven moves were identified including opening and signing off commonly found in all business letters.

Move 1 Opening
Move 2 Referring to a job advertisement
Move 3 Offering candidature
Move 4 Stating reasons for applying
Move 5 Stating availability
Move 6 Promoting the candidate
Move 7 Stipulating terms and condition of employment
Move 8 Naming referees
Move 9 Enclosing documents
Move 10 Polite ending
Move 11 Signing off

(Henry and Roseberry, 2001: 159)

Pinto dos Santos (2002) analyzed 117 English business letters of negotiation exchanged by fax between a Brazilian company and two European companies, namely Holland and Great Britain, in order to investigate the generic structure and its lexico-grammatical realization of a corpus of "Business Letters of Negotiation." However, he did not pay attention to intercultural aspects in the correspondence. His corpus shows the four obligatory moves as follows:

Move 1 Establishing the negotiation chain
Move 2 Providing information/answers
Move 3 Requesting information/action/favors
Move 4 Ending

(Pinto dos Santos, 2002: 176)

Within these moves, many detailed steps were also found. This may be because the letters of negotiation are multi-purposeful and the moves are broadly specified.

Flowerdew and Wan (2006) conducted a genre analysis of 25 tax computation letters from an international accounting firm in Hong Kong. Swales's (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) analytical approaches of moves were used in this study. The moves included opening salutation, subject, actions taken, discussion of issues, solicit action, express availability, and closing salutation. Ethnographic perspectives were obtained from the observation and interviews with the tax accountants. According to them, genre analysis can provide the valuable data from language in practice, the influence of ethnography and corporate culture which can be contributed into teaching of ESP.

From the previous research purely focusing on the move structures of different types of letter, it was found that some researchers included opening and closing salutations as two moves while the others did not. However, no reason was specified for the inclusion and exclusion of these two elements.

Within a genre, different cultures may require different moves and strategies to accomplish the communicative goal. In the analysis of 200 job application letters, Bhatia (1993) discovered that South-Asian application letters were significantly different from Western letters in the aspect that the South-Asians excluded self-promotion in their application letters while the Westerns considered it essential.

Hiranburana's (1996) PhD thesis contains move analyses of different types of business letter written by native English speakers, Thais, and other non-native speakers. Her corpus of 18 invitation and follow-up letters reveals the similarity in the move structures across cultures and most of the letters tended to be straightforward.

Opening salutation
Move 1 Establishing a Link
- Step 1 Acknowledging the visit message and/or
- Step 2 Referring to previous contact

Move 2 Arranging the Visit
- Step 1 Giving details of the invitation/requesting/ confirming details of the visit and/or
- Step 2 Offering hospitality/inviting
- Step 3 Accepting or declining an invitation

Move 3 Encouraging further contact
- Step 1 Requesting/expressing an expectation of reply/visit and/or
- Step 2 Expressing gratitude/appreciation

Closing salutation

(Hiranburana, 1996: 256)

Her findings led to the conclusion that the communicators in international business had little difficulty in conveying typical single messages because they were likely to follow common conventions to achieve the main purposes of business tasks and to maintain the interpersonal and business relationship.

Precht's (1998) comparative study of 39 English letters of recommendation from the United States, United Kingdom, Eastern Europe and Germany exhibits distinct regional patterns. The analysis was performed qualitatively by exploring the content of the letters and quantitatively by examining linearity, symmetry, data integration, advance organizers and sentence types. The findings of this study show that 1) the Germans are more likely to use bridge sentences than topic sentences; 2) German texts have more digressions and lesser symmetry than British and American texts; 3) the data are more integrated in the letters written by the Americans than the letters from the other regions. Significant differences have been found in the structural patterns and methods of support. The Americans immediately stated their purpose of writing while the Germans occasionally and the Eastern European rarely did so. Finally, Precht (1998) classified the organizational pattern of the American recommendation letters as "Topical Personal Endorsement"; the German letters as "Topical Factual Endorsement"; the British letters as "Topical Evaluative Endorsement"; and the Eastern European letters as "Narrative Accounts of Achievement".

Upton and Connor's (2001) genre analysis, based on the data from Indianapolis Business Learner Corpus (IBLC), investigated 153 job application letters written by business communication students from the USA, Belgium, and Finland. The purpose of this study was to introduce a multi-level analysis of a genre-specific learner corpus that included both move analysis and computerized analysis of lexico-grammatical and politeness features of texts. Their corpus was composed of seven moves as follows:

Move 1 Identify the source of information

Move 2 Apply for the position

Move 3 Provide argument, including supporting information, for the job application

a. Implicit argument based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience
b. Argument based on what would be good for the hiring company
c. Argument based on what would be good for the applicant

Move 4 Indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact, or specify means of further communication/how to be contacted

Move 5 Express politeness (pleasantries) or appreciation at the end of the letter

Move 6 Offer to provide more information
Move 7 Reference attached resume

(Upton and Cornor, 2001: 318)

The result shows that 50 percent of the Belgians, 73 percent of the Finns, and 80 percent of the Americans indicated a desire for an interview or further contact and specified a means of further communication. In the study of politeness strategies it was found that Americans tended to be much more patterned, even formulaic, in their politeness strategies whereas the Belgians showed more individuality in their letters and the Finns expressed both traits to lesser degrees.

