

Writing in the workplace

Variation in the Writing Practices and Formality of Eight Multinational Companies in
Greece

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ABSTRACT

Workplace writing is a high stakes activity. It constitutes a permanent record of a company's transactions and this has implications for both the employees involved in the production of documents and also for the company as a whole. Workplace writing is dynamic, and processes and practices vary between teams, departments, companies and industries. In this context, the study is concerned with workplace writing practices in eight multinational companies situated in Greece. The thesis is structured in two parts: the first part aims to explore the writing practices in the participant organisations focusing on factors behind inter- and intra- company variation. The discussion draws on the analysis of questionnaire and interview data. The second part takes a micro perspective and focuses on one genre, that of the business email. The analysis reports on a sample of naturally occurring emails from three participant companies. As the business email tends to be perceived as an informal genre, special attention is paid to the notion of formality, which has not been systematically discussed and defined in this context.

The findings show that writing practices vary according to company size, employees' hierarchical level and years of experience. Business email emerges as the most frequent genre, which serves a range of functions in different contexts. Dynamic continua of writing practices ranging from 'formal to informal' and 'transactional to relational' are mobilised as employees reflect on their use of email at work and this is aligned with the findings of the linguistic analysis. The data also indicate the impact of the globalised socioeconomic activity on employees' practices in modern organisations. The participants in this study operate at the interface of different languages and practices, which cut across national and professional boundaries. The complex choices they make in different contexts have implications for language training and specifically the teaching of writing in academic contexts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ads	Advertisements
CofP	Community of practice
Docs	Documents
EFL	English as a foreign language
ENG	English
EPRs	Employee Performance Reports
FL	Foreign language
GR	Greek
Info	Information
IS	Interactional Sociolinguistics
LF	Lingua franca
L2	Second language
MNCs	Multinational companies
RQs	Research questions
SC	Social constructionism
SD	Social distance
SMSs	Short Message Service messages sent by mobile

INTRODUCTION

0.1. Rationale and scope of the thesis

Workplace writing occupies a significant part of employees' daily routines. Although typically not mentioned in job adverts or work titles, all white collar employees are required to engage in this high stakes activity, which has implications for them and the company as a whole. In the process of workplace writing the employees need to negotiate concerns ranging from the expectations of different audiences to accountability issues - binding themselves, their team and their company. As succinctly put by Paré (2002, p. 59) "writing on the job can be dangerous. The form, content, distribution and use of many professional texts are closely governed by both implicit and explicit guidelines and regulations and failure to comply may place individuals in jeopardy". Writing *for* and *to* different groups including close colleagues but also collaborators from other departments/other subsidiaries in different parts of the world and external audiences is part of the knowledge workplace writers need to acquire on the job. The language used for written communication is also dynamic as in the modern workplace employees need to negotiate the use of *linguae francae* (often but not always English) and local languages that both form part of the linguistic landscape. Processes and practices vary between teams, departments, companies, and industries, and this nexus explains why research refers to workplace writing as a complex and dynamic activity. With the advent of technology, workplace writing becomes more diverse, and the boundaries between spoken and written genres become anything but clear-cut. A case in point regarding the latter is the business email, the most frequent genre in workplace written discourse.

At the same time the recent economic crisis in Europe, which constitutes the focus of this study, but also other parts of the world, adds a layer of complexity on corporate communication practices. Under the pressure to close or to restructure and downsize to survive, crisis-hit businesses are left with retaining 'talented' employees with multiple competences who could work efficiently in different areas. In this context, employees capable of meeting the demands of different writing genres, audiences and businesses and having multiple foreign/second language skills stand better chances of recruitment, retention, and promotion (Angouri, 2013; Feely & Harzing, 2002). This is also relevant to writing, which is many times unofficially allocated to those who have the right 'skills'

to carry out the task (Mahili, 2014). The perceived importance of workplace writing for employees' professional survival is still underresearched and an area this thesis aims to contribute to.

In this context the present study reports on data from eight companies situated in Greece, a country severely hit by the ongoing financial crisis. The thesis is structured in two parts: the first part aims to explore workplace writing practices in the participant organisations focusing in particular on factors behind inter- and intra- company variation. The thesis problematises how and why practices differ according to the perceptions of the employees. It reports on the perceived importance of different documents and the notion of collaborative writing. The discussion draws on the analysis of questionnaire and interview data. The second part takes a micro perspective and focuses on one genre, that of the business email. The analysis of a sample of naturally occurring emails from three participant companies is presented. The discussion probes the characteristics of business email as a distinct 'genre' (vs. a medium for communication). And given that the business email has been seen as 'informal', special attention is paid to the notion of formality, which has not been systematically discussed and defined in this context. The interrelationship between formality and power, social distance, and socialisation is foregrounded in the analysis.

Formality is a highly underresearched notion. Despite being frequently used in discourse studies, it still remains vague as to its denotations in the different contexts. Although it is often referred to as situation (e.g., a public event) and/or code (i.e., linguistic or non-linguistic features), neither of the two terms nor their interrelation is delineated. Accordingly the second part of the thesis attempts to investigate what formality is and when and how it is used by analysing workplace emails from the perceptions of their writers, as "a complex, multi-faceted and dynamic force" (Harris, 2007, p. 124). In addition, the investigation of formality in the writing practices of organisations can reveal important insights about the efficiency of business transactions, issues of access to the workplace community and its communication with external parties, and the negotiation of power relations among the employees. Part A of the thesis addresses these issues, contextualising them in a multilingual environment and the socioeconomic pressures.

Overall the project takes a mixed methods approach and combines quantitative and qualitative data in an ethnographically informed design that attempts to capture the voice of the participants and the way they ‘do’ writing in the modern workplace. The stance taken here is that complex questions can be addressed more holistically through a mixed methods approach as different methodologies provide the researcher with distinct tools to access different layers of context. Further to this, workplace writing does not happen in a vacuum; the social context and the text produced are in a dialogic relationship (Angouri, 2013). Hence an ethnographic approach is considered appropriate in developing an understanding of the social context within which the employees operate. The study seeks to capture a snapshot of everyday workplace communication and also dig deeper into the complexity of how employees communicate and why they do so.

By bringing together a discussion of the macro- perspective of writing practices in eight companies and the micro- analysis of a rich sample of business emails from three companies, this study aims to contribute to research both in the area of workplace discourse and scholarship on business email in particular. In the next section I discuss the context of the present study (0.2. and 0.3) before turning to the overview of the thesis (0.4.)

0.2. A brief outline of communication in the multinational¹ workplace

There is little question as to the accelerating pace of the changes in the socio-economic environments and the consequences they have for the fate of corporations in Europe and world-wide. Globalisation has led many businesses to expand their trade to other countries; formerly individual enterprises have turned into multinational alliances; employees from all types of organisations immigrate, relocate or travel to other countries to collaborate and do business; accordingly communication practices change to facilitate employees across national borders and time zones to do business faster and more efficiently; even small companies can take part in the international competition for trade and profit with the use of modern communication technology. In this context, organisations become multilingual environments, employing a multilingual workforce and required to use a range of languages to do business.

¹ Although the term multinational is often associated with a large company with branches and subsidiaries in other countries, here it also denotes a company that employs a multinational workforce and/or uses and promotes the use of multiple languages.

The constraints of globalisation on company communication have also been widely discussed. Organisations are under pressure to conform to international standards and are subjected to restrictions imposed by supranational authorities (Commission of Europe 2003; Council of Europe, 2001). Similarly, the languages of communication, and “the styles and designs of established genres become increasingly standardised in a globalised environment where trades, businesses and professions seek to harmonise disparate professional cultures in order to facilitate communication, foreign trade and economies of scale” (Jorgensen, 2005, pp. 147-8). Far from uniform, however, the reality appears to be highly variable for the employees of multinational companies (MNCs). As several studies on organisational communication policies and practice reveal (e.g., Angouri, 2013; ARCTIC project, 2013; Kingsley, 2009; Miglbauer, 2010), there are numerous discrepancies between corporate or departmental communication policies and the actual everyday use of communication. In the attempt to reconcile global and local demands, employees are asked to communicate in a variety of languages, genres, and styles often according to a ‘what works best’ solution rather than strictly adhering to predetermined official policies (Angouri, 2013; Maclean, 2006). Relevant to this thesis is the choice between English as Lingua Franca (LF) and local languages, Greek in this case, in the writing of documents for formal and informal purposes. Although the use of English (ENG) and Greek (GR) is not the primary concern of this thesis, it emerges as relevant to writing for formal and informal purposes and is discussed in section 4.1.

At the same time, the impact of the recent economic crisis on communication has not been addressed yet in workplace discourse studies. The crisis in Europe is a recent and still ongoing phenomenon, but it already had implications in relation to the companies’ management of human resources (OECD Report, 2009), recruitment policy, communication practices, and employees’ psychology. Companies are disbanded, corporations shrink, and subsidiaries are relocated to other countries. In this context, the key to survival is flexibility, innovation, and restriction of expenses (Jacobs, 2010); as companies downsize and reduce costs in order to survive and compete in the globalising market, the ideal option appears to be retention of talent and multiple competences (Hudson’s European HR Survey Report, 2009, p. 2). Employees with competence in foreign languages and writing skills that could combine different writing tasks and posts enjoy better opportunities to secure their post, or advance to a higher post (Mahili, 2014).

Worth adding here is that this environment encourages a skills-based view of communication, where communication skill is reduced to a commodity which acquires value according to its importance for the companies' economy. "[The] globalized new economy provokes tensions between standardization and variability and triggers debates over which kinds of language, and which kinds of speakers, have legitimacy or authority, or value as commodities, under these conditions" (Heller, 2010, p. 106). Although a skills-based view of employees has been criticised in the literature², it can provide a lens from which to explain the insecurity employees feel in times of crisis and the importance they attribute to their writing skills and competence in foreign languages. Faced with the prospect of losing their jobs to other colleagues, employees may project themselves or may be perceived by their employers as 'commodities' of value to their companies. These issues are further discussed in section 4.4. in relation to the importance employees ascribe to their writing skills.

The highly unstable economic environment thus further pronounces the rapid changes in the global and European setting on workplace communication. These become particularly visible in the latest years and in countries that have been severely hit by the crisis. Greece being one of them makes a valid case in point. Thus in the next section the specific Greek context is discussed to situate the study.

0.3 The multinational workplace in Greece

Although the internationalised nature of socioeconomic activity has affected all countries, evidently local differences are noted, and Greece is not an exception (Piraeus Chamber of Commerce & Industry). One such difference lies in its number of small, medium and large companies involved in global trade. According to Eurostat information in a report on small-medium businesses in Greece (Report for Small Business Act in Greece, 2010/11), Greece has the largest share of businesses in relation to population in the EU. Most of these are categorised under micro businesses employing up to ten people, have a strong family character, and are primarily involved in the export-import sector. The number of large businesses amounts to almost half of the respective average number of the other European countries according to statistics

² A skills-based view of employees has been seen as a characteristic of post capitalist workplaces and has been criticised in the literature (e.g., see Gee et al., 1996). Although this is a valid point, a discussion goes beyond the scope of the study (see Heller, 2010).

obtained in 2011. Also in the small-micro category in Greece, 96.5% is comprised of micro businesses compared to 92% in Europe and 3.1% is comprised of small businesses compared to 6.6% in Europe. Smaller differences are noted in the medium and large categories in Greece and Europe (respectively 0.4% vs. 1.1 and 0.1% vs. 0.2). Similarly, work posts in micro business comprise 56% in Greece and 29.7% in Europe. Hence companies with small groups of employees operate in the international domain and often with 'larger' counterparts where different Human Resources rules and regulations are in place. This provides a rich context for negotiating the 'way things are done' and something this study is concerned with. In this context, this research is conducted in a number of companies based in Greece varying in size, with a different range and type of activities, which yet employ a multinational workforce and use different languages. The variety in size and structure provides a better ground for investigating differences and commonalities in companies affected by both the local and the global economic and commercial environment.

Despite the prolific research done in other countries, there is a gap in linguistic studies on workplace written communication in Greece with few but significant exceptions. Angouri (2007) is probably the only extensive study discussing variation in the communication practices and products in MNCs in Greece. The primary focus of other studies seems to be on the types of foreign languages used and the language policies adopted in the public and private sector. As reported, in Greece high importance is placed on Foreign Languages, with the predominance of English as the first Foreign Language (FL) seen in Greek teachers' perceptions on multilingualism (Griva and Chostelidou, 2011) and in the FL policy emerging in job advertisements (Kandaridou & Papadopoulou, 2013) in the public and private sector. The second conducted in the last months of 2012 is particularly revealing about the impact the economic crisis has had on the types of jobs available in the midst of the crisis, as seen in the demand for job related skills and FLs. As shown, less than half of 25,000 job advertisements asked for unskilled labour and English predominated with 83% in advertisements demanding FLs. In the corporate sector in Greece one sees a similar trend. About 90% of business executives in Greece speak FLs (Graddol, 2006). Accordingly the languages used for workplace writing and the implications of second language (L2) use are discussed in this study (chapter 4), which aims to contribute to research on the largely unexplored workplace

discourse in the Greek context. This is discussed further in the light of the data, and the next section provides the reader with an outline of the structure of the work.

0.4. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised in six chapters. The first chapter includes a literature review where the main issues affecting workplace correspondence are foregrounded. It first discusses the characteristics of workplace writing that are pertinent to this study, namely its social, collaborative, and variable nature. It then focuses on email by touching upon its role in the workplace, the debate on its status as a genre, and its importance for workplace communication. Gaps in the literature are identified. The chapter then includes a section on formality, discussing problems of definition and quantification. Particular emphasis is placed on the way its two main aspects, situation and linguistic features, have been viewed in the past and the way social distance, power, and socialisation have been defined and related to formality. The section closes by highlighting the issues that remain underexplored and merit further investigation.

The second chapter touches upon the theoretical frameworks adopted in the study and the research questions addressed. The concept of Community of Practice (CofP) and the related concept of situated and natural learning are developed and their relevance to this study is discussed. Next follow the principles of ethnography and interactional sociolinguistics and the reasons for their adoption. The chapter closes with the research questions addressed in the study.

Chapter 3 provides a rationale for the methods used, the tools employed and the procedures followed. It starts with a rationale for adopting a mixed methods approach and describes the manner of integration of the quantitative and qualitative components in each research question. Issues of validity and reliability, ethics, and the role of the researcher are also addressed. The chapter then describes the manner in which the particular tools are employed namely the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews, and the discourse based interviews, and the coding of email functions is described.

The following two chapters report and discuss the results of the study in two parts. Part A (chapter 4) analyses the results on company writing practices; it starts with the frequency and importance placed upon different types of documents and the way these

vary according to company size, level of post and years of experience. Then it moves to the types of collaboration the participants engage in according to their level of post and years of experience. It closes with the types of writing difficulties encountered and ways of dealing with them.

Part B (chapter 5) discusses the results from the analysis of the naturally occurring written data. It first investigates the functions email serves in three participant companies. It then discusses the way formality is enacted in a sub corpus of email chains. This is done by first providing a taxonomy of the situational factors and the linguistic features of formality on which the analysis is based. The discourse analysis of the written data is organised in three subsections: Social distance, power, and socialisation. In the end, four considerations are suggested with regard to the enactment of formality.

The thesis closes with chapter 6, where the main findings are summarised, the contribution of the thesis is discussed, and pedagogical implications are drawn.

Chapter 1. Writing in the workplace

1.0. Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main sections: workplace writing, emails, and formality. The first section touches upon the basic characteristics of workplace writing, i.e. its social, collaborative, and variable nature. The second section discusses the role of workplace email, the issue of whether it is considered a medium or a genre, its importance in workplace communication, and relevant unresolved issues. The third section starts with a discussion of the definition of formality, particularly issues related to its linguistic features and situation. As part of the second, the interpersonal factors of social distance, power, and socialisation are also addressed. The chapter moves to issues related to the quantification of formality and closes with the rationale for its investigation.

1.1. The nature of workplace writing

1.1.1. The social nature of workplace writing

In the past decade scholarly attention has extended beyond a preoccupation with purely *what* is written and *how* it is written (i.e., aspects covered in textual and cognitive approaches) to *how and why* things are written the way they are. By encompassing the social nature of writing, researchers can better explain the way both the writing products and processes reflect and reproduce the organisational environment in which they are produced.

The organisational environment comprises the practices, values, and the behaviours that writers share with others in their work group, office or organisation and the interpersonal interactions with colleagues. Extensive research has shown how organisational context affects the discourse of members of particular organisations both in written texts (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Bremmer, 2006) and in their talk (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999). It also shows how organisational culture affects the genres (see section 1.1.4. for a discussion on genre theory) that are produced (Kankaanranta, 2006; Yates and Orlikowski, 1994). This is particularly visible in the way the respondents themselves talk about their writing; choices of content and perceptions of their audience are often based on the writers' shared beliefs and own

experiences in the office and department and the nature of their own work rather than on their knowledge of their readers (Ledwell-Brown, 2000; Kleimann, 1993; Odell, 1985). The employees' social relations, tensions, conflicts, and mutual dependency on each other are also evident in their writing.

The social context not only affects but is also affected by the writing. Individuals play an important role in creating the environments that surround them; "since both individuals and groups of people are continually selecting, modifying and interpreting the phenomena around them ... organizations have a major hand in creating the realities which they view as 'facts' to which they must accommodate" (Weick, 1979, p. 270). Also, as numerous research studies show (Bhatia, 1993; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Devitt, 1991; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), apart from a social process, workplace writing is also seen here as 'social action'. As stated in Miller's (1984) seminal work, workplace genres are commonly understood to be "typified social action", based on the assumption that a social community has a stock of knowledge categorised in types which are recognised and reproduced through socially constructed processes. In this context, a new type may evolve as a rhetorical response to a new situation and if this new type "proves continually useful for mastering states of affairs, it enters that stock of knowledge and its application becomes routine" (Miller, 1984, p. 157). As Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson (1999) suggest, "genre, as a discourse classification system based on typified forms of communication invoked in situations recurring in a particular social context, can be usefully applied to investigating the communicative practices of any social group, including professional groups and business organizations" (p. 9). In this light, as communicative practices and workplace genres become established in a community by its members, their nature apart from being social is also inherently collaborative.

1.1.2. The collaborative nature of writing

Workplace writing as a collaborative act is well known in research (Anderson, 1985; Ede & Lunsford, 1990; Paradis et al., 1985; Paré, 2000). It can be seen in the substantial number of writers on the same document from different companies, hierarchical levels and occupations, and the multiple reasons they have for working with others. Research, however, reveals conflicting findings with regard to the types of collaboration employees engage in when writing and the time they spend on it. Reasons point to the different

understanding employees seem to have of collaborative writing, some seeing it as falling within officially designated duties and others as informally working together with others.

Time spent collaborating

With respect to the time spent collaborating, research findings have appeared to vary from 19% to 85% for some time now. For example, Burnett (2001) reported 75% to 85% of respondents collaborate while writing, similar to older estimates of 73% (Faigley et al., 1981) and 60% (Harwood, 1982). Other studies, however, reveal much lower estimates ranging from approximately 19% (Paradis et al., 1985) to 30% of working time spent collaborating (Davis, 1977). Although various factors may explain this divergence (e.g., complexity of documents), a possible reason also lies in the different meaning writers ascribe to collaboration (Anderson, 1985) ranging from officially delegated writing tasks (Flatley, 1982) in the production of formal documents (e.g., reports to clients) to informally offering writing tips to other colleagues. As Lunsford and Ede comment, “Respondents think of writing almost exclusively ‘alone’ when, in fact, they are most often collaborating on the mental and procedural activities which precede and co-occur with the act of writing as well as on the construction of the text” (1986, p. 73). In light of the conflicting findings on the time spent collaborating and the immense, yet often unperceived by the employees, influence of multiple authors, the issue of formally assigned and informally produced³ collaborative writing merits further investigation. These issues are addressed in section 4.3.

Parties involved in collaboration and reasons for doing so

In addition to being visible and often invisible, the collaborating parties are also highly variable. People with different occupations (Anderson, 1985; Faigley & Miller, 1982), from different hierarchical levels (Odell, 1985; Paradis et al., 1985), employed in different companies (Selzer, 1993) with different competences and expertise (Zimmerman & Marsh, 1989; Winsor, 1989) contribute to the production of the same document in a process of ‘document cycling’ (Paradis et al., 1985). Ultimately investigating who collaborates with whom leads to why. Reasons for working together similarly vary from managing and supervising the work of others, to being visible,

³ Formally assigned collaboration refers to officially designated duties and informally produced to writing produced outside official duties.

sustaining a sense of community denoted by “corporate” identity (Ede & Lunsford, 1983; Reither, 1993; Paradis et al., 1985) to simply helping to meet deadlines by the end of the day (Mahili, 2014). Even when collaborating on the same document (e.g., a report on a meeting) individual writers may be engaged in different tasks (e.g., an initial briefing and the final report) and from different perspectives (Angouri & Harwood, 2008). Different strata were also seen to engage in different stages in the composition process (Winsor, 1989) with lower levels engaging mostly in drafting often outside their official duties (Paradis et al., 1985) and higher levels in supervising and editing their work (Anderson, 1985; Faigley & Miller, 1982; Paradis et al., 1985). Similarly for experienced supervisors collaboration was a means of managing work and assigning responsibilities, and for newcomers a way of belonging to the workplace community (Paradis et al., 1985). In this context, the study aims to explore how much and why employees varying in hierarchical levels and years of experience collaborate. Since the identification of the collaborators often remains obscure, the study investigates the ways employees from different hierarchical levels and with different years of experience collaborate (section 4.3).

Types of collaboration

One basic type of collaboration conforms to the traditional view of physical collaboration of people for the production of a document, “a process that begins with an intention to write and ends when a text is produced” (Reither, 1993, p. 197). However, employees also work on the same document electronically, from a distance, or less visibly and more informally in a kind of “communal brainstorming” (Selzer, 1983) with other workers both in the same office as well as in other offices engaging in informal telephone conversations and chats. The view of informal or unofficial collaboration is supported from insights from the situated theory of learning (for a discussion see section 2.1.2.), where people naturally learn by working together towards common organisational goals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Having said that, the process is far from simple as it is not only restricted to giving and receiving collegial help but is subject to power imbalances and conflicts between gatekeepers and newcomers who struggle to fit in. The visible formal type of collaboration and the invisible informal type outside

official duties become relevant here as relations of *power*⁴ can be negotiated in less visible aspects of workplace communication. In this light, who collaborates with whom, how, and why causes interest for further investigation and are examined in Research Questions (RQs) 3B and 3C.

Ultimately, variation in collaboration is a reflection of equally variable organisational writing practices and products. The factors that underlie these differences across and within companies thus present an area for further investigation. Hence, the following section discusses inter- and intra-company variation in writing practices and products, an important aspect of this research.

1.1.3. The variable nature of workplace writing

Variation across professions and organisations

There is little question as to the differences across professional groups when it comes to the types of texts produced and the amount time spent writing. Engineers were seen to write more reports than secretaries (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996) and to present information in a different style from administrators (Coutoure, 1992), leading to miscommunication between them. People in technical professions were found to differ in their purpose of writing from those in marketing and administrative professions/departments (Ledwell-Brown, 2000). Professional and technical occupations were also reported to spend considerably more time than other job categories (spending 29% of their job related time on writing) with blue-collar occupations at the other extreme (spending 4% of their time writing).

Different types of organisations were also seen to vary in the types, functions and structure of the documents they produce. For example, reports were more often used in industrial than non-industrial companies (Barbara et al., 1996), and direct mail as part of a marketing campaign was also seen to be used differently in companies with different activities and services like banks and engineering consultancy agencies (Van Nus, 1999). Accordingly, the role, rhetorical strategies and move structure of CEO's and chairman's statements were also found to vary between a UK and a Dutch corporation (Nickerson

⁴ Power is primarily seen here as control over others by virtue of one's hierarchical position and/or his/her expertise, knowledge, personal contacts etc. For a more detailed discussion of power, see section 1.3.2.

and De Groot, 2005). Apart from documents, differences have also been discussed in the communication procedures and practices of organisations. Morand (1995) discusses the differences between bureaucratic and mechanistic organisations with more formalised procedures and communication practices and organic innovative organisations with more informal communication practices, respectively called ‘formalistic’ and ‘informalistic’ interaction orders. Although the use of different communication practices and procedures by different types of organisations is well known, formality and formalisation appear to play a role in the discussion of these differences, which still remains underresearched.