Chakorn (2002) analyzed 636 persuasive English business correspondences written by Thais and native speakers of English. Her corpus consisted of all kinds of business texts in forms of letters, faxes, e-mails, memos, and telexes. Sales promotion, request, and invitation, which are sub-genres of persuasive correspondence, were analyzed from contrastive text linguistic and pragmatic perspectives. Move analysis was conducted in the letters of sales promotion and invitation. The findings exhibit the similarities in the pattern of moves in the cross-cultural invitation letters, but the differences were found in the sales promotion letters and in the persuasive writing strategies of Thais and native speakers of English to the extent that Thais used more negative politeness strategies, especially hedging and politeness markers e.g. please, kindly.

Chakorn (2002) also investigated the move structures in invitation letters written by 25 native English speakers and 15 Thais. Her corpus of 40 letters introduced six moves as follows:

Move 1 Inviting	obligatory
Move 2 Establishing the context	optional
Move 3 Detailing	obligatory
Move 4 Soliciting response	optional
Move 5 Anticipating acceptance	optional
Move 6 Expressing thanks	optional

(Chakorn, 2002: 194)

Her findings led to the conclusion that there were no significant cross-cultural differences in the pattern of moves in the letters of invitation, except that Move 6 was found in only two Thai letters.

Vergaro's (2004) study of discourse strategies of Italian and English sales promotion letters reveals the role of cultural diversity in written business discourse genres. This research aimed to investigate the way in which the information was presented and the rhetorical strategies were used in a given culture. In her study, sales promotion letters were considered as a sub-genre of the genre "business letter". Categorized in accordance with their discourse features and communicative purposes, Italian and English sales promotion letters were analyzed contrastively at the macro-textual level by observing the move structures and by focusing on the linguistic choices at micro-textual levels. The results of the analysis show that the subject line is an initial claim in Italian sales promotion letter. Mood and modality are the indicators of the politeness strategies used in this corpus. Positive politeness strategies were frequently found in English sales promotion letters to establish solidarity whereas Italian ones preferred negative politeness strategies, similar to Thais in Chakorn (2002).

In the study of Van Mulken and Van der Meer (2005), 40 e-mail replies to customer enquiries from American and Dutch companies were examined regarding rhetorical structures and interpersonal strategies used in those e-mail. In this process, it also aimed to find out the nature of electronic communication and the transcendence of cultural boundaries. The American and Dutch replies were subdivided into those from new and old companies. The results show that American companies were usually quite careless in their response policy, namely only 60 percent of all companies replied to the Dutch inquiry. The Americans more often expressed gratitude while Dutch producers were more often regretful before refusing a request. The difference between old and new companies appeared in the invitation to stay in touch with the company, namely new companies were generally more eager to invite to further contact with the customers than old companies.

Recently, Arvani (2006) has investigated the differences between English follow-up business letters written by Iranians and those written by native speakers in terms of their surface features, move structures and politeness strategies. The study into the surface features reveals the similarity in lexical density and patterns of moves and steps. The differences show in the politeness strategies. In comparison with native speakers, Iranians did not employ the concept of politeness strategies in their writing and that resulted in more informal and direct language in their letters.

These researches provide evidence that the business letters used in particular specialist environments have particular characteristics that distinguish them from other texts. Despite the fact that business letters are quite similar in format, it is clear from the past researches above that there are considerable variations of moves in business writings that are affected by cultural differences and this, in turn, can affect intercultural communication of business parties. Hence, business people should be aware of significant cultural differences in creating barriers to communication.

Though growing numbers of research on genre analysis, only a small portion of the work done in genre analysis is dedicated to the practical applications of genre analysis in classrooms. Genre specific compositions require more skill than that supplied through general writing classes. The situation, context, and stimulus of a writing assignment may allow students to understand cultural differences found within genres and properly prepare students to avoid the mistakes associated with these differences (Upton and Connor, 2001). Regarding the application of genre study to teaching, Zhu (2000a) combined genre analysis with schema theory and introduced a four-stage approach to teaching cross-cultural sales genres, namely comparison of social and cultural contexts, communicative purposes of sales genres, text structures, and implications of genre comparisons. Testing her approach with 40 authentic Chinese and English sales letters in terms of moves, text structure and politeness strategies, Zhu discovered that teaching the communicative purposes is the most important process and her approach was effective when teaching students how to write sales letters in English and Chinese.

A genre analysis form for a writing lesson was designed by Think© BBC British Council (2005). In this task, students were assigned to read three letters of complaint and use the form to analyze and find the key characteristics of them as well as provide some examples of grammar structures and vocabulary used. The form contains the questions concerning the communicative purpose, expected audience, format, overall organization, level of formality, sentence structure, and vocabulary.

However, though the application of research on genre analysis has recently made a positive impact on the ESP field, the application of genre theory on computer assisted students' learning is still at a preliminary stage. Interestingly, Antunes, Costa and Pino (2006) applied an analysis of the meeting genres in a university and an accounting company as a fundamental knowledge to the design of electronic meeting systems. To validate the analysis, a group of persons in each organization were required to classify the data according to the genre schema. Base on the results of the analysis, the templates for electronic meeting systems were designed and implemented to assist students' learning.

From the reviewed literature, it seems evident that there is still plenty of room for genre analysts to explore the implication and application of genre analysis in language classrooms.