Although size of organisation does not seem to emerge as a separate point of difference, it tends to be implied or mentioned sporadically together with other aspects of the organisation. For example, differences in the written documents and in the use of LF and local language/s between organisations were primarily ascribed to their global-local orientation (Gimenez, 2002; Miglbauer, 2010), types of activities-services offered (Gallion & Kavan, 1994), export orientation (Vandermeeren, 1999), and structure and corporate culture (Nickerson, 2000). In these studies the implication appears to be that the above organisational characteristics are inevitably related to size of organisation and they all in turn affect communication practices. Although linguistic studies appear to show a gap in the discussion of size, insights can be drawn from management studies. Largely enabled by their economic, technological and human resources large organisations manage their operation in multiple countries through standardisation and formalisation of their communication practices and ensuring accountability of actions between layers of management and exercise of control across national borders. By contrast, it is often reported that small businesses show a marked tendency toward flexibility, informality, personalised management style and centralisation of decisions (Baird et al., 1994; Gray & Mabey, 2005; Vitez, n.d). Having said that, not surprisingly centralised decisions have been seen to cause some small companies to be inflexible and averse to change and growth (Gray & Mabey, 2005, p. 469). However, in general flexibility appears to be a main advantage of small businesses as they can more easily “mix and match different services from different bundles” (White paper, 2012, p. 5), adjust to new socioeconomic situations, develop customized approach to carrying out business, introduce new innovations (e.g., a product or service that varies from the standard one) and evolve than large businesses (Baird et al., 1994; Fillis & Wagner, 2005). In this light, communication practices are expected to vary to reflect the different

needs of the different size organisations and the different role formality plays in the writing products and processes adopted in these organisations. Against this backdrop, the present thesis addresses differences in the writing practices of organisations varying in size, type of activities, and hierarchical structure by looking into differences in the frequency of the types of documents produced and the importance ascribed to them (sections 4.1. and 4.2.).

More inter-company differences relate to the use of different languages. Several studies report different uses of *Linguae Francae* and other local languages between companies (Miglbauer, 2010; Mahili, 2014). For example, the use of English and Dutch differs across a number of British subsidiaries in the Netherlands (Nickerson, 2000) and the use of English and Spanish similarly differs between a company's central offices and its subsidiaries (Gimenez, 2002). As the companies investigated here are based in Greece with extensive trade and divisions in a number of other countries, an examination of the types of languages used is necessary for a description of their linguistic and writing profile. Section 4.1. examines the use of English as LF and Greek as the local language with respect to the types of documents used in the organisations.

Such widely reported intercompany variation can be accounted for through a social constructionist perspective (further discussed in 2.3.) grounded on the recursive relation between organisation structures and its communication. According to this view, the organising processes of each corporation affect and are affected by its communication practices, giving rise to genre repertoires (discussed in 1.1.4.). This, in turn, can help explain the differences between various workplace communities whether they are temporary teams working on particular projects, departments/divisions of corporations, or self-contained companies. For example, a bureaucratic/mechanistic organisation ideally tends to employ formal communication procedures, enactment of official duties and routinisation of interaction, and ratification of authority in information flow. By contrast, an organic/innovative organisation tends to be characterised by informal and casual interactions, more loosely structured and defined duties, and free lateral flow of information (Morand, 1995). Similarly, democratic organising processes may be reflected in decisions made by all members in meetings by discussion and vote and autocratic organising processes are reflected in decisions resting with a leader who breaks down directives by email to the other members (Yates & Orlikowski, 1994, p.

542). In terms of different genres, a repertoire of a workplace community (see chapter 2 for a discussion on CofPs) comprising the informal memo, proposal, dialogue and the ballot genres, some degree of deviation from standardised formats of these genres and the absence of reports differentiates it from other similar communities that employ more progress reports and do not deviate as much from templates (Yates & Orlikowski, 1994, p. 570). Although genres are far from static and subject to numerous exigencies, they are socially constructed and subject to the local environmental constraints of each organisation. It follows that they differ from one organisation to another in substantial ways despite their similarities.

Variation within the same organisation

Even within the boundaries of one sector, profession, or organisation differences are reported to exist, which appear to be triggered by the local context and the situational, temporal, and spatial exigencies. A number of researchers talk of differences in the frequency of documents assigned to employees, their reasons for writing, complexity of documents, importance of writing, and use of templates (e.g., Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Beaufort, 2000; Gunnarsson, 1997; Odell, 1985; Paradis et al., 1985). These are discussed in turn below.

The frequency of documents was found to vary across levels in the hierarchy and departments. For example, holders of high posts were reported to write more memos than letters, reports and preprinted forms (Anderson, 1985). Similar differences in the types of memos employed by different levels pointed to differences in the writing duties and responsibilities of each level. Even when both higher and lower strata worked on the same document, they were found to work in different ways and for different purposes (Angouri & Harwood, 2008). Implications thus arise with respect to the variable nature of workplace genres (also see section 1.1.4.). Further to this the same document could be written in different forms and acquire different formal status in the same company. As an example, templates for taking the minutes of meetings were strictly adhered to and were accorded legal status in particular meetings with other companies, whereas internally they were replaced by informal notes serving as a memory aid (Angouri & Harwood, 2008). Email was similarly found to acquire both formal and informal status in the same company according to its recipients (Gimenez, 2002). The reported variability in formal

and informal uses of the same genre, although not discussed in length, is believed to be able to explain the different way organisations bridge their local and their wider needs.

Further, assignment of documents differed according to their complexity. More complex documents appeared to be delegated to employees in higher positions (Gunnarsson, 1997) and those with more years of experience in the company (Beaufort, 2000). Respectively, simpler everyday tasks were delegated to lower position holders and newcomers. Although a relation is implied between years of experience and hierarchical level, it remains inconclusive and is further investigated in the present thesis (Part A).

In addition, the importance ascribed to writing was also seen to vary within the same organisation despite the well-established importance of writing in the minds of employees (Anderson, 1985, Cox, 1976; Faigley & Miller, 1982; Paradis et al., 1985). Past studies report differences in the reasons and the extent it is important. As an illustration, the ‘critical importance’ of writing ability ranged from 57% (Anderson, 1985) to 30% (Storms, 1983) of the respondents. In technical fields there appear to be more conflicting findings as writing may be perceived as an end or a means to an end; as an engineering consultant stated, “Our product ultimately is the written document ... [p]oorly written reports can (and have) undermined the value of technical writing” (Faigley & Miller, 1982, p. 564). However, other studies report writing in technical professions to be of less importance to technical or job related skills (Northey, 1990; Penrose, 1976). Level of post and years of work experience have also been seen to play a role in the attribution of importance to writing with high level employees attributing more importance to writing than lower levels (Anderson, 1985).

A number of possible explanations are suggested for the different perceptions of importance of writing. One lies in the association with difficulty in writing task⁵ in the minds of employees, the assumption being that writing is important because it is generally demanding either because it is inherently so (Davies & Birbili, 2000) or because it is usually done under pressure for time and for financial results (Gunnarsson, 1997). Other explanations lie in the type of addressees and the degree to which the documents serve the company’s goals; documents addressed to external constituencies

⁵ Difficulty of writing tasks is not in terms of genre characteristics but in addressing the particular rhetorical situation and receiver.

(Beaufort, 2000; Gunnarsson, 1997) and those serving the organisation's goals (Beaufort, 2000) were considered more important than others. It appears, therefore, that "the context in which writing is done and the job it must perform" has a role to play in the different importance it is ascribed (Davies & Birbili, 2000, p. 432) and the different explanations that are given. In an attempt to better understand the variation in the writing practices of modern organisations, this study examines differences in the importance ascribed to the written documents by employees in different hierarchical levels and years of experience (see section 4.2.).

Considering all the above, the present study attempts to trace and explain the way the writing practices of different types of modern organisations vary by looking into frequency and importance of documents, the type of language/s they are written in, and the parties involved in their production. Although such differences were widely reported and discussed in the past, the findings may seem fairly out-dated given the impact of the recent global economic pressures on the organisational landscape. As such they may not bear relevance to the writing practices of modern organisations. Also, although the issue of formality in writing products and processes emerged sporadically in the past, it was not discussed in depth. Here it is believed that its investigation can yield potential insights into the way modern organisations adapt to the changing environment and challenges of the future.

Having said that, gaining a deep understanding of variation in workplace writing also entails delineating the concept of workplace genres as it has developed today in their complex variable and flexible nature and discussing the implications such variability has for the workplace writers. Hence the following sections are devoted to workplace genre theory and then the challenges employees face upon writing.

1.1.4. Workplace genre theory

Genre theory is particularly necessary as it helps understand what constitutes workplace genres and it becomes particularly relevant to this thesis by guiding our understanding of the variation in workplace practices and products (Part A). It will also foreground the discussion of the variation in the functions and forms of emails, the main preoccupation of Part B.

In particular, although genres become identifiable by virtue of their stable traits, their nature is highly complex, their purpose subject to change, and their form variable. In this light, “the notion of pure genre ... is unlikely to capture the complex communicative realities of the present-day professional and academic world” (Bhatia, 2004, p. 80). This can be seen in the multiple terms various scholars used to identify it and investigate it in various organisational settings such as pre-genre (Van Mulken & Van der Meer, 2005), super genre, colonies (Bhatia, 2004), systems (Bazerman, 1994) and repertoire of genres (Yates and Orlikowski, 1992). Also, researchers have repeatedly shown the wide variation of genres across and within disciplines and CofPs (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Coutoure, 1992; Pogner 2003). Therefore it is argued here that, although genres are conventionalised and standardised linguistic forms (Swales, 1990) with an identifiable generic integrity (Bhatia, 1993), their generic integrity is complex and should not be seen as static or prescribed but as volatile, dynamic and changing to meet the needs of the modern workplaces. The potential of genres for change has been seen to be due to changes in recurrent situations, an influential concept that came to prominence with Miller’s (1984) seminal notion that genre identification must be mainly based on the action it is used to accomplish rather than solely purpose and form. Seen as action, genres acquire their meaning from the recurrent situations that arise and change in response to newly emerging exigencies. In this light, they constantly comprise “sites of contention between stability and change” (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, p. 6).

Another integral aspect of a genre is the organisational context in which it is used. As Yates & Orlikowski (1992) support, the social construction of genres involves

the production, reproduction, and transformation of social institutions, which are enacted through individuals’ use of social rules. These rules shape the action taken by individuals in organizations; at the same time, by regularly drawing on the rules, individuals reaffirm or modify the social institutions in an ongoing, recursive interaction (pp. 299-300).

Numerous past and more recent studies on organisational communication have described the social construction of workplace genres (Nickerson 2000; Schryer, 1993; Winsor, 2000). Admittedly some choices are individual (Gains, 1999; Waldvogel, 2005), some writing intentions are ‘private’ (Askehave & Swales, 2001; Bhatia, 2004), and a genre is not objectively identified by the majority of its users in an organisation (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). It is “intersubjective[ly]” defined (Miller, 1985, p. 136) by its users, who

partly comply with the existing order and partly transform it through their actions (Giddens, 1984). It is, therefore, argued here that communication does not flow chaotically or haphazardly but is subject to different organisational settings and the purposes for which it is used. The ability to identify and confirm whether a text represents an academic abstract of a research article or conference paper will come from “an understanding, awareness and background knowledge of the established conventions of the disciplinary and professional community” (Bhatia, 2004, p. 121).

Having said that, a genre can be identified on the basis of certain set criteria. We owe to Yates and Orlikowski (1994) the idea that either or both the purpose and form can function as criteria for genre identification when recognised by the community’s members. For example, memos and meetings are clearly identifiable by their form as they may have variable purposes while the proposal is more easily identifiable by its purpose than its linguistic and structural features. Yet other genres can be identified by both purpose and form like IRS returns (Yates and Orlikowski, 1994, p. 544). In this context, workplace genres are seen here as: variable and subject to changes triggered by changes in the socioeconomic environment and identifiable and meaningful within the workplace communities where they are employed, according to how important (Winsor, 2000) and/or recurrent (Miller, 1984) their function is perceived to be by its members.

The changing and variable view of genres adds an extra layer of complexity to the already challenging social, collaborative, and highly variable nature of workplace writing. Employees are daily called to make decisions on how best to write both complex and operational documents as they are often involved in resolving conflicting interests while collaborating with others and compromising interpersonal and organisational priorities. Further to this the inseparability of genres from their social context casts doubt to whether workplace genres can be learnt outside/prior to the workplace environment and partly account for the numerous and persistent difficulties employees face when they write. In this context, the following section discusses the challenges employees face when composing the written documents.

1.1.5. The challenging nature of workplace writing

The problems workplace writers are presented with have been widely discussed in the literature. Studies tracing the writers’ transition from the academic to the workplace

setting (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Dias & Paré, 2000; Dias et al., 1999; Freedman & Adam, 2000; Gaitens, 2000) and investigating the problems writers encounter upon their *socialisation*⁶ primarily point to problems adjusting to rhetorical situation. These problems have been often attributed to the employees' lack of local context specific knowledge (Beaufort, 2000) and reported to go away as they gradually become familiar with the expectations and discourse of their new workplace community (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Bremmer, 2012).

Studies on writing processes in workplaces in technical professions report similar problems encountered by experienced writers and fully fledged members in their CofPs. They seem to attribute the problems in addressing different audiences to the difficulty people with technical skills – e.g., accountants, engineers and architects – have in including personal (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006) or persuasive (Dias et al., 1999) commentary or make the technical text friendly to users (Northey, 1990). For example, templates have been reported to complicate writing tasks (Bremmer, 2008) and to present difficulty in adjusting them particularly in the sections in their format that require expository writing (Northey, 1990). Frequently reported is the 'writer-centredness' of a document when it should be primarily reader-centred (Northey, 1990, p. 486). This appears to emanate from the different way writers and readers perceive the goals of various documents to be (Anson & Forsberg, 1990) e.g., of engineering proposals (McIsaac & Aschauer, 1990) and audit and tax letters (Northey, 1990). This is especially true when simultaneously addressing multiple readers whose hierarchical level, professional orientation, interests, and motives may vary considerably across departments and companies (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Kleimann, 1993). Ledwell-Brown (2000) discusses the differences between the goals of reports written by the marketing and M.I.S departments and those of the management, who read and revised them. Further to this, the difficulty of having to accommodate the conflicting interests and demands of the various subsystems is also encountered in much 'simpler' genres like emails (Bremmer, 2006).

⁶ Socialisation is seen in this thesis as the process in which the new members of a workplace community become fully fledged members by acquiring the discourse and the writing practices of the new community.

In short, in light of the social, collaborative and variable nature of workplace writing, writers are faced with numerous challenges in both complex and simple writing tasks. Although numerous studies discuss the writing problems new employees face, their preoccupation seems to be with in-depth accounts of few isolated writers (e.g., Artemeva, 2005; Beaufort, 2000; Bremmer, 2012; Winsor, 1989) or delineating the differences between academic and the workplace setting (e.g., Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Freedman & Adam, 2000). Thus the need arises to look further into the types of posts, hierarchical levels, and years of experience in the company that such problems are associated with. It also draws important implications about the extent to which localised knowledge plays an important role for the acquisition of the community's linguistic repertoire and the development of writers as fully fledged members of their workplace community (also see section 2.1.2.) These issues are particularly relevant to the intention of this thesis to look into the problems faced in workplace communication today. Part A of the findings addresses the problems encountered by employees in different hierarchical levels and with different years of experience, and the ways that they perceive help overcome them. Particularly relevant are the problems faced when writing the most frequent, potentially most simple, and most important workplace genre, emails. Hence Part B of the findings takes a close look at the predicament writers are in when adjusting the formality of their discourse in emails to accommodate multiple audiences and to abide by what is deemed appropriate in their organisation. With this in mind, the following section discusses the significant role email plays in workplace communication.

1.2. Emails in workplace communication

1.2.1. Emails as the dominant mode of communication

Email has been widely reported as the most dominant means of workplace communication. This can be seen in its high frequency, its unique characteristics in comparison to those of other means, and the effects it has on organisational efficiency and the social aspects of the organisation. These aspects will be discussed in turn below.

For a number of years now email remains the most frequent form of written communication and evidence suggests a still increasing trend (Angouri, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996; Waldvogel, 2005). This is attributed to email's tendency to partly supersede other means of communication, namely face to face, telephone, fax and memo (Markus, 1994). In 2001, email was reported to be used six times as much as in 1995 and

employees went from sending three and receiving five emails a day to sending an average of 20 and receiving 30 emails each day (Rogen International, 2001). Executives were similarly found to spend about two hours reading, sorting and writing emails every day. It follows that email remains indispensable in workplace communication. Hence, it has been selected as the focus of the second part of the thesis.

The main causes of the high frequency of emails are traced to the unique combination of technical and social characteristics and effects on the organisational communication (Lucas, 1998) not found in other means of communication. The first include ease of use and access and multiple addressability to geographically dispersed and unknown parties (Thomas et al., 2006). Its asynchronicity enables multiple users to respond at a time of their choice and facilitates their participation in the resolution of complex issues. At the same time its CCing function enables storage and retrieval of messages establishing accountability in both vertical and horizontal communication. Further, the standardisation of the dissemination process and the regularisation of the information flow leads to faster decision making, cost reduction, and enhancement of organisational efficiency and productivity albeit not in the short term (Thomas et al., 2006).

The second type of email characteristics and effects, often reported as secondary but arguably as important as the first, includes social effects characterised by a quite heated debate centred on the depersonalising nature of email. Two main streams of arguments evolve in response; those that hold that email lacks in social and emotional cues and those that argue the opposite:

Primarily in support of its practical technical convenience, the first view holds that email carries potential for fostering an egalitarian environment by filtering out social status cues as a lean medium (Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986; Lucas, 1998; Sproul & Kiesler, 1986). In this way it leads to ease in expressions of disagreement and the resolution of conflicts (and confrontations, grievances and complaints) and in turn to an increase in communication flow. As several studies show, email is used by both employees in lateral and vertical communication both carrying out everyday administrative tasks and more complex writing tasks (Markus, 1994; Rice & Shook, 1990).

Others, however, argue that email has its own strong mechanisms to compensate for its poorer social and emotional cues than those of face to face or telephone interactions. The variety of innovative linguistic devices writers employ to convey emotions serves as proof (Sherwood, 2000); interjections (e.g., ‘Nooo’, ‘see ya’), writers’ own abbreviations (e.g., ‘J’ for ‘John’), and emoticons are only a few of the examples (Herring, 2003; Walther, 1996). Added to this, are the different interpersonal as well as relational functions emails serve in various workplaces as well as the immense variation and informality in their writing style (discussed in more detail below).

In light of the above, it is posited here that the depersonalising and the egalitarian viewpoints are highly idealised. For as long as there are power asymmetries in the workplace as well as the wider historical and economic context of the Internet (Herring, 2003), the communication structures and media will both reflect and affect them. The preoccupation of critical discourse researchers with the exposition of the ways power imbalances are maintained in electronically mediated discourse further supports email’s potential to transmit social cues. The dominance of higher level managers over lower level post holders, of men over women, of English as LF over local languages are some cases in point. In this light, email can reflect and maintain power asymmetries by transmitting social cues albeit with mechanisms other than those used in face-to-face interactions (Herring, 2003; Panteli, 2002).

Furthermore, emotional cues can similarly be transmitted through email. It has been argued that filtering out intense emotions can potentially be suitable and desirable in work-based communication, the primary purpose of which is to get things done (Zhu & White, 2009). However, as an asynchronous text-based type of communication, it may enable its users to hide their insecurities and enable them to joke, tease, and negotiate with more ease (Herring, 2003, p. 11). In light of the increasingly informal uses it is put to, particularly in internal organisational communication (Waldvogel, 2005), email writers have been shown to express emotions like gratitude, anger, frustration to their colleagues even of different hierarchical levels or degree of familiarity (also see section 1.3.2.). This is evident not only in the writing style they adopt but who they chose to CC and who to exclude in the chains of communication.

In this context, email's technical and social characteristics explain its dominance as a means of communication in the workplace. They also become relevant to the importance of email for organisation practices and to its potential to reflect and affect the communication and organisational structures of various workplaces. This is particularly evident in its multiple transactional⁷ and interpersonal functions and writing styles (Abdullah, 2003; Kankaanranta, 2006; Rice, 1997). Hence, the second part of the findings addresses the potential email has for serving interpersonal and transactional functions and carrying relational and transactional cues. In this light, the functions and form of email are discussed below in more detail.

The functions and form of email

It is widely reported that email serves a multitude of purposes: from the most prominent communicative functions of information giving, requesting, sharing and directing (Gains, 1999; Kankaanranta, 2006; Waldvogel, 2005; Zucchermaglio & Talamo, 2003) to less frequent, albeit not necessarily less important, administrative functions, personal/social remarks, invitations and commissives (Sherblom, 1988; Waldvogel, 2005). The variety of purposes email serves can be seen in the different conceptualisations and levels of generalisation their categorisations are based on. For instance, using speech act theory Waldvogel (2005) talks of information giving, information seeking, directives, invitations, commissives, and expressives while Kankaanranta (2006), based on Yates & Orlikowski (1994), finds the conceptually different 'noticeboard', 'postman' and 'dialogue' genre as serving the email communicative functions in the company she is investigating⁸. At a wider level, these functions can be grouped under two main categories, informational/transactional and relational/interpersonal ones, the first being most predominant in the workplace (Pogner & Soderberg, 2003), where the purpose of communication is to do business. In this context, when personal and social functions are reported as the primary ones in email, this is particularly significant, even though it happens relatively rarely; Sherblom (1988) reported 8% of personal/social functions and Waldvogel (2005) about 8% of invitations,

⁷ Transactional is taken to mean work-related issues when interpersonal (or else interactional or affective) aims at maintaining good working relationships with colleagues.

⁸ According to Kankaanranta's (2006) categories of functions, the 'noticeboard' genre mainly informs recipients of corporate issues, the postman delivers attachments, and the dialogue involves information exchange.

commissives, and expressives. Having said that, although relational functions may not appear as the main ones in workplace emails, they have been found to consistently play a supplementary but equally significant role, that of developing, maintaining and negotiating interpersonal relationships (Abdulach, 2003).

The multiplicity of functions is also evident within the same email as researchers have repeatedly found that bifunctional and multifunctional emails by far outnumber unifunctional ones. As an example, Waldvogel (2005) reported that close to half of the emails in her three different corpora were bifunctional and that there were twice as many multifunctional ones in one of the three corpora she studied. Although emails with a relational function as the primary one are reported as much fewer than those with a transactional one, relational functions appear to play an important secondary role. Further research is evidently needed to support this, yet the wide use of bi- and multifunctional emails in combination with the rich social cues that emails transmit further support that a variety of both transactional and relational purposes characterise the use of email and quite possibly expect much wider uses in the future. In light of the above, the present thesis examines the functions email serves in three companies of different size and type and the way they vary according to company and level of post.

With regard to form, there appears to be little question as to the immense variation in terms of writing style and structural elements. Such is the variation that the language of email is referred to as a mixture of oral and written language (Gimenez, 2000; Rice, 1997), a hybrid language (Ferrara et al., 1991), a pidgin, a creole (Baron, 1998), and a bilingual system. The above mixtures draw on various linguistic features ranging from the opening and closing greetings and paragraphing to lexical, grammatical and structural items. The following are some cases in point: in personalised style, common formulae include items like 'hey', 'see ya', 'thanks' and one-line paragraphs mark particular emphasis (Crystal, 2006, p. 119). Opening greetings may vary from long formulae like 'Dear+title+ first+last name' to 'first name' only (Waldvogel, 2005). Seeing it as "an opportunity rather than a threat for language education", Crystal predicts that email will portray a much wider range of formal and informal expressions and "will no longer be as it currently is" (2006, p. 132-33).

Regarding its format and structural elements, email similarly presents substantial multiformity. Its format has also evolved from the simple one-way type to a complex embedded one (e.g., chains, question-answer response, ballot⁹), with or without a written text (emails carrying an attachment do not always have a written message). Although the obligatory ‘from’, ‘subject’, ‘date’, and ‘to’ elements along with the optional ‘CC’ and ‘BCC’ elements seem to have acquired generic status, they too are used differently by writers in different organisations. Similarly variable is the structure of the message in terms of the presence of greetings and/or paragraph structure.

Email’s high diversity of forms is traced to a number of factors. Demographics and situational context are discernible and are reflected in different writing styles in email. Information like education, gender, age and culture can actually be discerned in the course of a series of interactions even when participants wish to conceal them (Herring, 2003), and status differences seen both as status labels and impressions based on them, persist in electronic communication (Weisband et al., 1995). Situational factors like different participation structures (e.g., one-to-many, many-to-many, many-to-one etc.), communicative purposes (recreational, professional, pedagogical, even occasional personal disclosures), and variation of topics also cause differences in writing style (Herring, 2003). For example, light fun topics lead to the use of emoticons and grins and a confidential or personal matter will be expressed more informally than a widely distributed impersonal notification.

Apart from the more stable social characteristics of identities, the construction and negotiation of employees’ interpersonal relationships is also reflected in emails. In addition to the more stable hierarchical power and gender asymmetries, more ‘relative’ types of power are formed and negotiated in discourse and have been discussed in discourse studies (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Bremmer, 2006; Panteli, 2002). Social distance has similarly been reported as affecting the linguistic choices of email writers given the medium’s facilitation of communication between unknown parties, simultaneous distribution of messages to multiple parties in the same firm and allowance for more personal one-to-one correspondence. Further variation in style can be caused by newcomers in an organisation, who can “inadvertently fall out of the system”

⁹ Email chains were discussed by Gimenez (2002, 2006), question-answer by (McKeown et al., 2007) and ballot by Orlikowski & Yates (1994).

and important issues arise as whether their deviation should be seen as socially inappropriate in the company, effect a change in patterns of usage, or bring about new norms of social behaviour (Willis et al., 2002, p. 821). As the relationships of power, social distance and years of experience are particularly relevant to the aims of this study, they are further addressed in section 1.3.2. and examined in detail in Part B of the findings.

As a consequence of the immense variation in email's writing style and functions, scholars refrain from according it genre status. This is particularly relevant to the second part of the findings on the functions and formal style of email and is addressed in the following section.

1.2.2. The issue of email as medium or genre

The still unresolved debate on whether email is a medium or a genre is based on a strong preoccupation with its purpose and form, as the basic criteria for genre identification (also discussed in section 1.1.4.). In this light, the evolutionary nature and the diverse purposes and forms of email appear to complicate its identification as a genre in terms of stable features.

As discussed in earlier sections, emails serve a wide variety of functions and come in a variety of forms in response to the later variable needs for accountability, record keeping, convenience, speed of communication, and sustenance of interpersonal relationships. As a result, it becomes difficult to use function or form as a criterion for its identification as a genre in terms of stable features without considering the context (in this case the organisation) in which it is used. Earlier researchers (e.g., Gains, 1999; Yates and Orlikowski, 1992, 1994) in particular tended to project it as a medium possibly because until 1995 genre rules had not been fully developed and emails were discussed in terms of their various formats and purposes (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005).

Several scholars, however, see email as a genre in the organisational context it occurs even those drawing on Yates and Orlikowski's¹⁰ work (Nickerson, 2000). Mulholland (1999) similarly sees email as a genre in an evolutionary stage drawing on a number of ancillary 'companion' workplace genres like letters and memos (p. 58). Gimenez (2006) sees the embedded form of emails as constituting a genre by virtue of the generic 'CC', 'RE', and 'FW' functions, its composition of a chain initiator and terminator, and subordinate messages, and a number of optional elements (e.g., greetings) in the context of a satellite communications corporation. Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta (2005) discuss three email subgenres in Paper Giant similarly based on communicative purpose and form: the dialogue genre aims at exchanging information, the postman genre delivers attachments, and the noticeboard genre is meant to inform expecting no response. Similarly, Zhu & White (2009) see email as a genre on the basis of the primary purpose of getting work done subdivided into a number of other purposes (reminding, recording, asking etc.) and form characterisations (work-related, concrete, descriptive, correct etc.). As can be seen from the above, seeing email as a genre or medium is not a simple matter. This partly explains the conflicting views and the lack of a stance on the issue in discussions of workplace writing. Although such clear positioning may not be within the primary purpose of the researchers, it compounds the already inherently complex issue of what constitutes a workplace genre.

In light of the above problematisation, email is seen as a genre here. The following two arguments are put forward in its defence: First, given that a genre is identifiable only within the community in which it operates, it is argued that email can acquire the status of a genre in its own right with form and function insofar they are recognised within a particular workplace community whether it is a work-team or a constellation of organisations.

Secondly the complexity arises from the paradox of attempting to ascribe email stable characteristics, when versatility comprises an integral aspect of its identity. This can be evidenced in its historical evolution, its use by overlapping communities, its intertextuality with other concurrent genres, and in discrepancies between individual and

¹⁰ Although Yates and Orlikowski (1992, 1994) discuss email as comprising a repertoire of four genres, the memo, the dialogue, the proposal and the ballot, they consistently see email as a medium.

collective intentions. The solution seems to lie in a view of genres as dynamic and versatile as discussed in section 1.1.4. Bhatia's (2004) multi-perspective model for genre analysis. Askehave & Swales' (2001) theory of repurposing the genre provides suggestions on how to deal with the dynamic and unstable nature of genres in their identification. In this light, trying to see email in terms of stable traits would entail falling into the trap of looking at the world as we would like to see it and not as we find it (Bhatia, 2004, p. 157).

In this context, the genre of email can and – might better - be identified at various levels of generalisation (Bhatia, 2004; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Miller, 1984) such as a sub- (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005) or super-genre, a repertoire (Yates & Orlikowski, 1994) or a system (Bazerman, 1994) of genres. This view of email is in line with contemporary genre theory and allows one to investigate workplace writing as reflecting and reflected by its immediate and fast changing organisational context. The potential email has, as a genre, to accurately reflect the volatile context that generates it gives it another layer of importance as is further exemplified below.

1.2.3. The importance of email

As can be seen in the sections above, email has acquired prime status in workplace communication. Apart from being the most frequent means of communication, it has also become highly important for a number of reasons.

Email acquires its importance from its potential to serve a variety of formal and informal functions and thus give access to both visible frontstage and less visible and more personal backstage workings¹¹ (also see section 2.2.2. for a discussion of the terms). As a written form of communication it enables employees to use it officially as record keeping. Admittedly, this may deter users from putting confidential or sensitive backstage negotiations on record. However, even workplace email has the potential for more personal unofficial uses in addition to the official ones; it can still be deleted and not responded to (Crystal, 2006) especially in organisations with more informal communication practices (Morand, 1995). Emails can thus be a valuable source of

¹¹ In frontstage interaction a particular performance is more official and formal open to the public while in backstage performance it is more relaxed, informal and preparatory for the frontstage appearance (Goffman, 1959, p.134) often less visible to the public.

information on the daily communication practices of the organisations; the multiple functions emails serve in internal and external correspondence from an informal note to the official closing of a deal, as my data show, can reveal a lot about both more and less visible interactions to the public, both of which are integral parts of workplace communication (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999).

Also seen as a workplace genre from a social constructionist perspective (for a discussion see section 2.2.3.), email is important because it affects and is affected by the communication practices of the organisation it is employed. Although opinions may diverge as to whether the effects are positive or negative¹², the influence email has on social and communicative behaviours is considered relatively fixed (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992, p. 309), reciprocal and recursive (Yates & Orlikowski 1992). In this light, the substantial inter- and intra-company variation in communication practices, values, language policies and use and the construction and negotiation of interpersonal relations may be reflected in and affected by the use of email (for a full analysis on the construction of identities see chapter 5).

Finally, the importance of the study of email, as opposed to other more stable workplace genres, is most visible in its potential to accurately capture workplace communication as it is today. Considering its rapid evolution from past written genres and the still rapidly changing landscape of workplace communication, it comprises a conspicuous example of how a genre can respond to the new needs for fast and easy multiple addressability and accountability (Bremmer, 2006; Gimenez, 2006; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). In short, more than other workplace genres, it has the potential to provide a representative snapshot of contemporary workplace discourse.

However, despite the burgeoning literature on email and its importance for organisational communication practices, several of its aspects remain underexplored and merit investigation. Hence the following section addresses the gaps in email literature that merit further research.

¹² The potential of Electronically Mediated Communication to filter out many of the non-verbal cues, social presence and context is said to have a negative effect (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992, p. 309).

1.2.4. Literature gap

In the context of the above, email is a “site for contention between stability and change” (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, p. 6) to a greater extent than other genres. Researchers seem to be still debating on its origins, its positive and/or negative effects on the interactional and interpersonal aspects of communication, its status as a genre or a medium, the functions it serves, and its stylistic features. As function and style bear the most relevance to the aims of this thesis, they are discussed in turn below.

Although various studies have touched upon the functions of emails, several are far from recent and they have looked at their functions superficially in conjunction with other aspects of email as a primary focus, whether in combination with stylistic features (Gains, 1999), incidentally while focusing on the emergence of subgenres (Kankaanranta, 2006; Yates & Orlikowski, 1994; Zucchermaglio & Talamo, 2003) or reporting on participants’ perceptions rather than written samples (Zhu & White, 2009). The investigation of the functions of email, particularly their inter- and intra-company variation, remains a site for further exploration and is an area the present study hopes to address. Also, it still remains debatable whether and to what extent the relational and informational aspects of email can be separated and by extension whether email’s relational and informational functions are visible in quantitative or qualitative studies. It is difficult to find solely relational emails in the workplace setting, the purpose of which is to do business.

Another yet undecided aspect of email concerns its style. The widely acknowledged agreement on its mixture of several styles (e.g., formality and politeness in varying degrees and linguistic features) leads to a need to further understand how and why they are enacted and what they signify about the way employees behave in their workplace. Although highly important work has been done in the investigation of politeness in emails (e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Bremmer, 2006), politeness is only one of the various factors which affect the linguistic forms adopted in email leaving the writing style of email relatively underexplored. This gap is addressed in the second part of the thesis by investigating the enactment of formality in workplace emails. In this light, the following section discusses the way the concept of formality was viewed in the past and used in workplace emails.

1.3. The concept of formality in past studies

To gain a better understanding of the way formality is used in workplace emails, it is necessary to look at what is meant by it and the way it has been used and investigated in all the fields of study in which it is discussed. The following sections thus first discuss its definition in terms of linguistic features and situation. The latter is seen here as comprising the organisational and interpersonal context. The discussion then moves to the quantification of formality and closes with a rationale for its investigation.

1.3.1. The definition of formality

As a crucial aspect of social life and human interaction, formality has long been mentioned in discourse and anthropological studies and more recently in business studies. However, the concept still remains highly problematic with regard to its definition and quantification. With a number of rare exceptions (Irvine, 1979; Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999; Morand, 1995), it retains a vague meaning evidenced in the well documented lack of rigorous attempts at construct development and validation (Irvine, 1979; Morand, 1995) and in the multiplicity of ways scholars refer to it (some refer to formality in discourse, behaviour, situation, patterns of communication), what they mean by it (some see it as strict adherence to correctness, others as explicitness, seriousness, politeness, appropriateness to situation etc.) and the level at which they look at it (genre/register, document, sentence, word).

Particularly, in organisational literature it has been discussed as behaviour in accordance with Goffman's (1983) 'interaction order' (Morand, 1995), and seen as interactional encounters or communication modes/patterns that cater for different types of organisation and rules the participants follow. "Formality and informality are understood as two different types of interaction orders because each embodies a distinct set of understandings or conventions about how actors are to orient and conduct themselves. One set dictates looser, more casual modes of behaviour and situational involvement, the other tighter, more disciplined modes" (Morand, 1995, p. 832). In addition, formality has emerged as the 'formalisation' (i.e., adherence to) of organisational structures – regulations, procedures, communication patterns - (Morand, 1995; Andren et al. 2010); examples of such formal structures are multi-party gatherings characterised by shared attentiveness mainly through topic restriction (Atkinson, 1982) and the structuring of discourse in court trials (Irvine, 1979) and safety critical communication (Andren et al.,

2010). In the above, formality acquires a functional performative aspect and entails obligatory adherence to structured communication. Informality, on the other hand, has been seen as related to talk outside official duties and job descriptions (Dubin, 1974) and as the establishment of collegiality and everyday social interaction (Andren et al., 2010). Formality has also been used to refer to types of organisations; Morand (1995) extensively discusses and delineates the characteristics of ‘formal bureaucratic organisations’ and ‘informal organic innovative organisations’. In more recent research, references are made to small organisations as informal or employing informal and looser communication structures and procedures and larger organisations as using formal procedures and structures (Berranger et al., 2001; Gray & Mabey, 2005; White Paper, 2012). These issues are discussed in Part A of the findings on inter-company variation in writing practices.

In past anthropological and linguistic studies formality was seen and analysed in terms of situation and/or code, the relation between which yet remains unclear. Formal situations in anthropological studies mainly referred to rituals, court trials, conferences and parliamentary proceedings, predominantly multi-party gatherings. Code comprised linguistic elements (of mostly oral language), topic selection, spatial and gestural cues, modes of dress and physical surroundings. As such, formality and informality have been defined in terms of their deviance from each other, i.e., formality was defined on the basis of what is distinguished from common everyday speech (Andren et al., 2010; Atkinson, 1982). Insights from past linguistic studies are not more illuminating. Scholars appeared to be preoccupied with either linguistic or situational features defining the one in terms of the other and missing the question of how to address the relation between the two (e.g., Labov, 1972). This indicates a kind of circular thinking where situation and form were used interchangeably without specifying any specific linguistic features of formal speech. This type of thinking is still evident in recent dictionary definitions. As a case in point, the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines formal language as “very correct and suitable for official or important occasions”. By accounting for the characteristics of situations and not language, such definitions appear to be based on non-linguistic criteria and reveal nothing substantial about the intrinsic nature of formality (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). Likewise, one might erroneously assume that formality can be examined devoid of its situation. In this context, it is imperative that both situation (seen as both organisational and interpersonal here) and linguistic features

are examined to gain a thorough understanding of formality. Chapter 5 is devoted to their discussion.

From the above it appears that the relation between form and situation remains vague, largely undefined by researchers and seen as problematic by some. One may indeed wonder whether it is the discourse or the situation that makes an interaction or an 'interaction order' (Goffman, 1983) formal and which one affects the other. Arguably a repeatedly formal expression or a combination of consistently formal linguistic features will make a situation formal. Likewise a formal situation is likely to give rise to the use of formal discourse.

The issue of formality is further complicated by the different way researchers use the terms of context, situation and interpersonal relations; situation generally emerges as context or a part of it (Irvine, 1979) depending on the extent to which context is seen in its micro-local or macro-global aspects. Also, in several discourse studies that explore the construction of identity in the process of the interaction, interpersonal factors (e.g., power and social distance) tend to be seen as separate from situational ones, which in turn are perceived as the local organisational setting. Yet elsewhere interpersonal factors are seen as part of the situational ones. As both the organisational environment and the social identity/ties of the interactants serve as the context of the interaction and context itself can be seen at different levels, the need arises to explicate their use in this study. Thus here *situation* is used to mean the context affecting and being affected by the code. Particularly in the analysis of emails, *situation* refers to the organisational and interpersonal context. *Code* is seen as the linguistic features of formality in written language. Further discussion on the use of these terms in the analysis of real-life data and their graphic representation (figure 14) can be found in the introduction of chapter 5. In light of the importance of code and situation for gaining an understanding of the concept of formality and their relevance to the aims of this study, next will follow a discussion of the way formality has been viewed in the literature in terms of its linguistic features, situation and interpersonal factors in turn.

Formality defined by reference to linguistic features

Preoccupation with the linguistic features of formality and informality has been traced since the distant past when they appear to have concentrated on speech rather than

writing (Irvine, 1979; Fischer, 1972; Labov, 1972). Scholars have discussed aspects such as slurring, colloquialisms, accent as well as discourse-related but non-linguistic aspects like turn-taking and topic selection possibly out of a preoccupation with an anthropological rather than a purely linguistic orientation. Formality in writing seems to appear in later genre studies comparing formality at the document (rather than sentence or word) level (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999, 2002), or in studies comparing the characteristics of speech and writing albeit not focusing on formality per se (Biber, 1988). Viewing formality as explicitness, Heylighen & Dewaele (1999, 2002) talk of the descending degree of formality from official informational genres like newspapers and scientific writing to novels and imaginative writing.

At the same time a number of linguists were also attracted to linguistic representations of formality in workplace or academic emails. Most of them, however, have done so at a rather superficial level, primarily examining variability in style in general rather than formality per se. Formality in emails has been primarily discussed in the opening and closing greetings and the textual features of the body of the message. In his comparison of textual features of commercial and academic emails, Gains (1999) makes frequent mention of formal and informal elements both in the greetings and in the body of the message but does not arrive at a conclusion with regard to formality. He argues that commercial emails seem to follow the normal conventions for standard written business English whereas academic emails tend to resemble more a conversational form of communication. Complete and grammatically correct forms, stock business phrases and technical abbreviations were assumed indications of formality and conversational features and simply connected clauses were seen as indicators of informality. Crystal (2006) similarly finds immense variation in the formality of openings and closures as well as in the textual features of interpersonal and institutional emails such as short paragraphs, initialisms, contractions, colloquial expressions, loose sentence construction, subject ellipsis, and ‘cool’ acronyms. Gimenez (2000) seems to link written style to formal language with elaborate syntax, definite articles, standard abbreviations, and complete information units. Oral style is linked to informal language and simple straightforward structures, demonstrative modifiers, elliptical forms, more personal abbreviations and lack of guidelines for users. Similarly, Rice (1997) in his examination of email stylistic features talks of diction combining elements of formal and informal discourse, and “clashing elements of oral and written discourse” (p. 20). He associates

formal language with compound noun phrases, nominalisation, passive verbs, weak verb structures (e.g., ‘to make use of’, ‘would like for you to reconsider and approve’), acronyms, redundant modifiers, and pompous words (e.g., ‘albeit’) and informality with contractions, personal pronouns and personal greetings, exceptional word constructions (e.g., ‘Soo’), and the dominance of active verbs. Although such studies constitute serious attempts at uncovering the “stylistic register” of emails, most remain inconclusive as in the workplace world “circumstances dictate the tempo” (Rice, 1997, p. 20).

Yet more studies examine formality in addition to other stylistic features. Chen (2006) examines the change of her participant’s emails from her undergraduate to graduate studies in discourse style, message length and structure by making consistent reference to changes in formality among other textual features. Her student’s initially informal style characterised by a consistently conversational tone, simplified/reduced forms, symbolisation, surface errors and numerous narrative details later developed into more formal style, as in epistolary style, had fewer simplified forms and errors, no symbols and shorter more succinct messages. Bjorge (2007) studies intercultural differences in students’ emails to academic staff by looking into the formality of opening and closing greetings. The way the linguistic features of formality are perceived and investigated in this thesis is discussed in chapter 5.

A further different preoccupation with linguistic features has been seen in Heylighen & Dewaele’s (1999) definition of formality. The two researchers support the theoretically more fundamental concept of formality as “avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context-dependence and fuzziness of expressions”. In doing so they argue that more formal genres are characterised by higher frequency of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, and articles and more informal genres are characterised by higher frequency of verbs, adverbs, pronouns, and interjections. In a similarly serious attempt at defining formality (inclusive of discourse) albeit from an organisational/business rather than linguistic viewpoint, Morand (1995) links the elimination of individualised references ‘I’ and ‘you’ and impersonal structures to formal language and further argues that formalisation in organisations leads to elimination of sentiments and their linguistic realisations (p. 841). The assumption in his argument is that organisations with more informal structures and procedures (e.g., relaxed sitting rooms, unstructured meeting discussions) allow more freedom of expression hence use of powerful and emotionally charged words.

An issue that emerges in the analysis of the written samples, which has not been addressed in depth in past literature and merits discussion, is the potential link between politeness and formality in terms of linguistic features. Negative politeness has been linked with the degree of ‘nouniness’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which has also been linked with formality (Heylighen and Dewaele, 1999). In terms of greetings, more formal terms of address are also reported to show negative politeness or the desire not to impose on the reader, and informal forms of address to indicate solidarity (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Although the way the two are related has not been delineated in discourse studies, it appears that certain linguistic features carry potential to be both polite and formal and others to be both impolite and informal. Backgrounding, for example, increases both the politeness and the formality of a request as both reflect a distant rather than close interpersonal relationship between the interactants whether in terms of social distance or power. ‘Can you please make sure you send the budget figures?’ is both more polite and formal than the direct ‘Send me the budget figures’ depending on the context of the interaction. Although the two styles are conceptually different, this particular linguistic feature tends to reflect both high respect towards a more powerful interactant (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Brown and Levinson, 1987) and the high degree of familiarity. Other linguistic features such as choice of lexical items may similarly indicate both informality and impoliteness e.g., swear words given the context of the interaction, but such cases were not particularly visible in the present data. Further discussion falls outside the scope of this study and comprises an area of investigation for future studies.

Apart from the importance of the identification of particular linguistic features for the definition of formality equally relevant becomes the issue of their consistency. Although absolute consistency is clearly an idealisation, some degree can be evidenced among both formal and informal elements. Organisational and anthropological literature suggests that formal events are characterised by a high degree of consistency in codes albeit not only linguistic codes. Greater code structuring (e.g., predetermined turn allocation, use of certain lexis) has been reported to characterise formal settings such as court trials or job interviews (Irvine, 1979; Morand, 1999) and ensuring safety measures by avoiding ambiguity at all costs such as train and air traffic control talk (Andren et al., 2010). Informal settings, on the other hand, allow more variation and inconsistencies in

formality. “Variation, indeed even deviance itself, is often a hallmark of informality” (Morand, 1995, p. 839). Having said that, even in Train Traffic Control talk, sparse informalisations in the form of relational small talk occur complementarily to maintain sociability. In the context of workplace emails, the linguistic features of formality are likely to appear in various degrees of consistency and inconsistency. Also, although they may appear as the two extreme ends of a dichotomy, they should better be seen as choices along a continuum in stronger or weaker forms more or less intense. Accordingly we could best speak of the *predominance* or *balancing* of formal or informal linguistic elements in a document rather than of two extreme ends.

Formality defined by reference to the situation

In their search for a definition of formality, scholars from anthropology and linguistics alike were preoccupied with the reasons why one is formal primarily in oral language and/or the conditions that call for it. This led them to a preoccupation with what defines the formality of a situation rather than the language that is used. In the past this was linked to respect and politeness (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Fischer, 1972; Irvine, 1979) as well as to the seriousness and importance (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Morand, 1995) of a situation. The assumption is that speakers/writers would pay more attention to form if wanting to ensure they are not misunderstood, which would point to situations that are more important or difficult than ordinary circumstances (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). The notions of importance and difficulty as opposed to everyday simplicity also come up in other more recent definitions. The Cambridge Dictionaries Online defines formal language as “the language used esp. in writing in situations that are *official* and which is more *difficult* than the language used in ordinary conversation¹³”.

More recently in the context of workplace emails, formality has been linked with accountability and record keeping (Gains, 1999) primarily through the CCing function (Bremmer, 2006; Skovholt & Svennevig, 2006) and the form of chains (Gimenez, 2006). However, although record keeping is characterised by a sense of permanence, opinions seem to diverge on the permanence of emails. As Crystal (2006) comments, “It [email] feels temporary, indeed, and this promotes a sense of the carefree. Messages can be easily deleted, which suggests that their content is basically unimportant” (p. 132).

¹³ *Official* here appears to mean public, authorised and ceremonial and *difficult* to refer to language which lay readers have problems in understanding.

Therefore it appears that emails are seen as a more lasting record of communication and action than oral language but more temporary than other written genres. Having said that, their perceived degree of permanence largely depends on the more immediate organisational and wider socio-political context they are used in and the way these may change in the future.

The function of record keeping, accountability to superiors, and company representativeness tend to accord the situation of the communication official status (Mills et al., 2000; Stanton, 2004). Several studies have shown that even internal documents such as emails and memos used to 'cover one's back' were accorded legal status. However, officialness is not explicitly delineated and appears to be more intuitively associated with formality. In this thesis, *official* refers to writing products (e.g., documents) and processes (e.g., collaboration in work-teams, dissemination of documents), employees' duties and responsibilities, and events or situations (e.g., resolution of complex issues affecting all) which fall within the company policy, are easily recognised as *official* by all employees and act as representing the company to external parties (e.g., *official* is a situation in external correspondence where an employee requests a quote from another company on behalf of his own company and in internal correspondence where an email is sent according to established procedures and can be circulated to the wider internal public). Issues of appropriacy become relevant here. Seeing formality *as* or *within* its organisational context may potentially explain why formal or informal codes of communication are considered more appropriate in some companies than in others. Although clearly appropriacy is not a one-dimensional notion, it is largely determined by the organisational context in which it occurs. Inter-company differences in the use of formality are discussed in both Part A and B of the findings.

Yet more types of situations were related to formality in the form of exigencies such as time pressure and the rush to get information on the page (Crystal, 2006; Rice, 1997). Also the writer's lack of language proficiency might lead to language that, given the context, might be perceived as inappropriately formal or informal by the receiver (Chen, 2006). Finally, the choice of subject matter (Crystal, 2006), in particular the resolution of sensitive issues like a complaint or a grievance, has been reported to cause a shift in the formality of linguistic features (Gains, 1999). Similarly, the use of formal or informal

features might also lead the situation of the resolution to be perceived as respectively one of the two. Admittedly, discrepancies may still arise with regard to what is considered appropriately formal or informal even within an organisation or despite the situational exigencies. For instance, an email may be appropriately formal according to company stylistic norms or policies, but perceived as inappropriately formal for an interaction between two employees in close social distance. Hence the need to examine the effect of interpersonal relations on communication. Relations in terms of social distance, power, and socialisation have shown to be related to situational formality and are thus discussed below.

1.3.2. Formality as defined by reference to interpersonal relations

In yet a number of studies formality is associated with various interpersonal factors that seem to be related to its usage. According to the literature, a variety of types of interpersonal relations appear to affect the linguistic choices of formality and might appear to make a situation formal or informal. Examples are relations of hierarchical power, social distance, intimacy, power distance, and rapport management (Bjorge, 2007; Chen, 2006; Crystal, 2006; Gains, 1999; Morand, 1995). In addition, the relation between novice and more experienced members has also been discussed in terms of the formality of the interactants (Chen, 2006; Erickson, 1999). Although the above interpersonal relations are frequently discussed in discourse studies, they surface sparsely in relation to formality indicating a lack of systematic investigation into the way they affect the formality of the interactants.