2.5 Study of Business E-mail

With the advancement in communication technology, nowadays electronic mail (e-mail) plays a significant role in business communication. Originally, E-mail was invented by the U.S military in the late 1960s. Limitedly used for the business of U.S. military and defense at the beginning, e-mail has been used for collaboration among academics since the 1980s and spread to other professionals rapidly in the 1990s (Warschauer, 1995). Currently, billions of people use e-mail to obtain, exchange information or call for a certain action. The survey of Radicati Group in the first quarter of 2006 reported that there were approximately 1.1 billion e-mail users worldwide and nearly 1.4 billion active e-mail accounts, as of the end of March 2006. That makes about one in every six person on the earth who uses e-mail. Approximately 67 percent of the worldwide email mailboxes were delivered through a webmail service provider or ISP. Insourced mailboxes accounted for 27 percent of total mailboxes worldwide. Radicati Group estimated the number of e-mails sent per day to be around 171 billion. 171 billion messages per day means almost 2 million e-mails are sent every second. About 70% to 72% (or between 120 and 123 billion) of them are spam and viruses. The genuine emails are sent by around 1.1 billion email users (Tschabitscher, 2006a; 2006b).

Sullivan (1995) surveyed 135 staff in the Florida House of Representatives. The average scores of the channel preference in Table 2.2 indicate that the staff mostly preferred face-to-face communication as expected. Surprisingly the preference for e-mail prevailed over telephone communication.

Table 2.2: Average channel preferences across all communication activities

Communication Channel	Mean
Face-to-Face	2.20
E-mail	2.00
Telephone	1.81
Memos	1.60
Letters	1.57

(Sullivan, 1995: 57)

The e-mail was used mostly for document delivery. The percentage of the use of e-mail in each communication activity varied depending on job responsibility. The director assigned tasks by e-mail more often than the secretary and the analyst, on the other hand, the secretary received tasks by e-mail more frequently than the analyst and the director.

Table 2.3: Comparison of communication activities by e-mail use

	Percent Using E-mail for Specific Task			
Communication Activities	Secretary	Analyst	Director	Total
Document Delivery	89.8	84.4	84.6	86.36
Request Information	78.0	62.2	80.8	73.7
Answer Questions	69.5	77.8	69.2	72.2
Receive Tasks	69.5	53.3	61.5	61.5
Coordinate Office	57.6	55.6	57.7	57.0
Circulate Memos	55.9	60.0	53.8	56.6
Express Opinions	49.2	40.0	65.4	51.5
Maintain Office	47.5	42.2	53.8	47.8
Personal Messages	39.0	40.0	26.9	35.3
Draft Documents	32.2	44.4	26.9	34.5
Assign Tasks	25.4	15.6	50.0	30.3
Make Decision	13.6	4.4	23.1	13.7

(Sullivan, 1995: 56)

In business, e-mail is used in internal correspondence between colleagues and in external correspondence between companies for a quick response. According to Lehman and DuFrene (2002), estimated 70 percent of business communication occurs electronically, therefore, it is necessary for business people to be able to write e-mail messages efficiently. In their book, they provided guidelines for preparing and formatting e-mail messages for successful communication. E-mail messages are usually less formal than business letters. The writer often uses a straightforward structure and abbreviation such as AAMOF for "as a matter of fact", IMHO for "in my humble opinion", IOW for "in other words", OTOH for "on the other hand", and THX for "thanks" (Cunningham and Greene, 2002). Many corporations recommend that their staff do not use capital letters in their e-mail communication because this can be misinterpreted as impolite, and as if the writer of the e-mail message is shouting.

The more popular the e-mail as a mode of business communication, the more interesting it is to study the possible emergence of rhetorical structure, linguistic patterns and styles business people use in their e-mail messages. The notion of genre has been also applied to electronic communication in organizational settings in order to better understand the functionality of electronic documents. Business e-mail is a genre which is identified by their shared purposes expressed via move structures and linguistic features within the moves. The knowledge of genre is influenced by cultural expectations. Business e-mail messages can be traced to national and corporate cultures as well as business discipline. There is a connection between organizational practice and e-mail communication. The study of Nickerson (1999) on 100 corporate e-mail messages in a multinational corporation indicated that the use of English in electronic communication was embedded in the organizational practices of the corporation. However, such a study has not been widely conducted (Nickerson, 1999; Van Mulken and Van der Meer, 2005).

The evolution of e-mail messages was reported in the following research. Gains (1999) raised the question whether e-mail is a new style of communication or just a new medium and therefore investigated the text features, i.e. subject line, opening and closing salutations, register and abbreviations, of business e-mail used for internal communication. He did not label standardized medium characteristics such as typical openings and closings in e-mail communication as a distinct genre. Apart from a number of surface adaptations, he found that there were no essential differences between the paper-based and the electronic format in his corpus of commercial e-mail messages, except in the academic corpus. Crystal (2002) explored the ways in which the nature of the electronic medium and internet affected the language use in e-mail, chat groups, virtual worlds, and websites. As opposed to Gain (1999), Crystal discovered the emergence of a distinctive variety of language and the sign that the language of e-mail has been evolving. Gimenez's study (2000) of external business e-mails reveals the informality and flexibility of styles and register of business e-mails. The cline from formal to informal style in written business communication is illustrated by Figure 2.1. The cline shows a shift from informal to more formal style as moving from personal e-mails/letters to legal documents. For example, business letters can be very formal as compared with commercial e-mails and business telexes and faxes as well.

Figure 2.1: Style flexibility cline in written communication

Informal..Formal

Personal emails letters	Academic emails	Commercial emails	Telexes faxes	Business letters faxes	Legal documents

(Gimenez, 2000: 250)

In his latter study (2005) of 123 e-mails, Gimenez suggested that e-mails have reacted to new demands in international business communication (e.g. ease of reference and retrieval, increasing levels of accountability) by becoming a more complex genre which embeds a series of messages generated in response to the original e-mail. There was an extensive use of carbon copy (cc.) as a response to the demand for accountability and as a way of encouraging reliable decision making in international business communication. Thus, he called this characteristic "embedded e-mail" implying that one or more parts of the message depend on another or others to complete the communication. The study of Van Mulken and Van der Meer (2005) on 40 e-mail replies to customer enquiries concluded that the electronic and paper-based replies did not differ in terms of moves, except some minor differences in customer friendly behavior and rhetorical interpersonal strategies. On the basis of these findings, Van Mulken and Van der Meer also suggested that the electronic format is a channel choice, a medium of discourse, and this format entails register consequences. In order to assign genre, one has to abstract from register, i.e. medium characteristics imposed by the channel choice. It was conceivable that medium characteristics have implications for the move structure, in the sense that moves are omitted (such as openings and closings in electronic communication). These channel variations allow the move structure of the overarching genre to become more flexible and more dynamic; the style is informal and the form of address is direct and straightforward. Recently, Zhang (2006) investigated the text features of 36 commercial e-mails and found that e-mail has many characteristics similar to those of memoranda, especially in the situations where e-mail routinely functions as a device to negotiate the accomplishment of small and immediate tasks in a particular work environment. Concerning business English instruction, Gimenez (2000) pointed out that the changing mode of business communication has challenged the tradition of teaching writing and requires development in teaching materials. According to him, "e-mail composition may present a challenge to the long established tradition of teaching "formulae writing" to business students and become a crucial issue in teaching written business communication" (2000: 249).

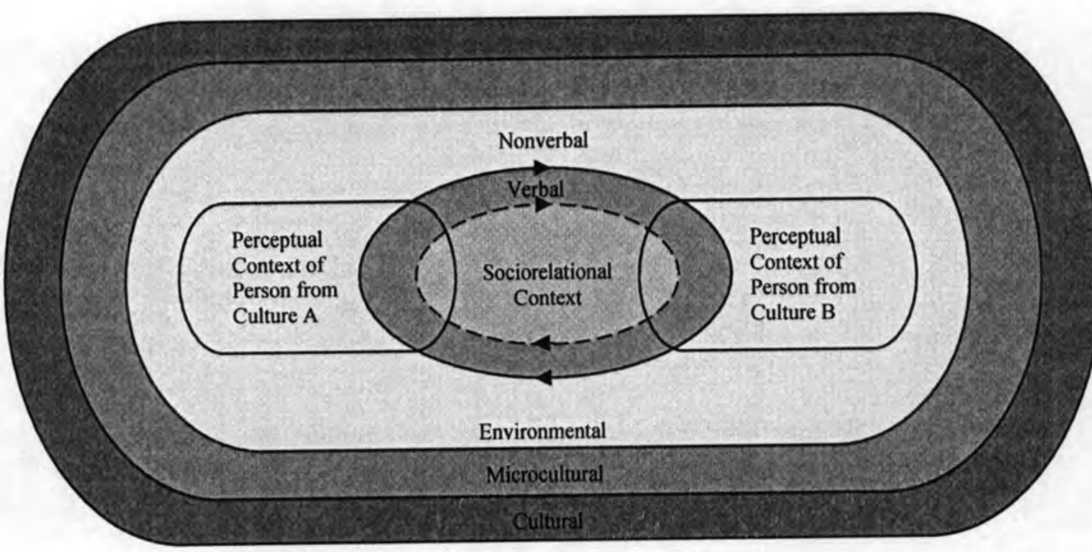
With the advent of an electronic community, genre analysis has consequently found another flourishing application ground. In that context, genre analysis contributes to understanding how electronic communities use electronic communication to collaborate.

2.6 Factors in Intercultural Business Communication

Due to the fact that business operation involves people from various national and cultural backgrounds, intercultural communication occurs. Intercultural communication consists of four elements according to Samovar, Potter and Stefani (1998), namely perception, verbal processes, non-verbal processes and the context of the communication event which is influenced by culture.

The contextual model of intercultural communication was illustrated by Neuliep (2003: 22) in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Contextual model of intercultural communication



According to Neuliep (2003), the perceptual context of people from different cultures interacting creates the sociorelational context in which the messages from an individual are sent and received verbally and nonverbally. The sociorelational context itself is influenced by the environmental context where the interaction is located. The environmental context is characterized by microcultural and cultural contexts. In business, the microcultural context is the culture in the organization which is often referred to as corporate culture whereas the cultural context is the culture of the country where the organization is located. In the past, academics and researchers did not pay much attention to the ethnography of communication and the role of perceptual and cultural context in the language use in intercultural business communication. The author of this study considers low and high context cultures, national cultures, corporate cultures and politeness strategies to be the factors affecting intercultural business communication.

2.6.1 Low vs. High Context Cultures

Hall (1981) distinguished cultures on the basis of the roles of context in communication. He proposed the term "low and high context cultures" to broad-brush cultural differences between societies. High context refers to the societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behavior are not made explicit because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other. A family society is probably an example of a high context environment. Low context refers to the societies where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration or for some specific reason. In these societies, cultural behavior and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave.

Despite specific individual differences within each culture, the understanding of whether the culture of a particular country falls on the high or low side of the scale is helpful since every person is affected by the level of context (Hall, 1981). On the basis of the dominating way of communicative behavior, several cultures have been mapped in the high- and low-context continuum. At the high-context end, Victor (1992) found the Greek, Spanish, French, and most of the Asian cultures, whereas the low-context end seemed to have attracted the US, German, Scandinavian, and Swiss cultures.