The above are particularly relevant to the second part of this study, which focuses on the way organisational and interpersonal situations of formality affect and are affected by the linguistic features in workplace emails. In this context, a discussion follows on the way social distance, power and socialisation are viewed in past studies and the discourse analysis of the written samples (see chapter 5):

Social distance

Social distance (SD) has often attracted the attention of discourse researchers preoccupied with aspects of style. It has primarily been investigated in terms of its evolution through time and the way this is reflected in the style of the interactants. For example, in her longitudinal study of one student's emails throughout her studies Chen

(2006) attributed her main subject's varying formality to the level of familiarity with her addressees. However, degree of familiarity is only occasionally reported alongside other factors (e.g., power) to affect formality in literature whether in discussions on greetings in business correspondence guide-books (Ashley, 2003; Taylor, 2012) or scholarly books (e.g., Crystal, 2006). SD is also frequently confused with power. For example, although companies' external communication has been seen to cause a shift in formality (Gains, 1999), it remains unclear whether it is because the interactants may not know each other or because they differ in hierarchical level. At the same time, changes in SD can also be observed to lead to changes in power relations. When two parties make their initial contact to enquire about the possibility of a future agreement, they are merely in high SD. As they approach or reach agreement, they begin to know and become more dependent on one another as they develop mutual power relationships by binding contracts. The two have, however, been discussed as opposites (Bremmer, 2006; Holtgraves & Yang, 1992). An often-cited comment is "If status is the vertical of social relationships, solidarity is the horizontal" (Brown, 1965, p. 57). Although there is some merit in viewing distance as the horizontal aspect of relationships and power as the vertical one, this may lead to an oversimplification of highly complex social relationships; SD has been seen to have a number of different faces, which are not explicated in the studies in which they are investigated (Spencer-Oatey, 1996; Wierzbicka, 1991). Addressing this point, Spencer-Oatey (1996) talks of the following distinct but often interrelated and covarying components of distance: social similarity, frequency of contact, length of acquaintance, familiarity, sense of like-mindedness and positive/negative affect (p. 7).

It follows that the explanation of what is meant by SD in the present study should be placed in the organisational context in which it is investigated. Foregrounding an insider's understanding of the world, participants were asked which aspect of SD they saw affect formality. Researcher observations and participants' reports pointed to a view of SD as frequency of contact and familiarity i.e., how well people know each other mostly depending on who is in whose direct communication line and on the proximity of the physical premises where work was conducted. The data suggested that friendship, affect, like-mindedness, and socialising with colleagues outside office hours did not influence the style of the interaction. This study is an attempt to disentangle SD from power and delineate the way it interacts with power, whether the two are seen to affect

formality in opposite or parallel directions, or to override each other (see chapter 5, extracts I and II).

Power

Power has been a central issue for many workplace discourse analysts, and this is not without reason. The workplace setting is known for being power laden and for providing an ideal site for investigating power both in its inherent stable hierarchical aspect and its other more relative flexible or local and temporary aspects. It has been widely discussed in the enactment of politeness in workplace written (emails inclusive) and oral discourse. With the exception of possible implications of power relations in studies of newcomers' socialisation in academic and workplace settings (e.g., Chen, 2006; Erickson, 1999), the enactment of formality by people holding different types and/or degrees of power does not appear to have been explored yet.

However, like social distance, power seems to have a number of distinct but interrelated aspects which need disentangling. The most common but still broad aspect is its 'vertical' one, seen as the degree of imposition of one's authority over another. Examples of multiple unequal relations include leader-member of a group, boss-employee, student-teacher, doctor-patient, parent-child (Spencer-Oatey, 1996, p. 11). Different interpretations of power, however, have also been discussed as dual roles of mutual needs, responsibilities and ties (Spencer-Oatey, 1996, p. 21). Although such interpretations are possible and of interest to investigate in workplace settings, they did not emerge in the real life data investigated here.

Other types of power have also been discussed: for example, reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert/informational power (French & Raven, 1959; Thomas, 1995). Similarly Spencer-Oatey (1996) talks of legitimate power (where interactants have the right to impose themselves on others by virtue of their position/role), referent power (acquired by virtue of being referred to or admired), expert power (acquired by virtue of their expertise), connection power (dependent on who knows whom) and information power (acquired by virtue of the information they know). Using the term 'status', Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) make a broader distinction between inherent and relative status; although inherent status results from the acknowledged hierarchical differences between the members, relative status is acquired more

interpersonally between groups or departments (p. 637) and may have a more temporary effect (Thomas, 1995). The two can conflict as well as co-exist in the same individual or group and can be mutually exclusive.

In this study, the notion of power is seen in a more general sense as control over another person's behaviour (Brown and Levinson, 1987) thus it is not restricted to only the legitimate right to control it according to employees' hierarchical divides or the legitimate right to make company decisions. In this way more specific hierarchical and 'relative' aspects of power can be investigated as they emerge in the data. In particular, its hierarchical aspect is investigated quantitatively in the differences between managers and post holders; the types of documents they write, the collaboration they engage in, the importance they ascribe to the written documents, and the writing problems they encounter (Part A). The functions of email (Part B) are similarly investigated with regard to the employees' different levels of post. Against this backdrop, the construction and negotiation of power relationships in both its inherent and relative aspects is qualitatively analysed in the enactment of formality in workplace emails (see Part B, extracts III and IV). In particular the relative aspects of power that are discussed in the enactment of formality are expertise, connection power, and more temporary activity based power¹⁴.

Socialisation

Although notionally different from SD and power, the employees' socialisation in the organisation can also be reflected in the stylistic choices they make. In the context of the present study organisational socialisation is seen as the process by which newcomers gradually learn and use the discourse of the CofP they enter. Although there seems to be a common understanding among discourse scholars on what socialisation is (see section 2.1.2.), this is examined in various ways and very few see it in relation to formality. A number of authors discuss the developmental stages of their subject's socialisation in their self-reported data (Bremmer, 2012) in relation to politeness, others investigate allocation of writing tasks to newcomers and old-timers according to complexity and importance (Beaufort, 2000; Gunnarsson, 1997), and the types of knowledge employed during socialisation (Beaufort, 2004). Few researchers trace changes in participants'

¹⁴ This type of power is acquired in the activity rather than automatically accruing to it by virtue of one's role e.g., the role of a decision maker (see further discussion in Extract V).

written discourse (including formality) pre- and post-socialisation (Chen, 2006). Erickson (1999) is possibly the only example of the way formality is enacted in discourse of newcomers albeit in oral interactions. He discusses the way the identity of an intern is orally negotiated vis-à-vis his interacting preceptor by alternating between the formality of medical terminology to show competence in the profession and the informality of everyday lay language to indicate collegiality. Despite the interest in socialisation, its enactment through the investigation of formality is largely under-researched.

The present study investigates socialisation in two ways: first quantitatively in Part A by framing it in terms of the years of experience employees have in the company they are employed in; newcomers and old-timers are examined with regard to the types of documents they are assigned, the importance they ascribe to the written documents, the type of collaboration they engage in, and the difficulties they encounter when writing. Second, primarily qualitatively in Part B, by investigating the different way newcomers and old-timers use formality in their emails and the different perceptions they have of socialisation according to the type of knowledge they perceive they bring to the organisation (see extracts V and VI).

Overall, in light of the above, two characteristics of the above three interpersonal factors should be foregrounded: first, their distinctness and, second, their interrelation. Although conceptually they are different types of relations, they can be interconnected in a variety of ways. High SD may place one in a powerless position when making a request. Close SD may reduce the legitimate power relationship between two interactants. An old-timer in most cases is also a gatekeeper and likewise a newcomer needs sanctioning prior to becoming a fully fledged member. Similarly, two conflicting identities (e.g., old-timer and subordinate) may be present in the same person at a particular moment in the interaction or one may predominate over the other.

In this context, the study investigates the way the interpersonal factors interrelate with each other as well as with the organisational factors. Organisational norms and exigencies and interpersonal relations comprise the context that help understand what formality is, how it is enacted, and when it is appropriate in workplace emails according to the interactants. For a full discussion and analysis see chapter 5.

1.3.3. Quantification of formality

The lack of converging opinions on the definition of formality has resulted in similar problems in its quantification. As Labov (1972) has remarked, what has long hampered the growth of sociolinguistics is the problem of quantification of style. One cannot measure what has not been defined yet. However, several attempts have been made to arrive at a definition based on quantifiable linguistic items. One such way is by examining aspects of style in isolation. The theory of lexical density as developed by Halliday (1985) included a measure for distinguishing between written and spoken language. Although it shared many similarities with the explicitness view of formality as formulated by Heylighen & Dewaele (1999), it differed in its view of important word classes. For example, according to lexical density, verbs as content words are seen as indicators of formality along with nouns when others have associated verbalisation with informality (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). The same holds for more word classes commonly encountered with verbs and nouns like adjectives and adverbs.

One of the first serious attempts at quantifying formality at document level appears to remain Heylighen & Dewaele's (1999, 2002) view of formality as context dependence. Based on the frequencies of word classes, the F-measure proposes that nouns, adjectives, articles and prepositions are more frequent in formal styles, and pronouns, adverbs, verbs, and interjections are more frequent in informal styles. The measure was successfully tried to distinguish formal from informal genres in several languages and claimed to be used universally irrespective of language. More recent attempts from computational linguistics suggested various formality measures at the word and sentence level without, however, considering issues of appropriacy according to contextual factors (Brooke et al., 2000; Lahiri & Lu, 2011; Sheika & Inkpen, 2010). Hence their decontextualised approaches fall outside the scope, focus and perspective of this study, which is to explain when (in which situations) and how (with which linguistic features) formality is used in workplace emails according to the interactants.

1.3.4. Rationale for the investigation of formality

One reason for the investigation of formality lies in the obscurity of the term. A brief overview of the literature on formality reveals that, despite being frequently mentioned and mainly intuitively and occasionally defined, there still seems to be lack of clarity concerning what it is and when it is used. Situation and code are interchangeably

invoked in attempts towards its definition, and the interpersonal factors are not systematically examined. The acknowledgement of this problematic relation dates back to Irvine's (1979)¹⁵ different aspects of formality that are interdependent but must remain distinct. As seen above, even more recent studies superficially touch upon it, as they seem either to restrict their focus of investigation to isolated (in)formality elements (e.g., greetings in email), aspects of formality (e.g., formalisation in procedures) or to avoid clearly defining formality per se (e.g., Budohoska, 2011; Solyom, 2004). Instead they seem to relate formality to a number of other concepts such as conventionality, informalisation, appropriacy etc. Such confusion seems to question formality's usefulness as a cover term; "it is so general [a term] that it is not very useful as an analytic tool" (Irvine, 1979, p. 786).

Added to this, most of these studies, perhaps with the rare exceptions of cases where the researcher is also the subject of the investigation (e.g., Crystal, 2006 discusses his own emails), are based on the researcher's best guess at the underlying reason behind particular instantiations of formality, which lend themselves to multiple interpretations devoid of the participants' feedback. With regard to participants' perceptions and the development of a theoretical construct on how to analyse formality, the literature seems to indicate a clear gap. Hence the attempt of this thesis to investigate it in terms of the interaction between situation and form by foregrounding the perceptions of the interactants.

Also, the investigation of formality becomes particularly problematic in emails especially in terms of quantified features. This is largely because emails are highly inconsistent in writing style as the writers frequently change the way they write according to the situation and their relationship with their readers. Admittedly, some documents are clearly more formal than others, e.g., reports and business letters, and attempts have been made to define formality through quantifiable characteristics. However, they could not explain why and how formality was employed in the same genre. Heylighen & Dewaele's (1999) F-measure is a case in point. Despite its valuable insights into the conceptualisation of formality one can draw on, it remains problematic

¹⁵ Irvine argued that situation and code are aspects of formality that should be considered separately in research to enable description and analysis, but are interdependent as social identities and situations become culturally meaningful when related to human behaviour.

for an analysis at a sub-document level and unsuitable for the aim and scope this study; on a continuum from most to least formal, this definition ranks informative genres as most formal, and hence cannot account for variable formality in workplace emails, most of which have an informative function (either information giving or information asking) and have a widely claimed tendency toward informality. Like other quantitative measures, it neither takes into account the immediate interactional context and explains the way it may affect the linguistic choices of the interactants nor can it account for the inconsistencies within the same text or the same interactant. Admittedly, Heylighen & Dewaele's (1999) view of formality as "attention to form for the sake of unequivocal understanding of the precise meaning of the expression" (n. p.) offers valuable insights into the reasons people decide to be more or less formal in their written interactions and the linguistic features they adopt. Yet it is argued here that in addition to explicitness and context dependence as well as the F-measure word classes, other factors and linguistic features appear to play a role in why and how interactants use formality (further considered and discussed in chapter 5).

At the same time, underresearched areas do not necessarily imply a need for further investigation. The investigation of formality in organisational practices and discourse can reveal additional aspects of the organisation. Formality in interaction patterns and communication procedures (e.g., rules for interacting with customers, the procedure of filing a complaint, specification of official duties) through the imposition of homogeneity and structuring has implications for the exercise of organisational authority, the "ratification of organisational authority systems" (Morand, 1985, p. 849). Since prescriptions and rules are made by parties with authority, adherence to them may indicate obedience to those in power, belief in the legitimacy and correctness of the 'more experienced' members, and gaining access to the workplace community (see CofPs, section 2.1.). Insights can also be gained into the way formality in discourse reflects and is reflected in relations of power. In addition, the use of formality, through its aspect of explicitness and structuring, implies that business transactions will be efficiently conducted and high-risk interactions (e.g., air traffic-control or stipulation of terms of an agreement) will be safely carried out; a formal document is unlikely to have errors in it, and misunderstandings are avoided when explicit verbal formulae are used (also see section 5.2.3.2., extract III). Also relevant is the extent to which divergence from formal writing duties enables employees to better meet the challenges of economic

pressures. Implications thus arise with regard to whether the employment of formal and/or informal practices or discourse enables the workplace community to function democratically and effectively meet economic challenges.

In this context, an examination of the way formality is perceived and employed in organisational practices and discourse can yield potential insights into workplace communication in today's globalising and crisis-afflicted corporations, which remain relatively underresearched. In relation to workplace emails, the literature presents a gap in the way the enactment of formality reflects the development of social and workplace identities in their organisational setting.

In order to address these issues, the present thesis provides an alternative conceptualisation of formality primarily based on participants' perceptions. (In)formality is defined here as workplace situations, writing practices, and writing style that the employees perceive as formal or informal in relation to whether they are in agreement with company policy and procedures, represent the company to external constituencies, and fall within employees' official duties. It is argued here that what the participants perceive as formal is a discursive process through which they negotiate their social and professional relationships. Rather than being defined a priori by the researcher, formality acquires a meaning that is dynamically constructed by the participants in their process of communication.

In particular, Part A of this thesis discusses formality in relation to types of documents and types of collaboration. These are respectively defined in sections 4.1 and 4.3 (also see 1.1.2.) Part B of the thesis defines formality in terms of situation and form of workplace emails. This is explained in section 5.2.1. To achieve this, the thesis analyses empirical data from eight MNCs based in Greece against the background of globalisation of businesses and economic pressures.

1.5. Conclusion

The present chapter provides a literature review of the points investigated in this thesis. As shown in the discussion, several issues relating to how and why workplace communication varies remain debatable and warrant investigation; at a more general level, the frequency and importance of documents, the way employees collaborate in

their production, the difficulties they encounter, and the way they deal with them have yet to reveal important insights into the different writing practices that are employed by different types of organisations and smaller subgroups as they try to reconcile their local and global demands. The role formality plays in this inter- and intra-company variation becomes particularly relevant. These issues are addressed in separate Research Questions (RQs) in Part A of the findings. In addition, the investigation of functions and the enactment of formality in emails provide a more detailed look into the way workplace communication is actually performed in everyday routine. Insights are provided into the way social and professional identities in relation to social distance, power, and socialisation are negotiated by adhering to or breaking company norms. These issues are addressed in Part B of the findings. Having discussed the literature that underpins the research, I now turn to the theoretical frameworks that provide the lens to view the data and the RQs the present thesis addresses.

Chapter 2. Theoretical frameworks & research questions

2.0. Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the theoretical frameworks through which the research questions addressed will be investigated. It starts with a description of the way the concept of CofPs is perceived and applied here. The type of learning that is characteristic of CofPs and the problems newcomers face are explained. The chapter then explains in turn the way ethnography, interactional sociolinguistics, and social constructionism are used in this thesis and the way they can help the researcher view the data and explain them.

2.1. Communities of practice

2.1.1. The concept of Communities of practice revisited

The framework of CofPs is adopted here primarily because it is suitable to the identification and explanation of the common and different communication practices of the people employed in various organisations. Originally coined by Wenger (1998), it was distinguished from other similar concepts through its key dimensions of ‘mutual engagement’, a ‘joint negotiated enterprise’ and a ‘shared repertoire of resources’ accumulated through time (p. 76). In Wenger’s later work (Wenger et al., 2002), there appeared to be a shift from more formal and tightly knit to less formal and tightly knit notions of community and from practice as the goal of people’s engagement to that of knowledge generation and sharing. Despite their variable insights, both works were later criticised on several grounds, the most pertinent of which are briefly discussed below and form the basis for explaining the way they are adopted in the present thesis.

One reported limitation of the CofP framework was that its notions of ‘community’ and ‘practice’ remained indistinct and the communities were portrayed as stable, more homogenous cohesive entities when in fact they are rapidly changing, highly diverse and plural entities (Cox, 2005; Fuller et al., 2005; Roberts, 2010). The above appears to stem from the variable uses the framework has been put to (from the investigation of highly diverse workplace practices to charting a member’s socialisation process) and the different emphasis several of its aspects received (e.g., emphasis on identity development or knowledge sharing as a management tool). However, the flexibility of the concept

allows it to bridge the global and the local dimensions particularly relevant to MNC structures and thus can help account for the wide variation in workplace communication. Therefore they are seen here as carrying the potential to comprise both formal and informal structures (Boud & Middleton, 2003) either mandated by company management (Cox, 2005) or informally and voluntarily formed by the employees or cross-company boundary experts (Wenger et al., 2002). Similarly CofPs are volatile and susceptible to changes in the wider socioeconomic environments, in the more local (e.g., national) demands that arise in the workplace and in the “functional requirements of workplace events” (Roberts, 2010, p. 221). Seen in this light, CofPs become particularly suitable for this study on variation across and within MNCs, where smaller communities at a company, departmental or work-team level can combine into larger ones forming constellations of practices (Wenger, 1998, p. 126-127). Similarly their members can belong to more than one CofP at the same time, and their membership status may change in time and vary from one CofP to another.

In this light the concept of CofPs is particularly suitable to the aims of this study. As employees belong to various overarching and overlapping communities, they have to confront and compromise multiple and often conflicting goals in their writing. These challenges are addressed in section 4.5. on the problems newcomers encounter when writing and section 5.2.3. on the linguistic choices of formality in workplace emails.

Similarly, the study of the members’ linguistic shared repertoire can help identify the genres a community uses and the distinctive way it uses them. In the form of “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83), different linguistic repertoires can signify different CofPs. In this way differences can be explained in the types of documents the participant companies produce (investigated in Part A), the functions email serves, and the way formality is employed by the writers according to the CofP they belong (discussed in Part B).

The second relevant point of criticism relates to its disregard for power imbalances and their effect on the acquisition of membership and the relations between the members. CofPs were criticised for portraying the acquisition of membership in these communities as a smooth welcoming process of socialisation. This view has been challenged by the

‘new work order’ perspective (Gee et al., 1996), which sees employees’ skills, efficiency and organisational productivity as commodities (Heller, 2010) that acquire significance according to their market value. In this light, power imbalances in the workplace and by extension in CofPs become especially pronounced. Participation is sanctioned and monitored by the gatekeepers of power driven communities, who are the more experienced or hierarchically higher members of the organisation (Davies, 2005). Although the study does not take the power relations for granted through a CDA lens, it views CofPs as largely characterised by inherent asymmetries, imbalances, and conflicts. In this context, the way employees learn the new discourse becomes relevant and is discussed below.

2.1.2. Learning in the workplace

Despite the criticism, we owe to Wenger (1991) the reconceptualisation of learning in the workplace from cognitive theories of the learner as a receptacle of knowledge to an inevitably social and natural process that takes place in all people’s life - a situated view of learning as ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

According to the concept of situatedness, when learning, the whole person is involved as a whole in connection with the activity and the world. The process resembles an apprenticeship, where the apprentice learns naturally from the more experienced master. The situated view of learning can thus account for the way employees learn through experience simply by working together with other colleagues in the same company or team rather than through direct instruction (Bremmer, 2012; Freedman & Adam, 1996). This becomes suitable to the investigation of the way newcomers manage to overcome their initial writing problems by learning on the job (see section 4.5.) and might potentially explain the types of collaboration they engage in when writing (section 4.4.).

Legitimate peripheral participation refers to the process by which one gradually acquires full membership initially as a peripheral member and later as a core one. Although the concept of peripherality implies “multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and ... developing identities, and forms of membership” (Wenger, 1991, pp. 35-36), it does not account for yet more dynamic and variable relationships between masters and apprentices; admittedly it does not explain that experienced members can also learn from less experienced ones and that new members can actually effect a change in the

organisation by importing knowledge from outside contexts. The importance of localised knowledge for one's full socialisation has been widely acknowledged by scholars tracing interns' socialisation into the workplace (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Bremmer, 2012; Davies & Birbili, 2000). However, newcomers are reported to be aided by types of knowledge other than or in addition to the one localised to their new community (Angouri & Harwood, 2007; Bremmer, 2012; Roberts, 2010). For example, novice writers have been shown to successfully challenge workplace genres due to their family background, prior university and workplace experiences (Artemeva, 2005) and by demonstrating their expertise (Katz, 1998). Similarly old-timers (in a particular trade) can equally well be imported to an organisation (Fuller et al., 2005). It is argued, therefore, that learning works in variable and not one-way directions, from more experienced to both less and equally experienced members and vice versa (Ochs, 2000). The extent to which it is perceived so by the employees is discussed in sections 4.3. and 4.5. (Part A), and in the analysis of extracts V and VI (Part B).

Seen in the light discussed above, the framework of CofPs comprise an important source of theoretical insight; it provides a flexible framework to investigate differences in the writing practices of organisations in a variety of levels from global to local; it also allows one to examine the extent to which writing practices and products, writing genres, and employee relationships and identities can be viewed in terms of stable features *and/or* constructed dynamically. Part A of the thesis addresses the first through a quantitative approach and Part B is based on the qualitative analysis of samples from their written communication. The following section will describe the ethnographic principles and the Interactional Sociolinguistics approach, which help underpin the analysis in both parts of the thesis.

2.2. Ethnographic research and Interactional sociolinguistics

2.2.1. Ethnographic research

Often equated with qualitative research and fieldwork, ethnographic research looks at the natural use of language within the practices and beliefs of various types of communities, national/ethnic, gender, organisational etc. The main goal is to provide a 'thick' detailed description of the everyday practices (activities, events and behaviours) and the beliefs the community members ascribe to them. In this study ethnography is used as providing an emic account of the world, where an insider's perspective is integral to accurately

recording and understanding how the community works according to the perceptions of its members. In contrast to a realist approach to ethnography, in favour of an objective reality that is possible to represent accurately, it is argued here that the researcher's reality is as partial as the insider's and exists alongside other realities (Brewer, 2000, p. 42). In defence of the criticism that the ethnographer only projects his/her own reality, two arguments can be made. First, all methods are equally unprivileged in portraying an objective reality even if this existed (Brewer, 2000; Richardson, 1991). Second, "since there is no perfectly transparent or neutral way to represent the social world (or the natural one), reflexivity on the part of the researcher assists in identifying the contingencies that produced his or her portrayal of it, so we should claim no more for the account than what it is, a partial, selective and personal version" (Brewer, 2000, p. 44). In the present study the attempt towards gaining a better understanding of workplace discourse is realised by taking such an emic, selective, in-depth perspective on written workplace communication.

Also, ethnography tended to focus on the description of stable social characteristics like the participants' age, sex, ethnicity, level of education, place of residence, etc., more akin to field research than business or workplace communication (Brewer, 2000). However, it is used here to investigate the communication of the participants based on the contextual characteristics of their workplace environment at different levels. Examples of different level contexts are the wider contexts of globalisation and economic crisis, meso level contexts of the local workplace communities of the company or department they are employed and virtual across national borders work teams, and narrower contexts of even smaller communities of old-timers, newcomers, the powerful and the powerless, distant and close acquaintances. These contexts provide the ethnographic lens that helps explain why participants communicate the way they do (also see chapter 3).

2.2.2. Interactional Sociolinguistics

Following a broadly ethnographic approach (as described above), the particular tool employed to investigate particular instances of discourse is Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS). Following an IS approach (Gumperz, 1999), the aim is to consider the enactment of formality in its immediate and wider context and attempt to account for a variety of contextual factors, ranging from individual, situational, and organisational to sociocultural factors, when and as they emerge to reflect the participants' formality

linguistic choices in particular instances of their written interactions. The plethora of contributing factors yields a complex and interrelated web which “leaves the discourse researcher with no choice but to engage with context at all levels...” (Sarangi, 2002, p. 100).