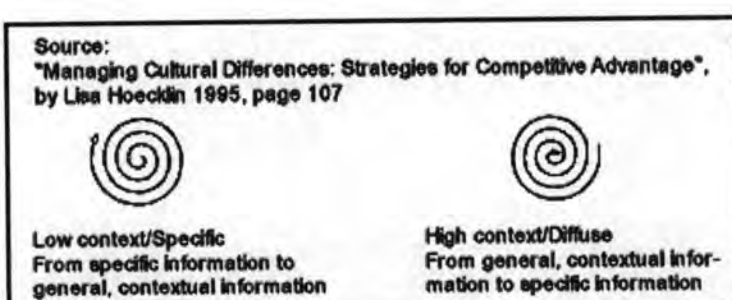
Table 2.4: Features of low and high context cultures

	Low Context	High Context
Preferred communication strategy	Directness, confrontation, clarity	Indirectness, politeness, ambiguity
Reliance on words	High	Low
Reliance on nonverbal signs	Low	High
Importance of written word	High	Low
View of silence	Anxiety-producing	Respected
Agreements made in writing	Binding	Not binding
Attention to detail	High	Low
Vagueness	Untolerated	Tolerated
Face-saving	Low	High

Source: Adapted from Victor, D.A. 1992. International Business Communication. New York: HarperCollins, p. 148,153,160.

Table 2.4 indicates that people in low context cultures tend to be direct when communicating with others and rely on verbal messages. On the other hand, directness is often considered rude and offensive in high context cultures. In high context cultures, most of the information is inferred from the context and non-verbal messages; little is explicitly conveyed. In contrast, low-context cultures view context as less important; most information is explicitly spelled out. Besides, people in high context cultures pay attention to the personal relationship rather than do people in low context cultures as corresponded to Fieg (1980) who compared the patterns of behavior between Thais and North American and pointed out that Americans overlooked the personal relationship as opposed to Thais. In addition, Americans frequently directed to the point of discussion while Thais began negotiation with a general objective not with a specific strategy. The way people from low and high context cultures organizes information is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Information structured in low and high context cultures



2.6.2 Dimensions of National Culture

There are many ways of approaching an understanding of culture. Perhaps the most significant study in the comparable and general aspects of cultures was conducted by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede (1984, 1997) carried out a large-scale survey on values and organization behavior in IBM's subsidiaries in 53 countries around the world including Thailand and Germany. Over 116,000 IBM employees in those 53 countries were asked to complete the questionnaires regarding four main dimensions of national culture: individualism versus collectivism (the integration of individuals into primary groups), power distance (the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality), uncertainty avoidance (the ways that a society create in order to deal with uncertainty or ambiguity), and masculinity versus femininity (the distribution of values between the genders as a national, not as an individual characteristic which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions are found). Thailand is characterized by low individualism, high uncertainty avoidance, high power distance and low masculinity. High power distance is influenced by the hierarchical social system. Germany scored rather high on uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity, but low on power distance. However, the research results about national cultures and their dimensions proved to be only partly useful for the understanding of organizational cultures (Hofstede, 1997). And since the dimension of masculinity versus femininity can not be seen explicitly in written communication, this research excludes this dimension from the discussion.

2.6.2.1 Individualism vs. Collectivism

The "individualism-collectivism" dimension has been found to account for a significant amount of variance in the social behavior of individuals across cultures. Individualism is the opposite of collectivism; together they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. "Individualism" refers to the attitude of valuing ourselves as separate individuals with responsibility for own destinies and own action. Individualistic cultures tend to think only of themselves as individuals distinct from other people. Implications of high individualism in the workplace are that the relationship between an employer and an employee is a contract that is supposed to be based on mutual advantage. Tasks prevail over relationships. Collectivism emphasizes common interests, conformity, cooperation, and interdependence (Hofstede, 1997). Collectivistic cultures emphasize the concept of groups. Relationships prevail over tasks. Harmony and loyalty within a company is very important and should always be maintained. Confrontation should be avoided.

Table 2.5: Individualism index values

Score Rank	Country or Region	Score	Score Rank	Country or Region	Score
1	USA	91	28	Turkey	37
2	Australia	90	29	Uruguay	36
3	Great Britain	89	30	Greece	35
4/5	Canada	80	31	Philippines	32
4/5	Netherlands	80	32	Mexico	30
6	New Zealand	79	33/35	East Africa	27
7	Italy	76	33/35	Yugoslavia	27
8	Belgium	75	33/35	Portugal	27
9	Denmark	74	36	Malaysia	26
10/11	Sweden	71	37	Hong Kong	25
10/11	France	71	38	Chile	23
12	Ireland	70	39/41	West Africa	20
13	Norway	69	39/41	Singapore	20
14	Switzerland	68	**39/41**	**Thailand**	20
15	**Germany FR**	67	42	Salvador	19
16	South Africa	65	43	South Korea	18
17	Finland	63	44	Taiwan	17
18	Austria	55	45	Peru	16
19	Israel	54	46	Costa Rica	15
20	Spain	51	47/48	Pakistan	14
21	India	48	47/48	Indonesia	14
22/23	Japan	46	49	Colombia	13
22/23	Argentina	46	50	Venezuela	12
24	Iran	41	51	Panama	11
25	Jamaica	39	52	Ecuador	8
26/27	Brazil	38	53	Guatemala	6
26/27	Arab countries	38			

(Hofstede, 1997: 53)

The individualism-collectivism dimension is also visible in organizations from different countries. It is used in explaining various organizationally relevant outcomes. From Table 2.5, Thailand ranks low on this individualism scale (20 scores) as opposed to Germany (67 scores). Therefore, Thailand is expected to exhibit many features that are associated with collectivism.

2.6.2.2 Power Distance

Power distance is related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality. According to Hofstede (1984), the combination of national power distance and uncertainty avoidance affects the structure of organizations in the nation. Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Education is a dominant factor indicating Power Distance Index (PDI) values, i.e. the lower-education and lower-status occupations tend to produce higher PDI values than the higher-education and higher-status occupations.

Table 2.6: Power distance index values (PDI)

Score Rank	Country or Region	PDI Score	Score Rank	Country or Region	PDI score
1	Malaysia	104	27/28	South Korea	60
2/3	Guatemala	95	29/30	Iran	58
2/3	Panama	95	29/30	Taiwan	58
4	Philippines	94	31	Spain	57
5/6	Mexico	81	32	Pakistan	55
5/6	Venezuela	81	33	Japan	54
7	Arab countries	80	34	Italy	50
8/9	Ecuador	78	35/36	Argentina	49
8/9	Indonesia	78	35/36	South Africa	49
10/11	India	77	37	Jamaica	45
10/11	West Africa	77	38	USA	40
12	Yugoslavia	76	39	Canada	39
13	Singapore	74	40	Netherlands	38
14	Brazil	69	41	Australia	36
15/16	France	68	42/44	Costa Rica	35
15/16	Hong Kong	68	**42/44**	**Germany FR**	35
17	Colombia	67	42/44	Great Britain	35
18/19	Salvador	66	45	Switzerland	34
18/19	Turkey	66	46	Finland	33
20	Belgium	65	47/48	Norway	31
21/23	East Africa	64	47/48	Sweden	31
21/23	Peru	64	49	Ireland (Republic of)	28
21/23	**Thailand**	**64**	50	New Zealand	22
24/25	Chile	63	51	Denmark	18
24/25	Portugal	63	52	Israel	13
26	Uruguay	61	53	Austria	11
27/28	Greece	60			

(Hofstede, 1997: 26)

The high power distance index is indicative of a high level of inequality of power and wealth within the society. The implications of high power distance in the workplace are that superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially unequal and the hierarchical system is only a natural consequence of this inequality. A smaller power distance produces the feasibility of control systems based on trust in subordinates. Table 2.6 shows that Thailand is located in the middle range of this dimension. With the score of 64, power distance in Thailand is greater than that in Germany (35 scores). As a result, organizations in Thailand possess greater centralization, tall organization pyramids, large proportion of supervisory personnel, and large wage differentials.

2.6.2.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and should not be confused with fear or risk (Hofstede, 1997). Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict behavioral codes, laws and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions, and a belief in absolute truth. Uncertainty accepting cultures are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to. The implications of uncertainty avoidance in the workplace are that there are many rules controlling work process and the rights and duties of employers and employees. Germans and Thais are from a fairly uncertainty avoiding culture. Therefore, their organizations should be as uniform as possible. Managers are task-oriented, consistent in their style, involved in details and less willing to make individual and risky decisions.

Table 2.7: Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) values

Score Rank	Country or Region	UAI Score	Score Rank	Country or Region	UAI score
1	Greece	112	28	Ecuador	67
2	Portugal	104	**29**	**Germany FR**	65
3	Guatemala	101	**30**	**Thailand**	64
4	Uruguay	100	31/32	Iran	59
5/6	Belgium	94	31/32	Finland	59
5/6	Salvador	94	33	Switzerland	58
7	Japan	92	34	West Africa	54
8	Yugoslavia	88	35	Netherlands	53
9	Peru	87	36	East Africa	52
10/15	France	86	37	Australia	51
10/15	Chile	86	38	Norway	50
10/15	Spain	86	39/40	South Africa	49
10/15	Costa Rica	86	39/40	New Zealand	49

10/15	Panama	86	41/42	Indonesia	48
10/15	Argentina	86	41/42	Canada	48
16/17	Turkey	85	43	USA	46
16/17	South Korea	85	44	Philippines	44
18	Mexico	82	45	India	40
19	Israel	81	46	Malaysia	36
20	Colombia	80	47/48	Great Britain	35
21/22	Venezuela	76	47/48	Ireland (Republic of)	29
21/22	Brazil	76	49/50	Hong Kong	29
23	Italy	75	49/50	Sweden	23
24/25	Pakistan	70	51	Denmark	23
24/25	Austria	70	52	Jamaica	13
26	Taiwan	69	53	Singapore	8
27	Arab countries	68			

(Hofstede, 1997: 113)

Comparing each dimension of national cultures, the author of this study found that individualism tends to have an inverse relationship with power distance, but uncertainty avoidance is independent. The countries with the low score in the individualism index seem to have high score in power distance index and vice versa. A case in point is Thailand and Germany. As for uncertainty avoidance, there is no predictor for the score of each country.

	Individualism	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance
Thailand	20	64	64
Germany	67	35	65

Besides, there seems to be a relationship between Hofstede's individualism and power distance dimensions and Hall's context cultures, namely people from low context cultures tend to have high score on individualism and low score on power distance, and vice versa for people from high context cultures. However, it should be kept in mind that low or high context culture, individualism or collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance should not be automatically imposed to the members of any country. The rank is better used as a guideline not as an absolute category.