Based on the ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1961), IS explains diversity by taking a bridging role in more ways than one: first, it bridges the gap between the macro-societal context (e.g., general political, economic and cultural context) and the micro interactive processes of the interactions comprising “the real work site where societal and interactive forces merge” (Gumperz, 1999, p. 454). Rather than being based on a priori assumptions and rules of how things work (like speech act theory), it looks at interactions as an ongoing process of negotiation, where participants infer what their interlocutors intend to mean and realign their responses accordingly in a particular situation. In agreement with Garfinkel (1967) and Grice (1989), the interpretation is heavily dependent on shared background knowledge about both the wider situational context and the more specific inferences made by the interactants and is allowed to shift in the course of the interaction. Second, it tries to bridge the gap between bottom-up participant based (e.g., Conversational Analysis) and top-down analyst based approaches (e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis) by taking both into consideration. Also, although the workplace, known for being fraught with conflict between power relationships, provides the ideal ground for the adoption of CDA, IS is employed here to avoid working with imposing a priori assumptions about the imposition of power and to facilitate the investigation of other interpersonal relations that may appear to receive less attention in workplace discourse analysis studies like SD and socialisation (for further discussion see section 5.2.1.).

In the discourse analysis of the written samples, IS is employed to investigate the reciprocal relation between context and the written data. As explained earlier (section 1.3.1.), context here is intended to mean both the organisational and interpersonal context that affects (and is affected by) the written discourse of the interactants. It also enables the researcher to trace the situated nature of meaning in interpersonal relations primarily as they are formed and negotiated rather than “[exposed and uncovered] taken-for-granted power relationships” (Stubbe et. al., 2003, p. 379).

Although the study does not primarily focus on the construction of identity per se, some concepts from Goffman's (1959) identity theory are useful in the analysis of the enactment of formality and merit clarification. Following Goffman's view of footing as "the multiple sense in which the self of the speaker can appear", footing is used here as a shift in perspective with regard to the relationship of the writer to the reader of a written text. Alignment is seen as agreement with the position of the reader and/or a position expressed in the written text. For example, a realignment of identity and a change of footing may be a shift from doing power to doing collegiality. An example can be seen in extract III, where, having issued a directive, the writer issues a reminder.

Also, particularly useful for the study of formality are the terms backstage and frontstage interaction. The two terms, originally coined by Goffman (1959), refer to the more public and hidden contexts where decisions are made. Therefore, both can provide insights into how these decisions are made and how the various interpersonal relationships are constructed. Both are also closely associated with formal-informal style (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Erickson, 1999; Cook-Gumperz & Messerman, 1999); "the front and backstage regions are constantly regulated not just in terms of activities that happen, but also in terms of formal/informal language behaviors" (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p.19). In light of the above, it is held here that both frontstage and backstage behaviours are necessary to capture an organisation's routine communication practices and relevant to the investigation of formality in workplace discourse. Emails of all other workplace documents or genres seem to provide an ideal ground for this.

2.3. Social constructionism

Social constructionism (SC) has proved to be especially useful for the investigation of workplace writing as it provides a suitable theoretical background for the study of writing as social activity. Rejecting positivist or empiricist explanations of social phenomena, the social constructionist views language as social action and the way in which the construction of the world is realised. In this light, workplace discourse is much deeper than a mere reflection of the workplace communities. They both engage in an interactive reciprocal relationship, where they affect each other. SC is also particularly useful for the investigation of the way workplace communities operate on both a global and a local level, can overlap, be a part of each other, and change over time. It can help explain how simultaneous membership in more communities than one can be reflected

and affect the discourse of their members. Furthermore, it can also account for the frequently reported problems in inter-departmental communication (Kleimann, 1993; Ledwell-Brown, 2000), the development of new discourse by a temporary virtual work team, and the adaptation of any community's discourse to situational exigencies (e.g., Yates and Orlikowski, 1994). Added to this, viewing context and communication as inseparable has been seen to raise implications about whether workplace writing can be taught outside the workplace context.

The above are eminently suitable to the way workplace communities are viewed here in line with the CofP framework. They also bear direct relevance to the thesis, which intends to explain potential differences as well as similarities in the types of documents written, languages used, writing problems encountered, and the types of collaboration which have been seen to take place across organisations, departments or hierarchical levels, aspects addressed in Part A. Also, its focus on the 'socially interactive'¹⁶ or dyadic relationship between the interactants enables the discourse analyst to gain a better understanding of how the adoption of formal or informal linguistic features reflects as well as affects the power or the SD relationship of the interactants (see section 5.2.). SC provides the lens to view the two main preoccupations of this study, organisational writing practices and the enactment of formality.

Having discussed the areas in literature on workplace communication that merit further exploration and the theoretical perspectives from which to approach them, the thesis now moves to the specific research questions it aims to address.

2.4. Research Questions

The research described here aims to shed some insight into variation in the general writing practices and in one representative genre of a number of organisations. To do that it comprises two parts. The first focuses on the general perceptions of employees concerning their writing practices and the second on the genre of business emails. In particular it seeks to explore the following:

¹⁶ The focus on the social interactive aspect of a text entails that its meaning is derived more from the process of the social interaction between writer and reader than the wider context of the organisational community this takes place.

Part A: Writing practices in the participant companies

1. Frequency of written documents

1A. How frequently the participants produce the written documents.

1B. How frequently the participants write in English according to company size and their level of post

2. Importance of written documents

2A. How much importance the participants ascribe to the written documents in English

2B. How the importance ascribed to the written documents differs according to company size, the employees' years of experience and level of post

3. Collaboration in writing

3A. How often the participants collaborate

3B. Who is involved in collaborative writing

3C. What types of collaboration employees are engaged in

4. Writing difficulties and ways of dealing with them

4A. What difficulties are encountered when composing the written documents

4B. What ways the participants perceive help overcome their writing difficulties

Part B: Email functions and formality in three companies

5. Email functions

5A. What functions email serves in the three companies

5B. How the email functions vary according to company and status

6. Enactment of formality in the emails of the three companies

6A. How formality is enacted in SD relationships

6B. How formality is enacted in power relationships

6C. How formality is enacted in the writers' socialisation

2.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to discuss the theoretical frameworks that underpin the research: the concept of CofP, as viewed in this thesis, is a flexible framework that enables a macro and a micro investigation of both the stable and more dynamic writing practices of workplace communities; ethnography, through its emic in-depth perspective, helps explain the everyday writing practices through the perceptions of the participants; IS comprises the tool to explain the written discourse of the interactants within their situational and interpersonal context. Lastly SC provides the lens to view the writing practices and the enactment of formality in emails as social action in a mutual reciprocal relationship. Following the theoretical underpinnings, the chapter then outlines the thesis' RQs.

Chapter 3. Methodology and procedure

3.0. Introduction

In an attempt to describe and explain the variation in the written products and processes of a number of organisations based in Greece, the present study uses a mixed methods approach. This is done by utilising a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches and drawing from three data sets: questionnaire results, interview reports and written samples. This chapter initially provides a rationale for the choice of mixed methodology. Next it describes the exact manner of integration of the quantitative and qualitative approaches in each research question and the procedure followed. Then it touches upon the issues of reliability, ethics, and the role of the researcher. In the end, it describes the research tools in the order they were employed.

3.1. Rationale for mixed methods

As suggested in the literature on methodological matters, the selection of methodology and methods should be primarily driven by the focus and the kind of RQs one is seeking to answer (Robson, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007). Added to that is a consideration of both instrumental as well as deeper conceptual and philosophical issues¹⁷ (Bryman, 2007; Nastasi et al., 2010) to ensure a rigorous analysis (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). As Harden & Thomas suggest, it is not simply a matter of ‘what works’ but ‘why, for whom and in what circumstances’ (2010, p. 755).

In this light, the stance taken in the present study is against the purist ‘paradigm war’ stance towards the mixing of methods, which sees them as incompatible (Tashakkori & Teddlie (2010). Instead, I follow a pragmatist stance toward mixed methods, seeing the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods as “a collection of techniques” (Angouri, 2010a) or a “wide variety of study types“ (Harden & Thomas, 2010, p. 754). This combination has the potential to address the demands of multifaceted RQs or a range of questions that could not be answered mono-methodically (Brannen, 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Admittedly quantitative approaches are well known for being “systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled, involving precise

¹⁷ See Tashakkori & Teddlie (2010) for an extensive review on these issues (pp. 45-272).

measurement and producing reliable and replicable data generalizable to other contexts” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34). On the other, qualitative approaches also hold unique merits: their exploratory nature, the potential for explaining complexities and dynamic phenomena, the emphasis on the insider’s meaning, and the use of small yet representative samples which characterise qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007, pp. 39-41) are particularly valuable. In the context of workplace writing, a number of researchers draw on its highly complex nature and argue that with few exceptions discourse studies can greatly benefit from qualitative measures (Angouri, 2010a; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005).

In this context, it is argued here that a combination of both methods can better address the multifaceted aspects of workplace communication by addressing the issues under investigation from different angles. A number of recent discourse studies have shown the benefits of using a mixed methods paradigm to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the real world (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). These are conducted in a variety of fields from the health sciences, sociology, cultural geography, education, management and media (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2010) and in the workplace in particular (Angouri and Harwood, 2008; Gunnarsson, 1997; Holmes and Mara, 2002; Jorgensen, 2005).

With regard to workplace writing, it is argued here that although its investigation has been shown to greatly benefit from qualitative approaches, some quantitative measures can be revealing as to the general patterns of communication that are followed in the workplace. Quantitative analysis can give a more ‘global’ picture of communication in the workplace, which is important to better understand the ‘micro’ picture and the particulars that will emerge. The qualitative data, on the other hand, can help explain the general patterns that will emerge without missing sight of the micro details that tend to be overlooked in quantitative approaches. The benefit of having access both to the global and the local picture, has been acknowledged by a number of researchers (Angouri, 2007, 2010a; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005). Its suitability to the present study lies primarily in the multi-faceted nature of the workplace setting (Stubbe et al., 2003) that calls for a need to collect data from different sources in an iterative way (Angouri, 2010a; Beaufort 2000).

Bryman cites the five most common reasons put forward in support of mixed methodology: triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion (2006, p. 105). This study is not uniquely concerned with the *triangulation* of findings per se in the sense of convergent findings from different sources, although this is seen to emerge. It is also concerned with *complementing* findings by looking into the conflicting nature of their subjective realities, which can only be revealed in data from different sources similarly to several mixed method scholars (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Angouri, 2010a). Divergent results are attributed equal importance with that of convergent ones as they bring to light complex aspects of phenomena that might otherwise remain unexplored (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p. 9). The importance of gaining access to participants' perspectives for the investigation of workplace communication has been pretty much established; since organisational communication is situated in specific social and organisational contexts, it is important to know what the employees perceive about it and take this into account when trying to understand how and why they communicate the way they do (Zhu & White, 2009).

In short, the primary intention of using mixed methods in this study is to shed light on different aspects of reality as shown in the architecture of the study: the macro picture is given by identifying the generic features of workplace writing in the companies investigated (Part A). The micro perspective is given by initially zooming in on the functions of email in a sample of three companies and even further on the discourse analysis of a sample of email chains (Part B). To achieve the above, at the macro level the study employs indirect¹⁸ data to identify possible patterns in the variation of writing practices. At the micro level the study utilises naturally occurring discourse data to investigate in more depth a number of issues that were seen to play a role in the variation discussed in the previous stages (e.g., relationships of power, SD, and socialisation).

3.2. Methodology

Given that mixed methods is not seen here as mere 'combination' or 'collection' of two independent strands, a word must be said about the manner of integration of the two approaches. Green (2008) proposes three typology criteria: the degree to which the two

¹⁸ Indirect data are seen here as the self-reported data collected from the participants' interviews in collaboration with the researcher. In contrast, the 'direct' or naturally occurring data of email texts are not subject to researcher's intervention.

methods are used independently or interactively, the priority given to one of the two of any, and the sequencing of their implementation. With regard to the first criterion, it is made clear that since the two components inform each other, the two methods are used interactively. Concerning the other two, overall the present study is primarily qualitative and sequential with the quantitative component preceding the qualitative one. Using Morse's (1991) typology¹⁹, the overall design is shown below:

quan → QUAL

However, the exact manner of integration of the two methods in the procedure and interpretation of the results varies so as to suit each research question separately. In particular, (see table 1), the RQs of part A are addressed first quantitatively through the questionnaire analysis and supplemented with interview analysis. In RQs 1-3 more importance was given to the quantitative component, and in 4A and 4B the components were equally prolific and acquired equal status. In part B, RQs 5A and 5B on the functions of email and their inter- and intra-company variation is addressed quantitatively through the analysis of the written samples. RQs 6A, 6B, and 6C on the enactment of formality are based on a qualitative analysis of the written samples coupled with the writers' reports in discourse-based interviews.

¹⁹ Capital letters indicate priority/importance of one method over the other, → indicates sequencing of the two methods, and + indicates concurrence of methods

Table 1. *Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in RQs.*

Part A		
RQs 1A & 1B	QUAN → qual	Questionnaire → interviews
RQ 2	QUAN → qual	Questionnaire → interviews
RQ 3A	QUAN	Questionnaire
RQ 3B	QUAL	Interviews
RQ 3C	QUAN	Questionnaire
RQs 4A & 4B	QUAN + QUAL	Questionnaire + interviews
Part B		
RQs 5A & 5B	QUAN	Written samples
RQs 6A, 6B & 6C	QUAL	Written samples+ interviews

3.3. Procedure

Data was collected from a variety of research tools, including the written samples, one questionnaire, interviews and observations in a procedure outlined below.

Table 2. *Procedure of Research*

1. Initial visits and observations to the workplaces
2. Distribution, completion & preliminary analysis of questionnaire
3. Conduct & preliminary analysis of semi-structured interviews
4. Collection of written samples
5. Conduct & preliminary analysis of discourse based interviews
6. Analysis of all data

The first phase of data collection, at the beginning of September 2009, involved making contacts from a list of potentially interested parties to inform them about the study and seek their interest and approval and thus gain access to their data. Contacts were

followed by initial visits to the workplaces where observations were made and recorded in note form on the everyday habitual practices of the companies. The intention was twofold: to gain a better understanding of the context investigated so as to enable myself to better prepare for the utilisation of research tools prior to data collection and to draw more suitable inferences post data collection. The second intention was to establish trust and rapport (Dörnyei, 2007), in agreement with the ethical considerations of doing research.

Approval was soon followed by the distribution of a questionnaire, as an initial source of information on the writing practices as perceived by the participants. The collection of the questionnaire was followed by the conduct of a number of face-to face semi-structured interviews. These were intended to enrich the questionnaire data and to urge the participants to reflect more on the writing practices they were involved in. An interview protocol was prepared in advance to ensure that certain issues were adequately addressed, but flexibility was purposefully retained to enable the interviewees to reflect more on issues they considered important.

Since the interviews were held with those who expressed a wish to help in the research, they also provided the opportunity to seek access to the written samples. Those who had shown an interest in the research and placed their trust in the researcher were asked to provide samples of emails and reports at a time of their convenience. Upon collection of written samples, a number of instances of personal communication in follow up meetings and discourse based interviews ensured that the written samples were interpreted as intended by the writers and/or - where that was not possible - by their receivers.

Although inter-rated reliability was not possible due to the individual nature of the PhD project, the qualitative analysis of themes was conducted by me and discussed with the supervisory committee. This process may fail to provide potentially different perspectives from other people with different experience to ensure rigour in the thematic analysis. However, the consultation with the supervisory committee, presentations of parts of the research in conferences and two publications based on work done during this project in refereed journals (Mahili, 2014; Angouri, Harwood, Mahili, in prep) provided valuable experience and constructive criticism on the analysis of the themes and the integration of the quantitative and qualitative components. This allowed for the

consistency of the interview results and strengthened the rigour of the mixed methodology employed and the validity of the findings.

Although research processes are often presented in linear form, to a great extent they are iterative and responsive (Waldvogel, 2005, p. 61) especially in mixed methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p. 10). In line with a bottom up approach, the research questions in this study were being reconsidered throughout the research in light of new evidence and were finalised after the collection and analysis of the data to better reflect the data as they emerge and minimise the imposition of the researcher's ideologies and expectations. Practical difficulties in access and the participants' lack of time also affected the data collection process. At times depending on the time and responsiveness of the participants, a number of stages took place concurrently. For instance, written samples were also collected during the interviews, and clarifications on questionnaire responses were sought and given during the follow up discourse-based interviews.

3.4. Validity and reliability

Coming as they do from very different epistemological roots, the concepts of validity and reliability in quantitative and qualitative approaches bear respectively different meanings and significance. Quantitative reliability refers to the consistency of data and quantitative validity refers to the soundness of the research and generalisability of the results (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 50). However, in qualitative research reliability becomes akin to the concepts of confirmability, trustworthiness and dependency of results and similarly validity is understood to refer to correctness of evidence, credibility, and transferability (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, pp. 270-271).

Applying the two terms in the mixed methods paradigm makes things more complex. The main suggestion is that in addition to the separate quality and inferences of the two components, one should also look at the integration of the two components and the meta-inferences drawn from the mixing of the two. As Nastasi et al. report (2010, p. 309), a widely made suggestion involves evaluating validity separately for the two components prior to mixing. In addition, a number of models along with their corresponding typologies have been proposed to specifically address the criteria of mixed methods²⁰. In

²⁰ For a comprehensive report on these models see Nastasi et al. (2010).

this thesis validity and reliability are evaluated separately for the two components and inferences are rigorously drawn from the integration of the two. It is hoped that the thick description of the employment of each of the two methods and of their integration in this chapter as well as the inferences drawn in the chapter of analysis and results will add to the validity and reliability of the research.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical issues related to collecting real time data were addressed through the adoption of a participatory approach (Stubbe, 2001), establishing an on-going dialogue between researcher and participants in all the stages of the research process: upon approaching the potential companies and asking for their participation in the project, personal contacts were used to introduce and vouch for me. An initial meeting was arranged with interested parties with senior management when required to explain face-to-face the details of the research and to assure them of my confidentiality. Before their informed consent was sought, all participants were thoroughly briefed on the project both orally and in writing. An information sheet (see appendix A) along the lines of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (Stubbe, 2001) was made available explaining the nature and purpose of the project, the degree and manner of the organisation's contribution, and analysis and storage of data. At the same time, the protection of the organisation's and the participants' names and identities was guaranteed, and the results were offered to be revealed upon completion of the project. All participants were offered the option to sign a mutual confidentiality agreement form as an additional way to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in writing prior to their consent.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to voluntarily provide their name if they were willing to take part in a short interview. Those who had provided their names and telephone numbers were contacted and asked for an appointment. Care was taken to avoid disruption of work so the interview meetings were arranged at a time and place convenient to each participant. All interviewees were asked for their permission to record the session and confidentiality was assured. Apart from the opportunity to achieve more depth and breadth of coverage (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), the interviews were the chance to seek access to the written data. To meet the practical and ethical challenges of collecting a corpus of real time data of sufficient size and quality, I decided to use a 'hands-off' approach giving participants themselves direct control over the data

collection process (Stubbe, 2001). I clearly explained to them that they would decide which data to give me and that they were free to erase or delete any parts of confidential information they did not want to reveal, which might put themselves or their company at risk. A number of participants who had shown a strong interest in the research, as key informants, collected samples of email chains addressing various audiences in GR and ENG.

3.6. The role of the researcher

Apart from the ethical considerations in the procedure, the participatory approach also determines the role of the researcher. Rather than being a detached observer, in this study the researcher became a participant for a number of reasons: to establish trust and rapport so as to help overcome problems in access to the workplace, to better understand the subjective realities and perceptions of the employees, and to more accurately interpret these findings into logical and coherent conclusions in the analysis of the results. In a participatory approach the research process is co constructed by all participants, which further adds to its credibility. This is evident in various stages in the research process. For example, although the initial version of the questionnaire primarily drew on previous studies on perceptions of workplace writing practices (e.g., Anderson, 1985; Paradis et al., 1985), in the pre-piloting and piloting stages, feedback from the participants on the questionnaire items led to several adjustments so that the items better reflect the workplace settings to be investigated. Also, rather than having a strict question-answer format, the semi-structured interviews following the questionnaire resembled more a discussion where both researcher and subjects contributed to a common understanding. As a researcher I tried to avoid imposing my own interpretations in all stages of data collection so as to accurately record the subjective realities of the participants. With regard to the analysis of the written samples, both writers and researcher contributed to the interpretation of the results. This was to avoid possible inconsistencies in the writers' views as they lack the metacognitive skills to perform discourse analysis and to minimise possible bias on the part of the researcher. In case of inconsistencies between the researcher and the participant account, the second was retained in so far it was in line with the discourse analysis of the data. Following an emic perspective on the data, the writer's and the researcher's perceptions are considered equally *underprivileged* as accounts of an *objective* reality (Brewer, 2000). However, the combination of the writers' account of the context in which the writing occurred and the researcher's

metacognitive skills to produce discourse analysis can lead to a coconstruction of *what* was written, *how* and *why*.

3.7. Research tools

3.7.1. Questionnaire

Design of the questionnaire

The distribution of a questionnaire was intended as a secondary but initial source of information as it ensures anonymity, an important ethical consideration (Angouri & Harwood, 2008), facilitates fast collection of information, and minimises the time required by the participants to complete. Mainly descriptive and exploratory in nature, the questionnaire included factual and attitudinal items aiming at revealing an overview of communication in the corporate setting by collecting background information about the companies investigated, their written and spoken communication routines and the attitudes and problems of the participants involved (see appendix B for questionnaire).

Because of the well-reported difficulties with access to written data in the workplace, a convenience sampling strategy was used. Care was taken to ensure sampling of a range of companies and a variety of subgroups (e.g., managers and post holders, newcomers and old-timers) thus retaining its stratified nature.

The final version comprised 26 items classified into three thematic subcategories: personal information, general workplace communication, written communication and oral communication. Factual items concerned issues like size and type of company, years of experience in the company, current position and level of post, first and second languages spoken, types of documents participants are being asked to handle, types of audience addressed, frequency of handling the written documents, and frequency and type of collaboration with others. Examples of attitudinal items are the perceived working language of the company, difficulties and solutions in writing, importance of documents participants were involved in, and importance and reasons for writing skills.

Analysis of the questionnaire

The following preliminary quantitative results come from the analysis of the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to give background information on

the communication ecosystem of the companies and to address a number of the research questions of the study. Using SPSS version 15.0 with the module Exact Tests, non-parametric tests were carried out to analyse categorical variables. It was decided that calculation of frequencies was more appropriate for the analysis of categorical variables in the present questionnaire than means, medians and mode, so frequencies were calculated for a number of the items. Also, correlations were sought between three nominal variables - size of company (large - small²¹), level of post (managers-post holders²²), and years of experience (newcomers - old-timers²³) - and a number of ordinal variables using the statistical chi-squared (or χ^2) test as a test for independence, and setting the level of statistical significance at 0.05.

Profile of questionnaire participants

Table 3 gives a brief overview of the profile of the sample population. From October 2009 until February 2011 the questionnaire was distributed to eight companies of variable size and type based in Greece (see table C1. Company profiles, appendix C for more details) and completed by a total of 80 employees. Although the sample may seem small largely due to the difficulties in access as explained below, seen within its context it acquires significance. As the table shows, 91% of the employees speak Greek as their mother tongue and the remaining 8% speak Italian, English, and Spanish. Half of the sample speak one FL, 47% speak from two to four FLs and only a small percent (2.6%) speak no FL. Almost half of the sample 55.3% hold a BA, 36.8% hold an MA, only one employee holds a PhD (1.3%) and five employees do not have a degree (6.6%). With regard to the years of experience they had in the company they were employed, 25 out of 78 (32.1%) were newcomers and 53 were old-timers (67.9%). According to their level of post, managers comprised 55.1% of the sample and post holders took up 44.9% of the

²¹ The companies were classified into large and small according to the size of their workforce rather than subsidiaries and branches. Companies 1-3 had from 6-30 members of staff and 4-8 from 200-500 members of staff (appendix C).

²² Similar to Angouri (2007), the classification of level of post was made according to hierarchical differences and associated types of responsibility: managers were responsible for a section or a subsection of a department/s and post holders were responsible only for themselves.

²³ Adopting Wenger's (1998) concepts of newcomers and old-timers, the classification of the two was based on years of experience they had in the company by which they were employed: newcomers were those with up to one year of experience and old-timers had two and more years of experience.

sample. 64.1% of the people were employed in big companies and 35.9% were employed in small companies.

Table 3. *Profile of Sample Population*

Number of participants	80	
Languages spoken	91% Greek	8% other languages
Education	55.3% BA	36.8% MA
Years of experience	32.1% newcomers	67.9% old-timers
Level of post	55.1% managers	44.9% post holders
Company size	64.1% large	35.9% small

3.7.2. Semi-structured interviews

Design of interviews

Upon completion of the questionnaire, the participants were invited to take part in a follow-up interview. Intending to verify and enrich the questionnaire data and to urge the participants to reflect more on the writing and the process they engage in, the interviews were mainly structured around the questionnaire items but flexibility was carefully maintained to enable the interviewees to expand more on their own problems and areas of interest. The first two interviews with participants working in two different companies were designated as pilot ones. Interviews proved to be a valuable supplementary tool for exploring the issues raised in the questionnaire in much more depth and breadth. They were an excellent opportunity to ask clarification questions, to correct misunderstandings, and effectively supplement the background information collected from the questionnaire.