2.6.3 Corporate Culture

The author of the present study presumes that corporate culture is one of the factors affecting certain aspects of communicative practice. According to Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003), corporate culture has a profound effect on organizational effectiveness because it influences the decision-making process, human resources management, and the way organization responds to the environment. Corporate culture may vary from organization to organization since the moral, social, and behavioral norms of an organization are based on the beliefs, attitudes, and values of its members (Nickerson, 1998). Hofstede (1984: 264) referred to Aston studies of organization structure which indicate that the relationships among people in the organization in Southeast Asian countries are hierarchical or so called "personnel bureaucracy" while the relationships among people in Germany are less, but the work processes are more rigid or so called "workflow bureaucracy". The degree of formalization is relatively high in German companies. Formalization in large German organizations has led to excessive bureaucracy, poor communication, and ultimately inefficiency. German companies emphasize the gathering and use of detailed performance data from and at all levels of business organization (Glunk, Wilderom, and Ogilvie, 1997).

Following on the success of the corporate model at a national level, many corporations have grown beyond national boundaries to attain remarkable positions of power and influence in the process of globalization. Hofstede (1984) divided organizations in international business into three types. "Multicultural organizations" are organizations that operate in many countries but where there is one dominant home national culture in decision making process while in "transnational organizations" there are two home national cultures. As for "international organizations", there is no home national culture of the organizations and the decision makers can be anyone.

In the spread of corporations across multiple continents, the importance of corporate culture has grown as a consolidating factor and a counterweight to local national sensibilities and cultural awareness. However, some groups believe that the phenomenon of globalization has reduced cultural diversity and so reduced the opportunity for misunderstandings, but characterizing people as a homogeneous market is simplistic (Bovee, 2003).

Unfortunately, not so many researchers have paid attention to corporate cultures and their roles in written communication. Swales and Rogers's (1995) study of discourse and the projection of corporate culture were based on the mission statements from two well-known US companies. Their study presents some differences in communicative purposes of the mission statements on account of the corporate culture.

In a study of Nickerson (1998) on corporate culture and the use of written English within British subsidiaries in the Netherlands, the findings reveal that corporate culture plays a significant role in the employees' English writing skills. Regarding non-native corporate users of English, Nickerson stated that it remained necessary to investigate the relationship between non-native employers' corporate culture and their English written communication tasks in various types of documents and media.

Akar (1998) examined the discourse properties of 450 Turkish commercial fax messages and memoranda of four Turkish companies from different sectors varying in sizes, organizational patterns and management styles during the years 1991-1996. He framed his analysis within the contexts of socio-history of private sector in Turkey, current linguistic and literacy trends, and corporate cultures. These frames of contextualization reveal the effect of corporate cultures on certain aspects of communicative practice. The result of this study shows the influence of public sector bureaucratic styles on the memoranda and fax messages in small companies evolving away from the traditional arrangements and styles of business communication due to the factors such as audience, means of delivery, and the types of intertextuality.

From the same corpus, Akar (2002) furthered his investigation to the macro contextual factors, namely national cultures, types of company, and communication technology, which influence the form and function of written business texts in Turkish and English. Given the fact that there is a variety of language use in corporate settings, it is impossible to clearly draw the boundary of business discourse. His analytical approach, therefore, included the identification and description of the contextual factors at different levels. Akar accredited the analytical model of Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999) which provided a comprehensive description of business discourse by placing the genres of business discourse in three layers of context, namely the communicative interaction at the micro level, the organizational context at the meso level to support the analysis at the micro level, and the national and regional cultures at the macro level. Akar's study of macro contextual factors involved the macro and meso level of Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson's framework. Akar analyzed the text into three levels as the primary method in the study. The first level examined the format features associated with the text types included in the data, such as the memo heading and fax cover sheets, the use of salutation lines, address forms and formulaic closing expressions. The second level was rhetorical analysis which comprised the discussion of argumentation patterns and speech acts. The third level emphasized a micro-level linguistic analysis connecting between certain linguistic structures and discourse functions. Akar's level of analysis is very systematic. His analytical model is thus adapted to the present study. Apart from textual analysis, he conducted discourse-based interviews with the writers of the texts which the author of this study found useful and thus includes interviews with the writers of the e-mail messages in the analysis in order to better understand the corporate culture, management styles, and hierarchical relationship in the companies.

2.6.4 Face-saving and Politeness Strategies

Among many factors and strategies that come in to play in intercultural business communication is politeness. Victor (1992) stated that face-saving is the most important dimension of context in international business communication. Politeness is an important linguistic strategy affecting language choice. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), all human being have self-esteem and want "face" or the public self-image in their society. They expect their "face" to be recognized and respected. Before the interaction takes place, one can decide either to engage in a face threatening act (FTA) or not. If the FTA is employed, one may choose either to go off record or to go on record. To perform it off record means that one is intentionally ambiguous. To do the act on record, baldly without redress is the most direct way of communication the FTA. To go on record with redressive action in order to save one's face, it is needed to consider whether one wants negative or positive face. A person with positive face wants to be accepted as a member of the group whereas a person with negative face wants to be independent, unimpeded in their action, and not to be imposed on by others. Politeness is a strategy that attends to the mutual awareness of "face" sensitivity. To save people's face, therefore, two different strategies related to their face wants are required, the so-called positive and negative politeness strategies.

without redressive action, baldly
on record
positive politeness
Do the FTA
with redressive action
off record
negative politeness
Don't do the FTA

(Brown and Levinson 1987: 69)

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed the description of positive and negative politeness strategies as follows:

Positive Politeness

1. Claim common ground
   1.1 convey "X is admirable interesting" by
      a. notice, attend to H's interests, wants, needs, goods
      b. exaggerate interest, approval sympathy with H
      c. intensify interest to H
   1.2 claim in-group membership with H by
      d. use in-group identity markers
   1.3 claim common point of view, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, empathy by
      e. seek agreement
      f. avoid disagreement
      g. presuppose/raise/assert/common ground
      h. joke
2. Convey that S and H are cooperators
   2.1 indicate S know H's wants and is taking them into account by
      i. assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants
   2.2 claim reflexivity (if H wants then S wants, if S wants then H wants) by
      j. offer, promise
      k. be optimistic
      l. include both S and H in the activity
      m. give or ask for reasons
   2.3 claim reciprocity by
      n. assume or assert reciprocity
3. Fulfill H's want by
      o. give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 102)

Negative Politeness

1. Bald on record
   1.1 be direct by
      a. be direct or be conventionally indirect
2. With redress to H's want to be unimpinged upon
   2.1 don't presume/assume/; make minimal assumption by
      b. question, hedge
   2.2 don't coerce H; give H option not to do act
      c. be conventionally indirect
      d. question, hedge
      e. be pessimistic
   2.3 communicate S's wants to not impinge on H by
      f. apologize
      g. impersonalize S and H
      h. state the FTA as a general rule
      i. nominalize
   2.4 redress other wants of H's derivative from negative face
      j. go on record

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 131)

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) model was designed for spoken discourse, their concept of face and face threatening acts can be applied to written discourse. In this case, the speaker (S) is the writer and the hearer or addressee (H) is the reader. Indeed, politeness strategies operate within the sentence but they also combine at the macro-textual level of choice and distribution of moves (Vergaro, 2004). The expressions of disapproval or disagreement threaten the reader's positive face while the actions that threaten the reader's negative face are, for example, requests, suggestions and advice. Apologies and acceptance of compliments threaten the reader's positive face in that he/she may feel that such activities have to be played down or reciprocated in kind. Thanks, acceptance of thanks, or offers threaten the writer's negative face in that he/she accepts a debt and humble their own face (Watt, 2003).

Politeness is in between language and social reality. The three variables which determine the weightiness of face-threatening acts in a communicative event are social distance between participants, power relation between them, and weight of any imposition they are negotiating.

Weightiness of an FTA

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

– W_x : weightiness of a face threatening act x
– D(S,H): social distance between speaker and hearer
– P(H,S): power of the hearer over the speaker
– R_x: absolute ranking of the imposition x in a given culture

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 76)

Politeness is an important variable governing language production. Most work on politeness is based on the notion of face and how speakers attempt to establish, maintain and save face during interaction. Unfortunately, few studies have so far applied politeness theory in studies of business correspondence. Maier (1992) carried out an intercultural research on politeness strategies in a fictional situation by asking eight native business professionals and ten non-native business English students to write a letter to a personnel manager of a company explaining why they unavoidably missed a job interview and persuade the personnel manager to give them a belated interview. The findings indicate that the letters written by native speakers employed more negative politeness strategies to preserve the addressee's face. As a result, their letters were more formal, indirect, and pessimistic than those written by non-native speakers.

Pilegaard (1997) examined politeness strategies in 323 authentic British business letters drawn from a corpus collected by Cambridge University. He divided the letters in to three categories: (1) Making contact including sales and inquiries, (2) Negotiating (e.g. quotations and orders), and (3) In conflict (e.g. reminders and complaints). He concluded from the findings that in the early stages of business contact positive and negative politeness strategies were equally often used in business letters, but once negotiation had started, negative politeness strategies dominated. His study on politeness in written business discourse demonstrated that the level, form and distribution of positive and negative politeness in business letters correlated with sender status and varied as a function of the dynamics of the course of business communication. He also advocated that monitoring politeness strategies on the text level would give valuable insight into the norms that govern business communication.

Politeness strategies in e-mail exchanges were studied recently by Vinagre (2006). She analyzed a corpus of 11 introductory e-mails written half in English and half in Spanish, along with the replies. The findings show that the correspondents did not used negative politeness strategies as often as expected in encountering where the social distance between them is high, but they relied heavily on positive politeness strategies, especially those relating to "claiming common ground", "assuming or asserting reciprocity", and "conveying cooperation". Thus, she concluded that the solidarity is the priority the correspondents to be achieved.

In conclusion, the reasons for the differences in the use of politeness strategies across countries may be partly due to differences in audience expectations and writer concepts of how politeness is expressed. The term "politeness" may be defined differently and the perception of degree of imposition may vary from culture to culture, in other words, what is considered to be polite in one culture may be impolite in another (Sifianou, 1999). The relationship of politeness strategies and cultures is illustrated in Figure 3.2 in Chapter III.

2.7 Summary

With technological advances for information exchange and globalization, there have clearly been changes away from the template of letter writing as discussed in the Crystal (2002), Gimenez (2000, 2005) and Zhang (2006) 's studies cited above. The genre analysts have become increasingly aware of the need to contextualize the genres used by the international business community in order to achieve communicative purposes. This includes the consideration of the effects of various non-linguistic factors on the nature of spoken and written business text such as corporate cultures (Swales and Rogers, 1995; Nickerson, 1998) or the physical aspects of the text's distribution such as the communication medium used (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). These contextual factors fall outside of what has traditionally been the focus of business English teaching where linguistic evidence alone can not fully account for the nature of business discourse.