Profile of the interviewees

Due to the widely known difficulties in access a business setting poses, a convenience sampling strategy was used retaining its stratified and purposive nature i.e., I decided to interview people who were willing to help but made sure to include participants from a variety of subgroups according to size/type of company, level of post, and years of experience. As table 4 shows, out of the 17 people who were interviewed, five were

working in MNCs and 11 in smaller international companies. The sample included seven post holders and nine managers, out of which five were newcomers and 11 were old-timers. The volunteer basis on which the sampling was conducted cannot make it representative of the population employed in the corporate sector or in either one of the subgroups. The sampling procedure adheres to the principles and ‘logic’ of qualitative research to represent salient characteristics and in depth and variable details and not statistical representation.

Table 4: *Profile of the Interviewees*

Number of participants	17		
Mother tongue spoken	12 Greek	4 other languages	
FLs spoken	5 1FL	11 2FLs	
Education	12 BA	4 MA	1 PhD
Years of experience	5 Newcomers		11 Old-timers
Level of post	9 managers		7 Post holders
Company size	5 Large		11 Small

Analysis of interviews

Development of themes

In the analysis of the data, a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis was used in the search for “repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 86). Interviews were transcribed reproducing the semantic meaning of the talk without details of its delivery. In accordance with the purpose of the analysis, to look for semantic themes salient to the research questions, it was thought that the analysis is concerned with the content of the interviews and not with details like pauses, overlaps, phonetic and phonological aspects. The various stages of the analysis can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. *Process of Thematic Analysis*

**Inductive
descriptive
approach**

Stage 1: Transcription of data set

Stage 2: Generation of codes

Stage 3: Generation of initial themes

**Deductive
interpretive
approach**

Stage 4: Reviewing and sorting themes

Stage 5: Generation of final themes

Stage 6: Naming super-themes and developing thematic map

The first phase involved reading and rereading the data set a number of times to achieve familiarity and gain a good understanding. The second phase, still a descriptive phase of analysis, involved the generation of initial codes, the first attempt to approach the most basic segments of the raw data in a meaningful way i.e., more extended pieces of the data were manually coded by writing notes on the right margin of the text analysed. Following an inductive data driven rather than theory driven approach, the aim was to code the entire data set by “giving full and equal attention to each data item” (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 89) making sure nothing is left out at this stage. The next phase involved generating initial themes, by sorting the codes into potential themes. This was done manually by writing notes on the left margin of the text analysed. This is shown in figure 1.

Initial themes	Data extract (translated from Greek to English)	Code
<p>Use of formal style + docs</p> <p>Company policy (-no)</p> <p>newcomers' socialisation</p> <p>old-timers' fossilisation</p>	<p>I. Are these reports written in formal or informal style?</p> <p>X. Look as long as it is addressed to administration and carries your signature ... it is formal. Now the style in which you will write it ... obviously you won't write it as if you are writing to your friend. This language that you're using is relatively formal but it's not something predetermined as a particular type of text ... as a form of text. In other words it doesn't have an introduction, main body and conclusion. Not many people write these things. They are written by those ... who are more into the logic of a more structured hierarchy in the company, newer people, less old, because that's how they've learnt to communicate. The older employees here have been here for many years and you know many of them haven't learnt to use paper and pencil. Especially if they are given the chance to just walk in Mr Papadopoulos' office and say this this and that...</p>	<p>formal doc → administration → carries signature</p> <p>formal style depends on you -no official policy structure of text depends on you</p> <p>(new) employees write formal reports</p> <p>(old) employees don't write formal rep & prefer oral lang.</p>

Figure 1. An example of coding and development of initial themes

Although this stage involved starting to consider possible relations among the codes and initial themes, it consistently remained a descriptive data driven phase so as to retain as much of the information as possible. In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the main themes, I started to form preliminary broad categories and place the respondents' main ideas under these categories by drawing mind maps on paper. I also noted the initials of their names to allow myself to later calculate frequencies and find points of agreement and variations in perceptions later on although this was not my main concern at that stage. An example is shown in figure 2.

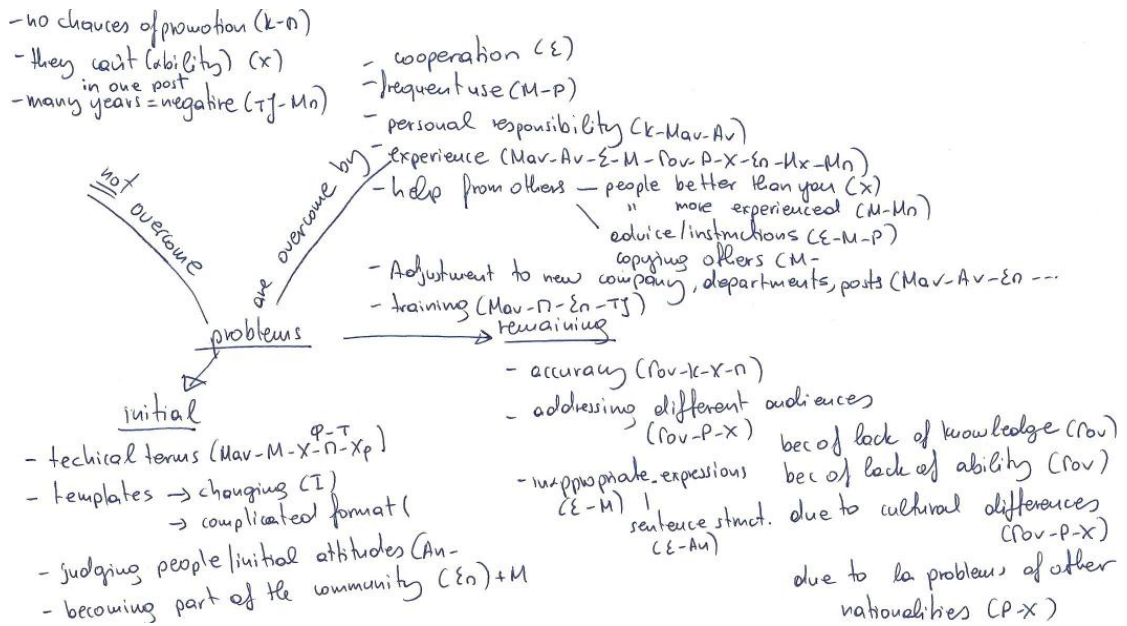


Figure 2. Initial coding

The following phases were more interpretive than descriptive. The generation of sub and bigger themes and their sorting into categories involved making decisions on their relation, importance and relevance to the research questions at hand. This was done by rereading the interview transcripts and writing more extensively in each category on separate pieces of paper. This is shown in figure 3.

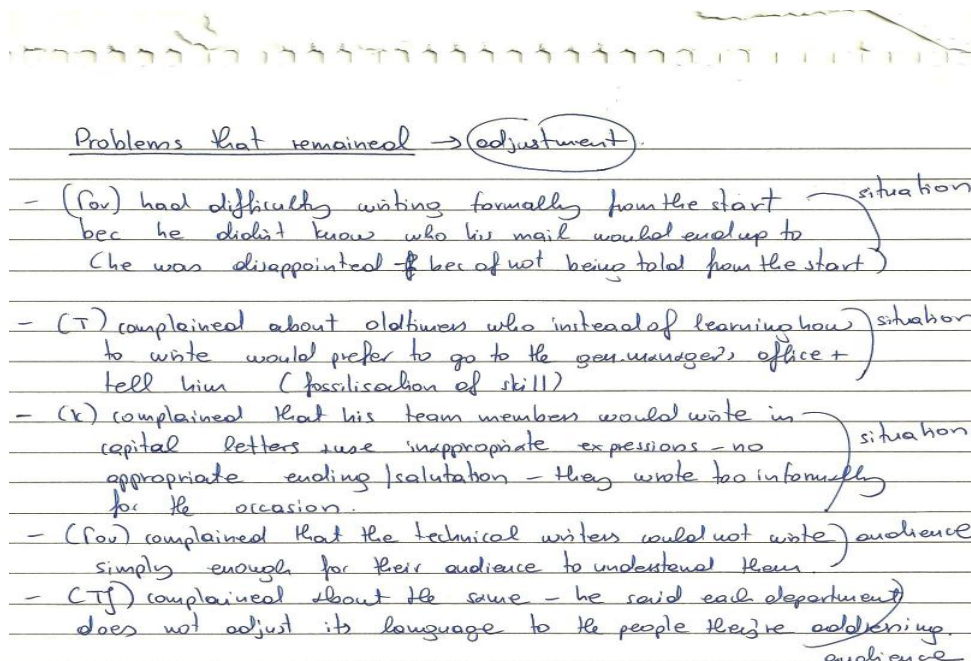


Figure 3. Elaboration and development of themes

The codes were grouped into categories according to their similarities and differences in an iterative process that went on in the writing stage. This can be seen in figure 4.

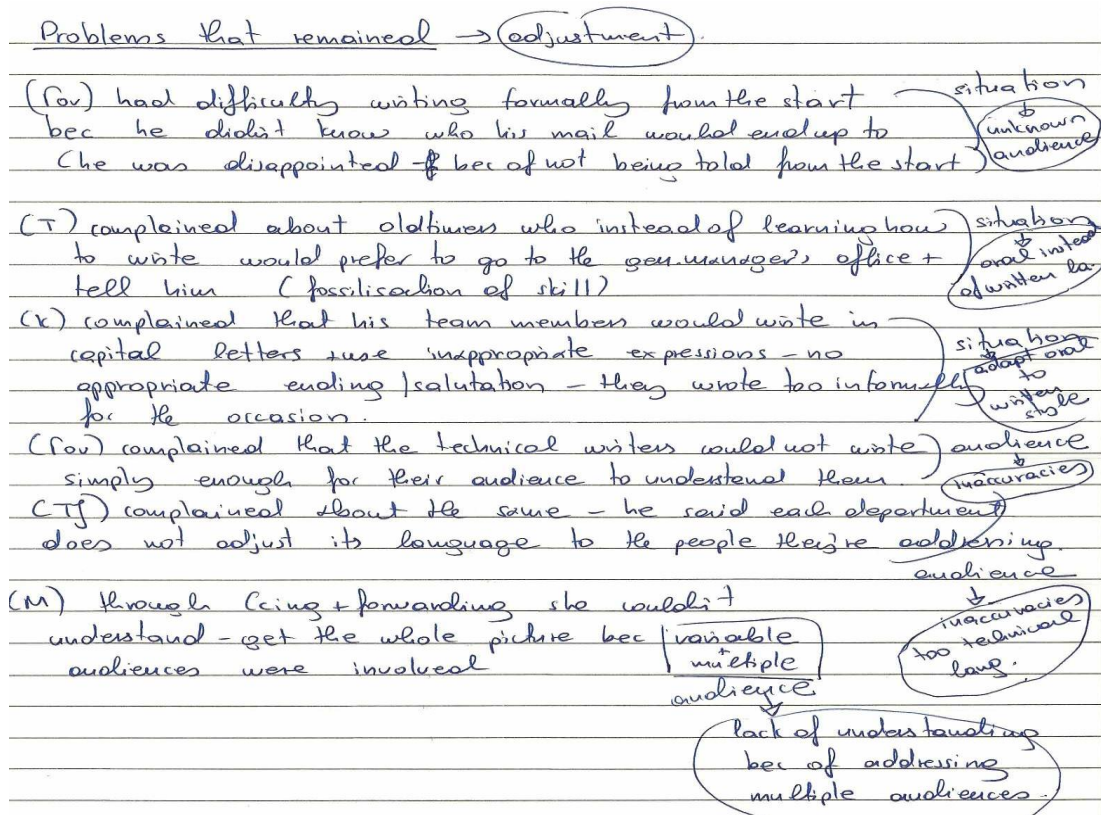


Figure 4. Grouping of codes into themes

As themes were developed, the codes were rearranged in a continuous process of reviewing and refining as well as rereading the entire data set to ensure the themes reflected the data as a whole. The final stages involved drawing up provisional diagrams and naming the themes. This is shown in figure 5.

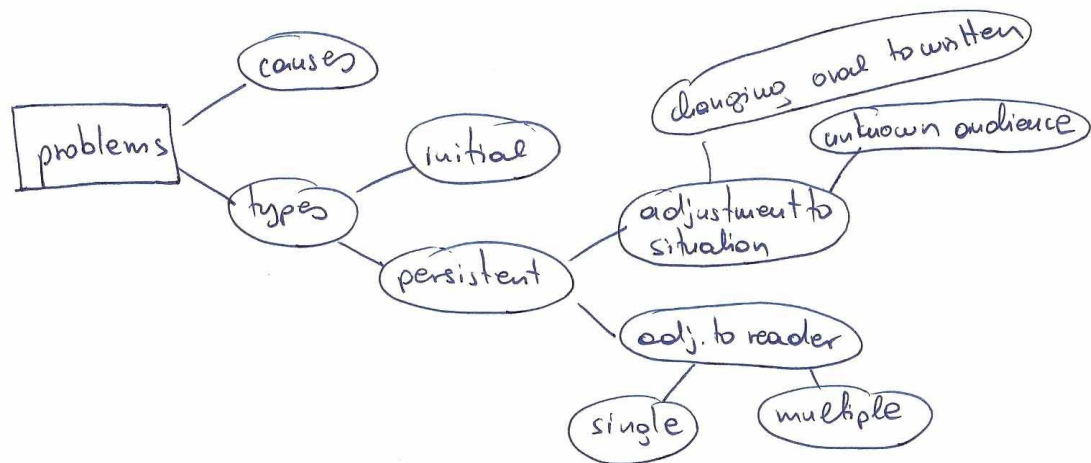


Figure 5. Provisional thematic map

The final stage involved drawing three thematic maps. The first was of the entire data set on company writing practices (figure 6). The other two focused on the writing difficulties encountered and ways of overcoming them (respectively figures 7 and 8), to analyse in more detail the participants' richer data sets. To facilitate the discussion of results in the research questions of Part A, the diagrams have been placed in the section where the respective issues are discussed (sections 4.0. and 4.5.). The discussion of the findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews was supplemented with excerpts from the interviewees' data sets. These were selected to represent the themes of the thematic analysis (see figure 7, section 4.0 and figures 10 and 11, section 4.4)

3.7.3. Written samples

Sampling of emails

From all eight companies investigated a variety of different documents were collected ranging from reports, general announcements, letters, and tender proposals to emails. The research questions on the functions of emails were addressed from a corpus of 300 emails collected from three companies with distinct differences in type, size, way of work, structure and culture. These were provided to the researcher from a number of key informants from each company, who were asked to provide emails and chains that were representative of their workplace communication that pertained to work-related matters. Despite the risk for subjective selection of samples, it was thought that the informants were better acquainted with their workplaces and better judges of which samples constituted work-related emails that illustrated "how work was normally done" in their

companies than the researcher. The samples therefore did not include emails of a social, personal or confidential nature. 15 emails were written in GR mostly from PharmaMed²⁴ and a few from Rysy. Infoquest! only used ENG in their written communication. From a total of 300 emails, three corpora were formed from each respective company. 120 emails were collected from PharmaMed written within a two-month period, 86 emails were collected from Rysy written within a three-week period, and 94 emails were collected from Infoquest! written within a four-week period. Below is their distribution in the three companies.

Table 6. *Distribution of Email Chains in the Three Companies.*

	Chains	Individual emails	Total
PharmaMed	28	30	58
Rysy	20	11	31
Infoquest!	16	5	21

The chains contained various numbers of emails ranging from two to 26.

The RQs on the enactment of formality were addressed in a corpus of six chains comprising a total of 32 emails. All were written in ENG with the exception of email 1 (in extract III) and extract VI, which were written in Greek and translated into ENG by me similarly to other researchers in their investigation of formality (Andren et al., 2010). The translation was used together with the original in the discourse-based interview to ensure the feedback on their linguistic choices would be the same in both languages.

Profile of companies

The particular three companies were chosen for two reasons: a) a sufficient amount of sample of emails was collected from all three, which, as indicated by all key informants, was typical daily written communication of their respective companies and accompanied by sufficient contextual information from the key informants. b) Focusing on these very

²⁴ All companies and participants have been anonymised and their names replaced with pseudonyms.

different workplaces as case studies would allow me to investigate differences and similarities in their use of email.

PharmaMed (no 3 in table C1 on company profiles, appendix C) was an import company employing approximately 20 people based in Athens with two branches in other cities in Greece. It traded daily with European countries and employed Greek and non-Greek staff. As the sole representative and distributor of a brand of pharmaceutical machinery, its main activities involved importing it from various European countries and selling it to a number of parties in the public and the private sector. Since the machinery was used in cases of diagnosis and treatment of serious terminal illnesses, the company had to be constantly updated from their suppliers on new software and on courses of corrective action once a problem appeared in the machinery. External electronic communication therefore involved at least weekly if not daily contact with their suppliers on matters of updates and for placing orders. At the same time a great deal of electronic internal communication took place between the offices in a three storey building for two main reasons: 1) electronic communication was convenient if one was to avoid walking up the stairs to the next floor 2) a single transaction (e.g., placing an order) normally required the instant collaboration, hence communication, of several departments. Written as well as oral communication was conducted mainly in ENG and some in GR. It was a hierarchically structured company organised in three main levels: senior management, junior management (department heads) and post holders. Therefore there was a need to account for one's actions and to keep everyone informed of updates and releases of new products. The need for the cooperation of employees at all levels and departments meant that procedures had to be adhered to and written communication was a good way of ensuring this. Compared to a MNC whose subsidiaries spread out in a number of countries, this appeared to be a small locally based company. However, since its existence depended on its Swiss suppliers as well as its Greek clients, it comprised a good example of the integration of the international/European workplace communication and the Greek, the global and the local.

By contrast, Rysy (No 1 in table C1. Company profiles, appendix C) was a small family business producing and selling food. It employed three white-collar office workers and three manual labourers who worked in the factory. The group of office employees consisted of two family members, also the shareholders, and an accountant. As an

import-export company, it traded daily with approximately 15 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. It sold its final product to big distributors and supermarket chains in Greece and other countries and bought its raw materials from an equally big number of countries outside Greece. This company was selected because its small workforce and size in combination with its extensive trading with other countries made it an interesting workplace communication environment for investigation. Company offices were located in one unified space on the first floor of a building adjacent to the production line. As all four employees shared offices in the same space, communication between them was in GR, mainly face-to-face and by phone when out of the office allowing no room for internal written communication. External communication was through a variety of means orally and in writing depending on the urgency of the situation, the stage of the transaction, and the preferred medium of the other party. Contact with clients and suppliers outside Greece was made primarily via email or social networks (Skype & MSN). Clients and suppliers in Greece were contacted by email or phone. Both GR and ENG were used in their communication depending on the language of the addressee. Working in that company involved frequent travel to countries abroad (e.g., China and India) as well as receiving visits from people abroad in view of potential cooperation. Given the small workforce and the blood relations between the employees, there was no hierarchical structure or clearly distinct roles and duties. Most, if not all, communication in ENG was conducted by two people and decisions were taken primarily by one, George. All three members of the family were involved in pretty much everything and had to adapt to everything new that came up.

Infoquest! (No 8 in table C1. Company profiles, appendix C) was the only MNC with subsidiaries. It operated one of the largest employment websites in the world through an online job search engine. Based in the US, it had subsidiaries and branches in all continents of the world. Its staff was constantly on the move communicating mainly through email, phone, and teleconferences. Although it had all possible levels of management, hierarchical status as well as clientele relations were kept informal to a great extent. Employees travelled to the countries they were responsible for, where they resided for a number of months and about once a year paid a visit to headquarters. The main informant was residing in Greece at the time of the study to oversee the business done in the company's newly formed branch. Given the extensive travel, electronic communication involved reporting, resolving enquiries and problems, setting meetings

and participating in exhibitions. In this company email was the primary means of communication.

Coding of emails

To address the RQs on the function of emails, a coding scheme had to be devised that would address the issues under investigation. In response to the RQ on the function of emails, samples were coded according to discursive function. To seek correlations between these and a number of factors, emails were also coded for company (PharmaMed, Rysy, and Infoquest!), single/multiple addressability, internal/external communication, status, and social distance. A frequency count revealed that the sample was fairly equally balanced in terms of its distribution in the three companies, internal-external communication and single-multiple addressees. Close to half of the emails were used in internal communication (122/300, 40.7%) and slightly more were used in external communication (178/300, 59.3%). Addressability was also similarly divided into single addressees (170/300, 56.7%) and multiple addressees (130/300, 43.3%).

Coding difficulties

Multiple addressability whether in the form of direct multiple addressees or in the form of CC caused a number of problems when coding for status and SD as different addressees can have different status and SD relationships to the sender.

Coding for status

Although the high number of emails that are addressed to multiple addressees poses a limitation on the size of the corpus that can be clearly categorised according to status, it was decided to keep the categories clear and work with the smaller corpus.

To keep the status categories clear, the following scheme was used:

- 1: one/multiple superiors,
- 2: one/multiple inferiors,
- 3: one/or multiple equals/near equals
- 4: (mixed) one /multiple inferiors and superiors

A frequency count of the distribution of the sample in the following categories showed that the majority of emails were distributed among equals and the rest were spread in upward, downward, and mixed communication.

Table 7. *Distribution of Emails According to Status*

Upward	16% (48)
Downward	12.7% (38)
Equals	45.3% (136)
Mixed	26% (78)

Coding for Social Distance

Although the scope of SD has meant different things to different researchers (see Spencer-Oatey, 1996 for an overview of interpretations), the component that participants reported as affecting their communication was frequency of contact and degree of familiarity. The following categories were used:

1. close colleague/s
2. distant colleague/s
3. mixture of distant and close colleagues

Given the variety of categorisations as well as interpretations of the different degrees of SD (e.g., Waldvogel, 2005), in the present study a close relationship is defined as one between colleagues who worked together and communicated frequently (at least a couple of times a week) whether in the same office or in another country. As reported by the participants, close colleagues would be those whose communication style and character employees feel they know and those they address using their first name, regardless of affect, liking or friendship. Similarly, distant colleagues were defined as colleagues employees rarely communicate with, people out of one's reporting line, or people employees do not know and are writing to for the first time. The mixed category of distant and close colleagues was formed to cater for the numerous instances of mixed multiple addresses in the present study. Decisions on these relationships were based on participants' reports in the discourse-based interviews as well as repeated instances of

personal communication where participants were asked about their degree of familiarity with their addressees. Although a great number of informants were contacted, the main informants in each company as well as company organisational charts provided additional help in deciding on both social distance and power relationships when coding for status. Cases where the relationship was unclear were excluded from the analysis. Although it was expected to be difficult to decide on clear power relations of communicators in external mail, the information provided by the informants was sufficient for these decisions to be safely made. As can be seen in Table 8, the frequency count revealed that most emails were addressed to people with whom the senders had a distant relationship:

Table 8. *Distribution of Emails According to SD*

Close	81 (27%)
Distant	164 (54.7%)
Mixed	55 (18.3%)

Coding for Function

In relation to their function, emails were coded in two ways: according to the type of function they served and according to the number of functions they served. According to the number of functions they served they were categorised into unifunctional (emails with only one function) and multifunctional (those with more than two functions). From the multifunctional emails, 133 served two functions and 34 more than two functions. 141 emails were unifunctional and 167 were multifunctional.

To be able to categorise the types of functions served, it was decided to separate the main function of each email and categorise it accordingly. Despite its limitations, speech act theory provided a useful framework for this categorisation. Speech act theory has been criticised on two grounds: it largely ignores the immediate context of the interaction in which the speech act is made i.e., it is not always possible to know the intentions of the writer nor is it possible to know what the perlocutionary effect of an email is on the receiver as the intention of the writer may differ from the way this intention may be perceived by the receiver. In cases where the functions were not easily discernible, the writers of the emails were contacted by phone and were asked about their

intentions in writing them. In cases where the writer could not be reached, the key informant and supplier of emails provided additional help with this. Looking at follow up emails sometimes assisted with this as they provided more contextual information about the exchange. Since it was impossible to know the perlocutionary effect of emails, it was decided to focus on the intentions of the writer i.e., the illocutionary point was perceived as the most important point of the utterance (Allan, 1998) in line with past studies of email function categorisation (Waldvogel, 2005).

Emails were thus categorised into five broad categories and further subcategorised into smaller more specific categories. The prime intention was to find a scheme that would primarily cater for the functions emerging from the samples along the lines of a bottom up approach. At the same time it should allow me to easily see both the general picture of all the functions used in the samples as a whole as well as take a more particular glimpse into the differences in functions between companies and possibly status differences. The complete categorisation with the distribution of the functions can be seen in figure 6.

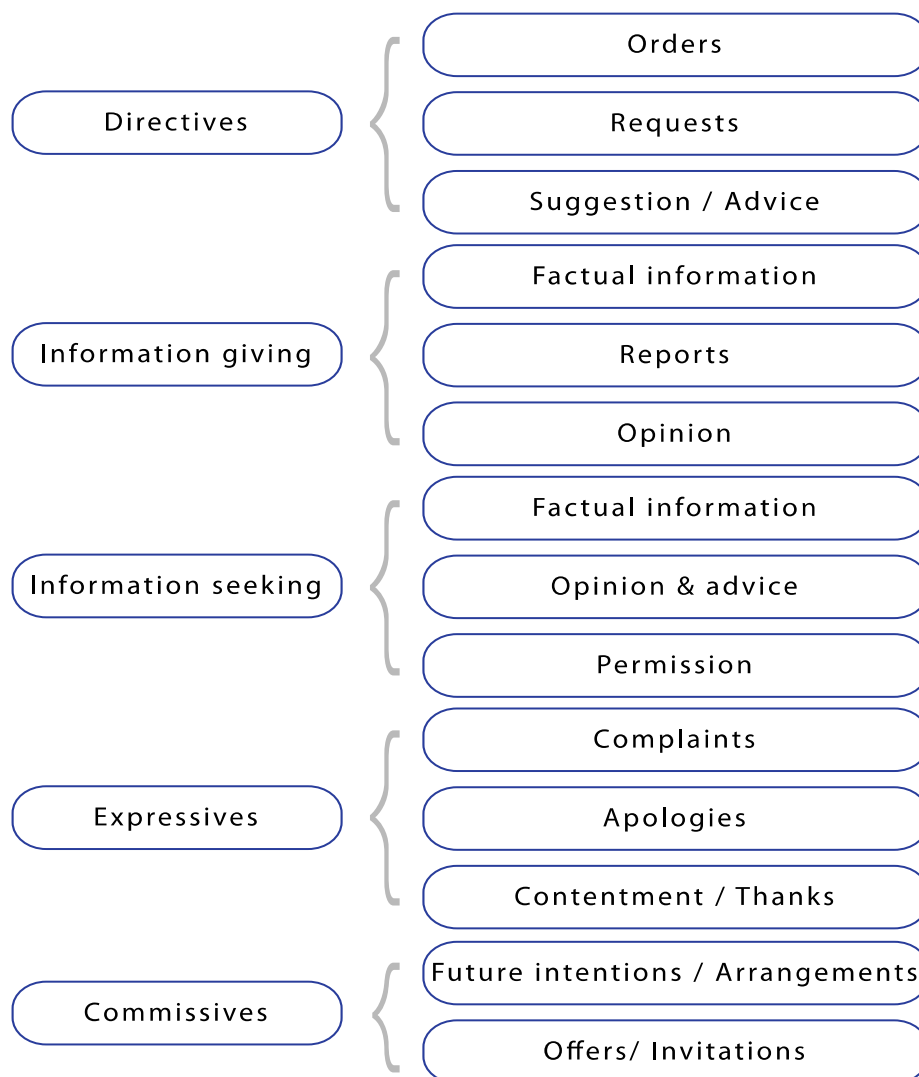


Figure 6. Categorisation of email functions

The above classification seems to be pretty much generally accepted and similar to that of past researchers of emails. Gains (1999) classified all his email functions into three types: informative, requests and directive. Sherblom (1988) similarly used information requests, information provisions and influence attempts among others. More recently Waldvogel (2005) has also included information giving, information requests and directives in her email functions.

In this study, directives was a broad category along the lines of Searle's (1975) category with the aim of 'getting someone to do something' and in Sherblom's terms 'influence attempts'. It included types such as orders, requests, and advice and suggestions but, unlike Searle's directives, it did not include information seeking questions or invitations.

Orders were mainly seen as allowing no option to the addressee but to comply, they were enforced upon addressees mainly by virtue of the legitimate power of the sender. They were therefore a clear indicator of high status. In this way, orders were distinguished from requests. The latter were given by people regardless of status and allowed the addressee the right to decline to meet it. Although requests have been claimed to be difficult to distinguish from orders on the grounds of need for contextual information, in this case information from discourse based interviews provided access to this kind of information thus allowing me to make the distinction. Also, although status differences are more clearly seen inside a company, such problems of categorisation did not come up in the present sample. In PharmaMed company hierarchy ranks were similar to their suppliers'. Infoquest!'s external communication was addressed to clients only. There were no ranks in Rysy.

The information-giving and information-seeking categories were formed by virtue of their prominence and importance in the sample as well as in past studies in electronic communication (Gains, 1999; Pagner & Soderberg, 2003; Sherblom, 1988; Waldvogel, 2005). The information-giving category was further divided into three subcategories of specific functions: a) Factual information included information about meeting arrangements, quotations, general announcements, updates, technical information about products etc. b) Reports were separated from the previous category as they served a different function, that of referring to past events for example daily reports on hospital visits, occasional reports on the market of a particular product, and weekly and monthly reports of site clicks²⁵. c) The third category included giving one's opinion on an issue, matters of personal judgment excluding advice/suggestions, which fell within the directives category.

Information-seeking included seeking three types of information: a) One was factual information like requests for quotes, availability, clarifications, shipping terms. b) Another subcategory was advice and opinions. There was no need to separate the two here as the emphasis was on the enquiry and the distinction between advice/opinion and factual information. c) The third specific function was asking for approval.

²⁵ Site clicks are a count of the number of times a person clicks on a particular site to determine how frequently it is visited.

Two more categories of functions emerged, expressives and commissives. The first were similar to Searle's expressives in the sense that they indicated the sender's psychological state or attitude to events. This category included complaints, apologies, contentment with a state of affairs, congratulations, and thanks. Due to the small number of occurrence of contentment, congratulations and thanks as main functions, it was decided to group them in the same category.

Finally the commissives in this study correspond to Searle's commissives in that they commit the sender to a future course of action. Unlike Searle's paradigm cases, however, this category did not include promises and threats as they are unlikely to appear in business correspondence. The primary characteristic of commissives here was commitment to future arrangements (e.g., promises) or intentions to future action. Offers correspond to Searle's offers and are placed under commissives but invitations, unlike Searle's categorisation (who places them under directives), they were placed under commissives by virtue of their benefit towards the receiver than the sender. Since both offers and invitations share a similar benefit towards the sender and were insignificant in number as main email functions, they were grouped together in their own subcategory of commissives. By virtue of committing the sender to a future course of action like future intentions, they too were placed under commissives. Like expressives, commissives were also small in number as main functions, but played a bigger role as part of the overall function of emails.

Problematic categories were cases of forwarding and reminders. In these cases the forwarding or reminding email was given the function of the email it forwarded or reminded unless otherwise indicated by the participants or understood by its context and the role and position of the parties involved. If, for example, an order from the head manager was sent to senior managers and then further forwarded to the members of their departments, the forwarding mail with or without text was considered an order. Since both senior and junior managers were breaking down orders to staff and they both had the legitimate right to do so, both emails were seen as orders. Similarly, if an email was a reminder of a request, it was considered a request. If it was a reminder of an information enquiry, it was considered as such.

Analysis of functions

Using SPSS version 15.0 with the module Exact Tests, non-parametric tests were carried out to analyse categorical variables. Similar to the analysis of the questionnaire, it was decided that calculation of frequencies was more appropriate for the analysis of categorical variables than means, medians and mode, so frequencies were calculated for all five types of email functions in the three companies. Also, correlations were sought between these functions as ordinal variables and two nominal variables, company and status, as defined above using the statistical chi-squared (or χ^2) test as a test for independence, and setting the level of statistical significance at 0.05.

3.7.4. Discourse based interviews

Rationale and design of discourse-based interviews

Given the gap in literature on the definition of formality, there appears to be a need for exploring further the way formality is perceived and enacted in discourse to better understand the underlying factors behind its use. It is argued here that having the participants talk about their own writing is useful in that it gives a more accurate and researcher-unbiased picture of a reality that is closer to the way it is perceived by the very people who experience it. The importance of such ‘first’ rather than ‘second order concepts’ (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011) has been highlighted by a number of researchers of workplace discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Odel et al., 1983; Sarangi, 2002). Admittedly no analysis is completely researcher-bias free. However, given the inherent practical restrictions of conducting, analysing and interpreting research, a mutual cooperation of researcher – participant in the research stages above can be very fruitful.

In this context, the intention here was to urge the informants to provide the necessary contextual information to more accurately understand the stylistic choices made in the production of the written documents. Given that style is claimed to operate on two levels, conscious and unconscious (Rice, 1997, p. 6), the assumption behind the use of discourse-based interviews is that they help elicit the informants’ tacit knowledge - that allows access to the contextual information necessary for our understanding of written discourse, an important limitation of other methodologies like corpus-based studies (Odell et al., 1983; Widdowson, 2000). It becomes obvious that adopting the insider’s lens rather than that of the “observer looking on” (Widdowson, 2000) can give access to

contextual information that is not present in the text. Admittedly basing the discourse analysis on either the information elicited from the participants or the discourse analyst's best guess can be criticised for being subjective. However, here although the analysis highlights the participants' perceptions, it is also based on the discourse analysis of the data and seen in light of evidence from past literature studies on formality. In agreement with other discourse analyses utilising 'second order' concepts, the interview process was as non-directive as possible and iterative helping the participant to activate his/her tacit knowledge (Harwood, 2006). "Research on verbal reports as data confirms that informants can report reliably on such socially learned information, which has been tacitly transformed into functional plans they apply when writing (Smith & Miller, 1978 cited in Odell et al., 1983, p.228).

Having said that, the multiple and alternating authorship and audiences of email chains pose a number of problems. Since accessing and interviewing all multiple authors is virtually impossible, it was decided to seek interviews from participants who were directly involved as main writers or/and readers of the sample email chains thus acting as main informants. Seven participants volunteered to act as informants in discourse-based interviews, where they commented on the formality of the emails they were directly involved in either as writers or readers: Maria, Chris, and Thomas from PharmaMed, George from Rysy, and Bill, Victoria, and Luis from Infoquest!. The informants were asked to a) give their own perceptions of what constitutes formality, b) to indicate and explain instances of formal and informal language in their writing and c) to comment on the formality and appropriacy of the overall formality of the emails and of particular linguistic items.

Analysis of discourse-based interviews

The interviews were recorded and transcribed²⁶. In the analysis, the informants' views were initially summarised into notes and these were examined for similarities and differences allowing for the compilation of a comprehensive list of themes on the definition of formality and appropriacy rather than a list of points of convergence. The idea behind it is that all participants' perceptions on what formality is and what is considered appropriate are equally important given that they are consistent with their

²⁶ For transcription conventions see appendix H.

linguistic choices in their writing. As Odell et al. (1985) rightly remark about addressing isolated alternatives (i.e., isolated linguistic choices and perceptions as opposed to common perceptions),

although an isolated feature (e.g., form of address or elaboration) may seem insignificant, it is a sensitive indicator of a writer's complex understanding of the rhetorical context and ways for them to achieve their purpose within that context (p. 231).

Upon writing, each participant's views were expanded in detail and supplemented with quotes from their interview data sets. The quotes included in the text were selected to represent the themes that emerged in relation to the situational and linguistic characteristics of formality (see figure 14, and tables 12 and 13). The fact that certain interviewees were more engaged in the study than others and provided richer information is reflected in their greater number of quotes. The thematic map that emerged in the final stage of the analysis of these interviews is shown in the introduction to chapter 5 on the analysis of emails.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the preparatory stage of the thesis. In the first two chapters, the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks of the research were discussed. The goal of the present chapter has been to discuss the methodology used in this study. A mixed method approach was adopted to better address the multifaceted aspects of workplace written communication. The aim has been to capture general features of workplace writing and to deeply explore the most frequent and important workplace genre, the email. The procedure and the tools were described in detail, and the role of the researcher and ethical considerations were addressed. The thesis will now move to the analysis and discussion of the data. This will take place in two parts. Part A of the findings will be discussed in chapter 4 and part B will be discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 4. Analysis and discussion of findings

Part A: Self-reported data

4.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses perceptions about general writing practices. First it looks at the time spent writing on the job and the importance ascribed to knowing how to write. Then it reports on inter- and intra-company variation in frequency and importance of particular written documents and collaboration. It closes with an investigation of the writing problems encountered and the ways the employees deal with them. This chapter draws on the quantitative data from the questionnaire analysis and the qualitative data from the analysis of semi-structured interviews, the thematic representation of which is seen in figure 7 below.

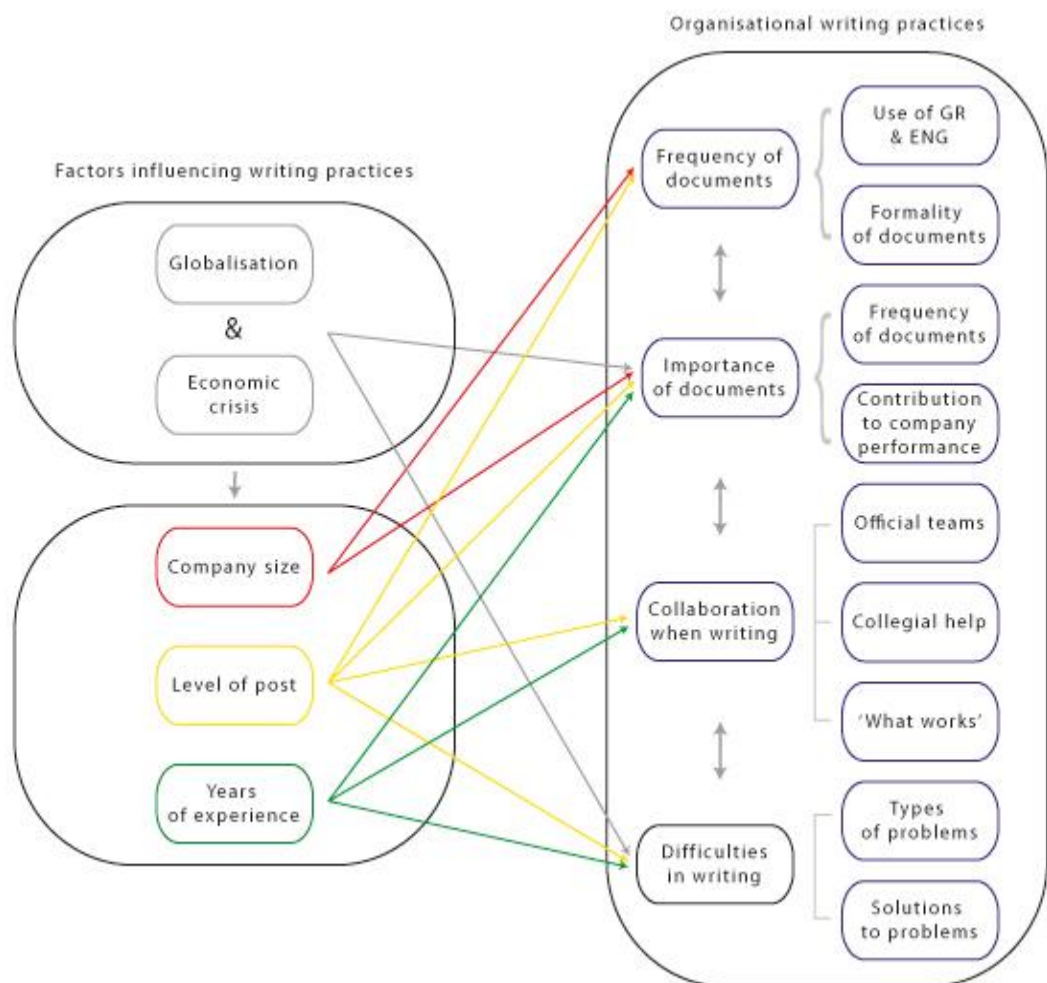


Figure 7. Thematic analysis of writing practices

4.1. Frequency of written documents

RQ1A. How frequently the participants produce the written documents

As the quantitative analysis shows, the documents were written in two languages, English (ENG) and Greek (GR). In agreement with other studies on email use (Angouri, 2007; Waldvogel, 2005) emails appear as by far the most frequent document, which in both languages were written mostly on a daily (67.9% in GR & 39.7% in ENG) and weekly basis (19.2% in GR and 26.9% in ENG).

The next most frequent documents, written weekly in both languages, were letters and faxes. 20% wrote letters in GR and 25% in ENG. 29.9% wrote faxes in GR and 29.9% in ENG. Memos were primarily written on a weekly (and monthly) basis (the ones in GR being more frequent). Other studies similarly report letters, memos and faxes as most frequently produced documents (Cox, 1976; Flatley, 1982). The rest of the documents, progress, financial, and employee performance reports and scripts for oral presentations were written mostly on a monthly basis and safety documents, in-house journals, brochures/ads, minutes, audits and agendas of meetings were the least frequent types of documents produced on a yearly basis. Other studies similarly point to reports and instructions as produced very often but less frequently than letters and memos and to various publications as rarely written documents (Cox, 1976; Storms, 1983)²⁷. For more details on the exact frequency in which all the documents were written in both languages see table D1 (appendix D).

According to the analysis, an additional finding emerges regarding the difference between the documents written in ENG and in GR. It appears that ENG was used more in the documents that were written less often, only a couple of times a month and a year, and GR was used more in those written more often, primarily several times a day or a week. In particular, more emails, SMS messages (SMSs), faxes, and memos were written in GR than ENG several times a day. Likewise more letters, various types of reports, audits, safety documents, ads, and journals were written in ENG than GR a couple of times a month. This can be clearly seen in the two bar charts below (see figure 8) that

²⁷ For a review of these studies see Anderson (1985).

serve to compare the daily and yearly use of documents in the two languages²⁸. This is further supported by additional data from the questionnaire analysis illustrating that writing in GR concentrated in daily use (68%) whereas ENG was used for a much wider range of frequencies i.e., in documents written weekly, monthly or yearly (for additional information see table D1 in appendix D).

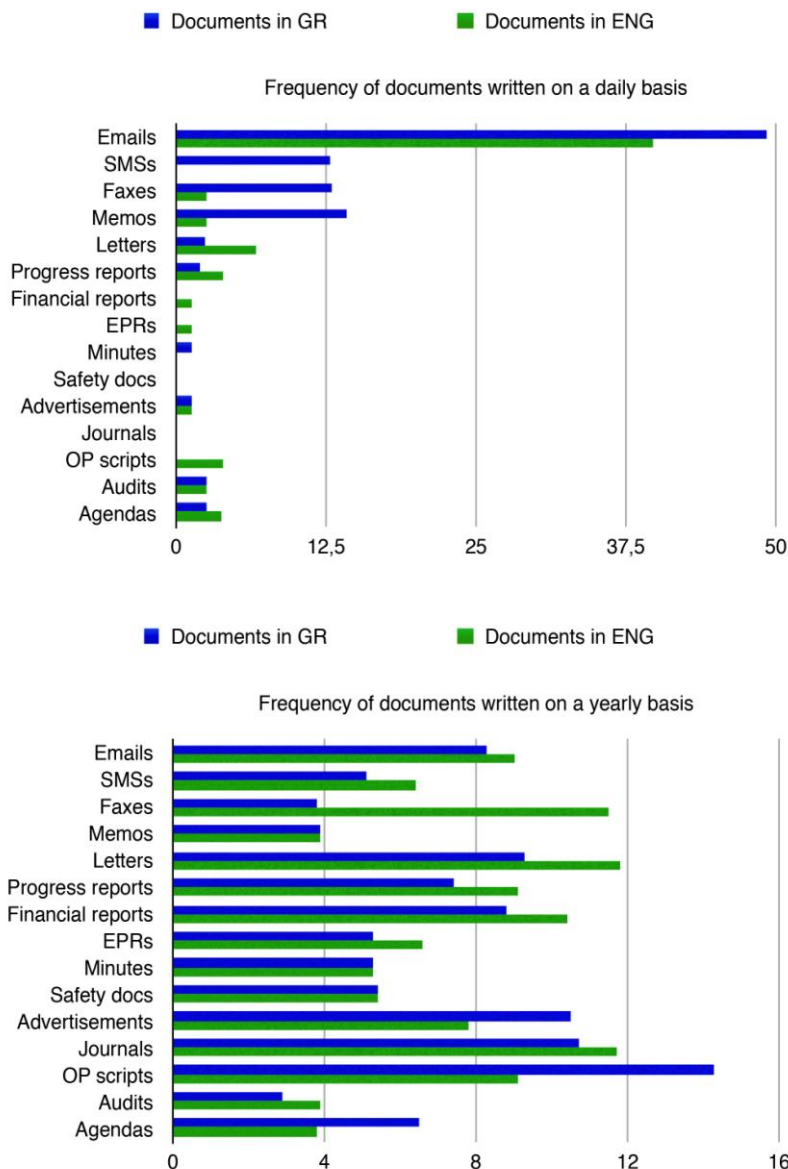


Figure 8. Frequency of documents written in ENG and GR on a daily and a yearly basis²⁹.

²⁸ The daily and yearly categories (rather than the weekly and monthly categories) were used to indicate more visibly the differences in frequency of documents and the languages they were written in.

²⁹ Documents written on a daily basis were documents that were written a couple of times a day (very frequently) whereas those written on a yearly basis were produced less frequently only a couple of times a year.

A possible explanation is that documents written on a daily basis tended to be more informal, concerned mostly operational issues, and were written in GR. Documents written less frequently (on a monthly and yearly basis) tended to be more formal, concerned more complex issues, and were written in ENG. Admittedly, formality is perceived differently in different organisational contexts. As explained earlier (section 1.4. on definition of formality), in this study a formal document was perceived by the participants as one that is officially representative of the company in external communication, is written and disseminated internally laterally and vertically according to the company's communication procedures, and tends to be an accountable record of action. An informal document was seen as not official, usually of a more ephemeral and personal nature and on operational issues and more characteristic of backstage than front stage communication (for a discussion of the term see section 2.2.2). For example, as table D1 shows, emails (considered informal here) and SMSs were written more frequently in GR (respectively 49.2 % and 12.9% produced them daily) than in ENG (respectively 39.7% and 0% produced them daily). Similarly faxes were written more often in GR (29.9% produced them weekly) than ENG (10.3% produced them weekly). The same applies to most of the remaining frequencies (yearly and never categories) in which these documents were written in.

Along the same lines, documents perceived as formal here, such as reports, are produced more frequently in ENG. For example, progress reports written on a monthly basis are produced by 33.8% in ENG and by 24.1% in GR. Similarly, 6.6% of letters written daily are in ENG and 2.4% are in GR. Even audits, which are written by particular employees (i.e., only by accountants and financial controllers), are written by 3.9% weekly in ENG and by 2.9% in GR. ENG appears to be used much more extensively in documents that have acquired an official status (for a definition see section 1.3.1, p. 40) i.e., documents which are or may be later addressed to senior managerial levels and to headquarters and external clients and suppliers outside Greece.

Interview reports provide further support to the links between document frequency, formality and the choice of ENG and GR (see 'Use of GR & ENG' and 'Formality of documents' themes in figure 7).

(1)

we usually use Greek for everyday stuff, where are we gonna meet, what time, what did you do with this and that (?) [...] it's pretty simple and in Greek [...] other documents like [...] that are written once or four times a month or a year [...] are in English [...] to your senior manager abroad for example [...] now that is formal [...] very carefully prepared and (laughs) no mistakes of course (Jonathan)

As the quote illustrates, everyday communication tended to be on operational and fairly simple issues and conducted in GR as the local language. Literature further supports the use of the local language in informal documents (Kingsley, 2009) and for informal use either orally or in writing among the locals especially when they all share a common language (Ailon-Souday & Kunda, 2003; Angouri & Miglbauer, 2010; Gunnarsson, 2006; Vandermeeren, 1999). For example, Italian is used in event organisation among Italian organisers (Poncini, 2002), Croatian (Miglbauer, 2010) among Croatians in a MNC and Spanish in an Argentinian subsidiary (Gimenez, 2002). Explanations point to the need to ease communication and to establish rapport and solidarity among a group of the same language and culture.

In contrast, documents that officially indicated accountability to senior management levels stationed in countries outside Greece through the CCing function were written in English. Nickerson (2000) similarly reports such use of ENG in Dutch subsidiaries when reporting to head office in England and the use of Dutch to communicate among themselves. Similarly a number of studies reveal the use of various Linguae Francae in MNCs (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, 1999; Kingsley, 2009; Mettewie and Van Mensel, 2009). Admittedly the formality of various documents may expectedly vary in different organisational contexts (Gimenez, 2002). For example, despite its extensive trade with non-Greek countries, Rysy, the small Greek family business, did not have its headquarters or upper management abroad and had no need to report formally in English. Similarly, in PharmaMed, a business of 20 employees with central offices in Greece, reports were written in GR as they were addressed to Greek senior managers. Also, some documents have potential for both formal and informal uses (e.g., emails and reports).

(2)

we have two kinds of reporting here the internal and external one some of the reports we have to write in both languages [...] some only in English especially by senior managers to central offices (abroad) more formal stuff [...] and few like how yesterday's visit to place X went [...] more informal ones in Greek (Paris)

(3)

emails here are written in both languages of course depending on who they go to or who they might end up to (George)

As the quotes show, the organisational context plays an important role in the frequency, formality, and type of language used in the written documents. This is further supported from insights from studies illustrating the impact of the organisation's structure (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994) and formal and informal organising processes (Morand, 1995) on its communication practices as well as discussions on differences between small and large businesses (Baird et al., 1994; Ingram, n.d.; Matley, 1999; White paper, 2012). However, despite the variation in the different organisational contexts, the data in the study as well as other studies (Gunnarsson, 2006; Vollsted, 2001) show that the local language is restricted to use in more informal situations among the locals and ENG is used more frequently for a wider variety of purposes in MNCs; when addressing senior management abroad and clients and suppliers outside Greece and when being unsure of who the chain will end up to.

In this context, two observations are made with regard to the type of language used and the frequency of documents: a) most documents in the participant MNCs tend to be written in ENG and as such can provide valuable insights into the way communication practices vary across and within these organisations. b) Frequency of documents appears to be related to the formality of the documents and the type of language used. Although this is an important finding, inter and intra company variation in frequency of documents merits further exploration. In this light the following section examines the relation between frequency of documents written in ENG and a number of factors perceived by participants as affecting communication practices.

RQ1B. How frequently the participants write in ENG according to company size and their level of post

The chi-squared test showed that there is a statistically significant relation between a) frequency of a number of documents written in ENG and b) size of companies (large-small) as well as level of post (see table 9).

Table 9. *Frequency of Documents in ENG in Relation to Company Size and Level of Post*

	Company size		Level of post	
	Large	Small	Managers	Post holders
Letters	32.7%	11.1%		
	<i>weekly</i>	<i>weekly</i>	-	-
Memos	58.3%	85.7%		
	<i>never</i>	<i>never</i>	-	-
Progress reports	38.8%	64.3%		
	<i>never</i>	<i>never</i>	-	-
Employee performance reports	35.4%	7.1%		
	<i>monthly</i>	<i>monthly</i>	-	-
Financial reports	32.7%	14.3%	34.9%	14.7%
	<i>monthly</i>	<i>monthly</i>	<i>monthly</i>	<i>monthly</i>
PO scripts	44.9%	3.6%		
	<i>monthly</i>	<i>monthly</i>	-	-

Note. The frequency noted under each percentage (e.g., weekly, monthly) is the one where the correlation is strongest based on their adjusted residual figure³⁰. Empty boxes indicate lack of statistically significant correlations.

In particular, large companies tended to write letters ($\chi^2 = 8.019$, $df=4$, $p=0.048$, $V=0.325$), internal memos ($\chi^2 = 10.324$, $df=4$, $p=0.022$, $V=0.369$), reports on progress of

³⁰ The correlation is strongest if the adjusted residual figure is equal or larger than 2.

work ($\chi^2 = 9.703$, $df=4$, $p=0.039$, $V=0.355$), on employee performance ($\chi^2 = 9.776$, $df=4$, $p=0.019$, $V=0.359$), financial statements ($\chi^2 = 10.018$, $df=4$, $p=0.023$, $V=0.361$), and oral presentation scripts ($\chi^2 = 21.798$, $df=4$, $p=0.000$, $V=0.532$) more often than small companies. Linguistic studies appear to show a gap in relation to a systematic investigation of differences in writing practices and products according to size of company. In the few studies in which it emerges, it is discussed or implied alongside other aspects of the organisations that are more prominent such as their global-local orientation, their type of activities, and organisational structure. For example, Vandermeeren (1999) attributes the differences in the use of local and global languages between large and smaller companies to the structure and the exports orientation of each trade company. Gimenez (2002) discusses the different use of email and faxes in the European headquarters of a large organisation and its smaller Argentinian local subsidiary. Gunnarsson (1997) finds that company hierarchical structure affects choice of documents with implications that companies with different hierarchical structures might lead to different choice of documents.

More insights on the differences in the communications of small and large businesses can be gained from management studies and internet sources discussing the differences between these types of organisations. According to these studies, differences in communication appear to emanate from differences in the amount of resources, geographical expansion of company, hierarchical structures, tendency towards flexibility or formalisation, and objectives. Lack of resources restrict smaller businesses using an informal approach toward management development, trading with other organisations, and communications. They are primarily driven by practical outcomes of survival and customer satisfaction rather than company expansion and career development (Gray & Mabey, 2005). In this context, communication takes a different role in small and large businesses. Large businesses can more easily meet the multilingual and technological demands of the international competition by standardising language usage across the firm through written policies (Kingsley, 2009) and employing communication specialists (Mackinnon, 1993). By contrast, smaller businesses, which can no longer avoid global trade, have to rely on their limited staff's technological and linguistic competence to carry out their transactions mainly through electronic communication (Incelli, 2013). Whereas large businesses adopt more formalised lines of communication according to certain posts or layers of management, communication in small businesses is more

direct, face-to-face primarily taking place by phone or email (Ingram, n.d.). Decisions on which documents to use, which language to use, and appropriacy of writing style are highly centralised and individualised especially in the micro owner-managed businesses when they are subject to written policies and collective bodies in large MNCs. Further to this, the multiple layers of management in large MNCs results in the need for more accountability and a more complex reporting structure where line managers account to higher levels of management about themselves as well as about employees in lower levels. Lacking such vertical structures, small businesses similarly lack the need for accountability and largely centralise and informalise their duties.

In this light, in the present data it is expected to see progress and employee performance reports and financial statements being produced more frequently in large than in small companies. Reporting on the progress of a project in a one-man small family business or assessing an employee's performance in a small-medium size company is quite possibly done orally, unofficially or informally face-to-face or on the telephone. Such differences become prominent in interview reports as the following quotes illustrate:

(4)

we don't write any reports here but for the annual audit [...] who's going to report to who here (?) (laughs) we just call each other on the phone if one of us is out of the office or just tell him he's right there at that desk (George)

(5)

when the company was larger [...] in the past year we did some reporting in writing [...] it was standard procedure now we don't anymore [...] there is no reason to keep doing that [...] we've become so much fewer (Eric)

Apart from reports other documents are also differently used in large and small companies. Letters, as official documents sent by post or electronic attachment, and oral presentation scripts, as a preparatory stage of formal public speaking activity, are expectedly produced more frequently in large companies. In a similar vein, internal memos as official notifications used in internal correspondence, are never used by the majority of the employees in small companies (85%) when they are used by about half of the employees in larger companies. The use of more letters, reports, memos and OP

scripts in large organisations, therefore, appears to reflect their tendency toward more officialness, standardisation and formalisation of communication practices and bureaucracy (Ingram, n.d; Vitez, n.d.). By contrast, smaller businesses may restrict formal genres to their external communication (e.g., letters), and communicate internally through written genres that lend themselves to informal use (e.g., email) or oral genres (e.g., telephone or face to face conversations). This in turn may reflect their widely reported tendency toward informality, flexibility –their major competitive advantage-, their need for adaptability to the proximity of physical working spaces, and the absence of management layers. The literature on small businesses also point to the “informality inherent in their size” to the point of needing to develop distinct modes of inquiry that cater for informal business processes (Berranger et al., 2001, p. 199).

Insights from genre theory (also see section 1.1.4) are also fruitful in explaining the different writing practices/documents of large and small organisations as constellations of organisations can also form CofPs with their own genres. These genres are recognised and used by their members (Bhatia, 2004; Wenger, 1998) and respond to rhetorical exigencies in a “mutual construing of objects, events, and purposes that not only links them but makes them what they are: an objectified social need” (Miller, 1994, p. 30) and “what is perceived as socially or collectively as sameness in situations” (Dias et al., 1999, p. 118). The need for more officialness, accountability, and simultaneous reach of a geographically dispersed readership of large organisations might lead to a group of genres more typical of large organisations. Similarly the need for more flexibility might explain the more informal genres of smaller companies. Having said that, although the findings here seem to suggest the existence of different groups of genres in large and small organisations, more research is needed to substantiate this, which falls outside the scope of the thesis.

Apart from size, the χ^2 test also showed a statistically significant relation between level of post (managers-post holders) and the frequency of certain types of documents when written in English i.e., as table 9 shows, managers appeared to write financial reports more often than post holders ($\chi^2 = 9.669$, $df=4$, $p=0.026$, $V=0.354$). The above data show that managers appear to be more accountable for the progression of financial matters (than their own performance) than post holders possibly indicating different official writing tasks assigned to employees at different hierarchical levels. Written evaluation of

finances along with future projections is a highly formal document likely to fall within the official duties of managers, who act as parties responsible for a particular product line/s, department/s, or area/s. Financial reports, which in this data have been seen to lie in the official duties of managers (Financial Controllers are considered as belonging to this group), are a case in point as they tend to comprise a compilation of smaller reports on the company's different aspects of performance (based on variable/multiple indexes), contributions of various members (e.g., financial controller/s, accountants, department managers etc.), a final evaluation of the above, and future projections in a coherent whole addressed to a particular audience specialised in evaluating it (e.g., board of directors, higher levels of management and shareholders). These conclusions are corroborated by interview reports as shown in the following quote:

(6)

we don't all write the same things of course [...] I as a department manager am accountable for the people [...] actually all the people [...] in my department and the finances of my department [...] those in lower positions do not [...] cannot deal with departmental financial reports although they should be able to report on how they did one particular day [...] we all have different duties ultimately we write different things (Paul)

The quote illustrates that different level employees are assigned different types of documents. It also implies that those in higher posts have more responsibilities than those in lower posts. By consequence higher post holders may be involved in more demanding writing tasks such as the compilation of a financial report including future projections than lower post holders. As reports are considered official documents and are addressed and forwarded to higher post holders who are located in company headquarters or branches outside Greece or do not speak Greek, they tend to be written in English.

Similar differences in the types of documents produced according to level of post have also been reported in literature. Gunnarsson (1997) reported people in high posts writing more complex documents (e.g., reports, plans, pronouncements), those in middle posts writing simpler documents like letters, memos, newsletters, and balance sheets and low post holders writing more standardised documents like minutes and lists. In her data,

apart from complexity, length, content and addressees of documents also differed according to level of post. Angouri (2007) and Angouri & Harwood (2008) reported similar findings; line managers had to produce briefing notes and internal memos more frequently than post holders and the opposite was found to be true for some other documents (e.g., safety documents and minutes for meetings). Although complexity and length seemed to be a main factor for the allocation of writing to the different levels of post, in the present study differences in the types of documents assigned appear to be attributed primarily to the responsibilities and accountability associated with levels of post. Potentially this might also link these differences to complexity of documents that require the cooperation of a number of employees in their production. This, however, needs further investigation to be more strongly supported.

It is worth adding here, despite the inter- and intra-company variation in the above documents, no variation emerged with regard to the use of emails. As shown in table D1 (appendix D), emails appeared to be used extensively by all organisations investigated despite their differences in size and profile and by all participants in all hierarchical levels for a variety of purposes and audiences. The daily use of emails as shown in the results illustrates the high frequency of emails in both languages and further supports the widely reported use of email as the most common means of communicating in the workplace (e.g., Angouri, 2007; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996; Waldvogel, 2005). It follows that in the present study emails are shown to be used for both official and unofficial use, daily administrative errands and arrangements as well as issues that have a more direct impact on company performance, as will be discussed in the functions emails serve in Part B. The wide variability in the use they are put into can be seen in their high frequency of use in both English and the local language in contrast to the other documents, most of which seem to be written primarily in English. Hence emails become the focus of the second part of the thesis. Further discussion on the different documents used in the companies under investigation requires an investigation into the importance ascribed to them by the participants, the issue raised in the following section.

4.2. Importance of written documents

RQ2. How the importance ascribed to the written documents differs according to company size, the employees' years of experience, and level of post.

As documents acquire different importance according to the organisational context in which they are produced, it was decided to look for potential differences across and within companies. According to the analysis, with the exception of emails, visible differences emerged in the importance of a number of documents according to company size, employees' experience and hierarchical level. It is worth noting email was perceived as by far the most important document (100%) in addition to being the most frequent (as seen in section 4.1.). Hence their choice for the second part of the thesis.

In relation to company size, the statistical chi-squared test showed that a number of documents were perceived as more important in the large companies than in the small ones of the sample. In particular, it showed that more employees in big companies considered letters ($\chi^2 = 7.537$, $df=3$, $p=0.057$, $V=0.313$), internal memos ($\chi^2 = 8.412$, $df=3$, $p=0.035$, $V=0.328$), progress reports ($\chi^2 = 6.803$, $df=2$, $p=0.034$, $V=0.295$) and employee performance reports ($\chi^2 = 13.410$, $df=3$, $p=0.003$, $V=0.415$) important than in small companies (see table 10). A possible explanation lies in the greater need for official documents and adherence to procedures and their perceived contribution to the performance of the organisation in large companies. Large companies can be seen to place importance on official internal documents like memos and progress and employee performance reports and external documents like letters. Although memos may differ in degree of formality among organisations (Angouri, 2007), the notification of multiple parties in writing is a more formalised procedure than telling people in the corridor or on the phone. Equally expected appear to be the lack of importance placed on reports by employees in small companies, where despite the importance of evaluation, it is not done in the form of a written document. A comparison between the most frequent and important documents in large and small companies in tables 9 and 10 reveals a similar general trend; letters, memos, progress and employee performance reports are both more frequent and more important in large companies than they are in small ones.

Table 10. *Perceived Importance of Types of Documents in Relation to Company Size, Years of Experience, and Level of Post.*

	Company size		Years of experience		Level of post	
	Large	Small	Old-timers	Newcomers	Managers	Post Holders
Letters	44.9%	17.9%				
	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	-	-	-	-
Memos	.0%	10.7%	39.6%	8%		
	<i>not important</i>	<i>not important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	-	-
Progress reports	8%	28.6%	60.4%	16%		
	<i>a little important</i>	<i>a little important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	-	-
Employee performance reports	58%	25%				
	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	-	-	-	-
Financial reports			71%	20%	69.8%	37.1%
	-	-	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>
Safety documents					34.9%	17.1%
	-	-	-	-	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>
Faxes			30.8%	4%		
	-	-	<i>extremely important</i>	<i>extremely important</i>	-	-

Note. The degree of importance noted (e.g., extremely important, not important) is the one where the correlation is strongest based on their adjusted residual figure. Empty boxes indicate lack of statistically significant correlations.

A statistically significant relation was also shown between level of post and the importance ascribed to two types of documents. In particular, managers considered financial reports ($\chi^2 = 9.101$, $df=2$, $p=0.011$, $V=0.342$) and safety documents ($\chi^2 = 10.501$, $df=3$, $p=0.015$, $V=0.367$) more important than post holders. A possible

explanation lies in the different writing duties assigned to employees at different hierarchical levels, which was also discussed in relation to frequency of documents in the same section. In particular, financial reports may be considered important by more managers because they appear to fall within the official duties of managers to compose them. Safety documents were also reported to fall within the overall responsibilities of managers although they were not composed by them. This is further corroborated in interview reports.

(7)

diagnostic equipment simply has to be safe [...] for this the accountable parties are us (department managers) (Maria)

(8)

you can't deal with the production of food and disregard safety documents [...] especially if you are a manager (Simon)

Although safety documents may not carry equal importance in all areas of business, they appear to be very important in the majority of the participant companies, which were involved in the area of pharmaceuticals and food (for company profiles see table C1, appendix C) and within the duties of managers. In short, as the analysis shows, employees at different hierarchical levels place different importance to documents according to the official duties and responsibilities assigned to them. Similarly discussed elsewhere is the way the official duties of different hierarchical levels are reflected in the employees' different perceptions of organisational communication (Mahili, 2014). More insights from the literature also illustrate differences in importance of documents according to hierarchical level but not in relation to official duties. For example, as seen in section 1.1.3., employees at different levels of post were assigned documents of different importance and complexity (Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Beaufort, 2000; Gunnarsson, 1997). Claims were also made that people at higher levels attribute more importance to writing than those in lower posts (Anderson, 1985; Flatley, 1983). In this context, the present study showed that importance of documents varied according to employees' level of post primarily because of the different official writing duties of employees at different hierarchical levels.

The third difference in importance of documents relates to the employees' years of experience. In particular, it was shown that old-timers considered faxes ($\chi^2 = 8.085$, $df=3$, $p=0.042$, $V=0.324$), memos ($\chi^2 = 10.956$, $df=3$, $p=0.008$, $V=0.375$), progress reports ($\chi^2 = 15.604$, $df=2$, $p=0.001$, $V=0.447$), and financial reports ($\chi^2 = 19.222$, $df=2$, $p=0.000$, $V=0.496$) more important than newcomers. A possible explanation with regard to the divergence of views may lie in the different degree of awareness of writing practices and of their direct and indirect consequences for company performance between newcomers and old-timers. Coming from different workplace environments, newcomers may have different perceptions of how important and for what reason the various documents are in the company they are currently employed. The documents or genres involved in the closure of a trading deal, for example, may differ from one company to another in type, formality, complexity, and importance and as such be the cause for divergence of perceptions between newcomers and old-timers.

Added to this, the analysis also shows that old-timers tend to place equally high importance to all types of documents when newcomers are more restricted in the documents they consider more important. This can be seen when comparing the importance placed upon the range (rather than the type) of documents by old-timers with that placed by newcomers (see table F1, appendix F). Although this finding may not be as important as those that emerged from statistical correlations, it further supports the claim that old-timers, probably by virtue of their longer experience in the company, attach importance to a different range of documents than newcomers. Support from the literature is scarce here; although the importance ascribed to writing has been reported to vary between employees in different strata (Beaufort, 2000; Faigley, 1982; Gunnarsson, 1997), it has not been reported to vary between employees with different years of experience. Implications lead to a possible difference in the Greek setting. Interview reports provide additional support and further elucidation:

(9)

everybody who's been here a few years knows that all documents are important how else can you survive the competition (?) [...] (laughs) even against each other [...] and even worse the economic crisis (?) (Jim)

(10)

you need to know how to write period [...] an old person you know with experience should know that [...] the more things you can do, write, say, the better your chances are to be promoted [...] or to keep your job if things get tough [...] (Paris)

As the quotes illustrate, part of what more experienced employees should have learnt is the importance of multiple competences, including writing skills for their future development. Although the significance of multiple competences is a well-known perception, it becomes especially pronounced in the Greek corporate setting in light of the fierce competition and the pressures of the economic crisis. Admittedly competition can have numerous positive effects on business. However, it is perceived here as the harsh reality employees should be able to face in order to secure or to advance their employment in the corporate sector.

Although this perception is expected to apply to newcomers and old-timers alike, it appears to become more visible in the old-timers' reports (all old-timers interviewed reported feeling this way). It is possible that by virtue of their longer experience, old-timers are expected to have realised more fully the significance of being able to survive the competition in the corporate world. It is also possible that these feelings are particularly visible in employees who have 'secured' their company posts or acquired positions of power and are in danger of losing them. These explanations point to a view of workplace as fraught with power imbalances and conflicts (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999) and contrasts with the often allegedly smoothly working team-based model of work that numerous companies claim to adopt. In this context, it appears that the more skills and qualifications employees have including writing skills, the better they can help their company compete against other companies or even themselves compete against other employees.

Competition becomes even harsher in periods of economic crisis (see theme of 'economic crisis', figure 7). As discussed in section 0.4. on the impact of the economic crisis in the Greek setting, this becomes especially relevant as Greece was more strongly affected by the crisis than other European countries. The danger of company downsizing and potential redundancies caused employees to have intense feelings of insecurity and

the need to have more competences (e.g., knowledge of multiple languages, writing different types of documents) to be able to perform better in different contexts (WSI report, 2010). In this light, the employees' skills appear to be 'commodified' (Heller, 2010) to enable employees to stand better chances at securing their employment. Despite the criticism the commodification view of employees has received (Gee et al., 1996), it can help account for the insecurity employees face in times of crisis and becomes especially relevant in the case of Greece. In the present interview data the potential layoffs and harsh competition appear to be the main reasons for the acquisition of writing skills and the importance placed upon them.

Overall, the importance ascribed to documents appeared to be related to the frequency in which they are used and the role they play in the company's overall performance. More importantly, the importance ascribed to a number of documents appeared to vary according to company size, and the employees' level of post and years of experience. As the data shows, in the context of economic pressures and intense competition, the above three factors become more relevant and require further investigation. The following section intends to further elucidate this further by looking into the types of collaboration employees engage in and why.

4.3. Collaboration while writing

RQ3A. How often the participants collaborate.

In agreement with other studies on workplace writing discussed in the literature section, the results in the present study illustrate that quite a big share of writing is done collaboratively. More than half of the participants (65.4%) reported writing in collaboration with others in addition to writing alone (76%). The well reported emphasis on the collaborative nature of writing, however, might misleadingly create the impression of the workplace as a smoothly working environment based on assigned flat-based team work, where everybody is happy to make his/her own contribution to the common institutional products or goals, when in fact it has been widely reported to be as laden with conflict (also see section 1.1.2. on collaboration). Such considerations prompt a deeper investigation into the types of collaboration employees engage in and the parties who are involved and the reasons behind it.

RQ3B. What types of collaboration employees engage in.

According to the thematic analysis in figure 7, three themes emerged with regard to the types of collaboration employees engage in: officially designated work teams, informal collegial help from one to another, and a third category of collaboration observed as falling somewhere in between the previous two.

As explained by the interviewees, the first type of collaborative writing involved officially assigned supervision of lower post holders' writing and allocation of separate sections of a document to separate writers according to their specialisation. The following quote illustrates an example of the contribution of various departments in the compilation of a tender file:

(11)

the sales department prepares the quotes [...] makes the economic and technical offers [...] then the contracts department adds its own section on the legal matters of the tender it provides the required documents from banks the supplier company the tax office and [...] explains how they all ensure that participation in the tender is legal that all requirements are lawfully met and [...] it then reads the sales department's offers and revises them to see if they accurately meet the criteria set for participation and [...] it's not just one person from each department of course [...] from sales it would be the sales manager the product manager and others and after all this [...] the whole thing is read revised and checked by the general manager (Maria)

Similar types of collaboration have also been reported in past studies. For example, Ledwell-Brown (2000, p. 206) reports that within their duties supervisors revise and correct texts of people in lower positions. Ede & Lunsford talk of fifteen people contributing different sections to the annual report of an international mining corporation, the entire version of which is subsequently revised into a number of drafts by a group of four or five who come together for this reason (1983, p. 151). In their description of document cycling process, Paradis et al. (1985) report that the writing of a document would be assigned to members of staff, would then be returned to supervisors in middle-management for corrections mainly on technical information and scope and would only go to upper management for signature and approval in its final draft (p. 294).

The second type of collaboration concerns writing help provided out of collegiality from one colleague to another. This appears to emerge in the writers' struggle to meet different rhetorical demands and challenges, as the literature (Bremmer, 2006) and the following section (on writing problems) show. As reported (Mahili, 2014), one such challenge appears to be having to write in a language other than their own. Although in this study, all employees are considered to be highly proficient in English, which also emerged as the most widely used FL in the Greek corporate setting, difficulties were still reported in the production of documents that were expected to be as faultless as possible (Ledwell-Brown, 2000) and dealt with by informally consulting colleagues. As Helen reports,

(12)

I am happy to be consulted on matters of language [...] you know one can easily just pop into my office and ask for a quick tip [...] it makes me feel appreciated

Although not all employees appeared to welcome the chance to help others especially informally like Helen, the inevitability of having to help because you might also need it in the future and of engaging in collaboration whether you like it or not becomes especially visible in participant interview reports.

(13)

one thing is certain here [...] we will all need to 'help' each other at some point [...] of course you don't have to be assigned to it to do it [...] although it's good to be shown some signs of appreciation sometimes

Admittedly, friction may also arise in officially designated work teams. However, as employees engage in collaboration that is not officially assigned and less visible and potentially unrecognisable (either by the receiver of the help or by upper management), stress and tension builds up further aggravating the challenges that the employees are called upon to face when writing and intensifying the conflicts among them. As Dias et al. (1999) comment,

Even when [workplace] interests are organized to collaborate than compete-as they are in most large collectives- the differences in their motives, perspectives, procedures, topics, arguments, and goals are likely to cause friction. The hierarchical structure of organizations creates economic and political imbalances that work against these shared goals, and the continual growth of specialization, including the increased use of technology, rules against any common discourse. Competition for decreasing funds, and consequent concerns for accountability, further intensify the struggles for power (p. 114).

Such conflicts might also explain why nearly half of the participants (56%) prefer to write alone despite the high percentage of reported collaboration found in the present study and past literature. Paradis et al. (1985) similarly report that nearly three-quarters of their respondents preferred writing in total isolation at work (p. 286). In brief, the findings suggest that informal collaboration takes place to help address the difficulties employees face when writing. Hence the writing difficulties faced by the participants are investigated in section 4.5.

Along the same lines, the third type of collaboration involves working together simply because “this is what works here”. Asked about whether his assistance to the technical writers employed by the company for the writing of technical documents fell within his official duties, Jonathan replied:

(14)

actually I have no idea [...] it's clearly within their duties now [...] but they can't manage so I do some of it [...] I used to do it before them but I can't say I do it merely out of the kindness of my heart (laughs) [...] I'm kind of expected to do it and [...] otherwise there might be misunderstandings with our clients and partners and the client will come to me to resolve it [...] and this just might help me keep my job these days

In light of the lack of employees with sufficient writing competence, companies are reported to rely on the people who can do the job unofficially. The quote illustrates the company's policy to assign the writing of particular documents to people who have been hired specifically for this job, a practice reported in other studies (Mackinnon, 1993). However, when this does not work, the work is done unofficially by the ones who can. The notion of ‘language nodes’ acting as the default communication channels is relevant

here (Feely & Harzing, 2003). The divergence between organisational policy and practice in relation to communication has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g., Kingsley, 2009). Similarly, studies on workplace communication also report that official writing duties are not always clearly defined (Ledwell-Brown, 2000) and the initial authorship is often lost in the process of document cycling (Paradis et al., 1985). This is particularly evident in its ‘visible’ aspect as an accountable official written record of action and its ‘invisible’ aspect in its informal uses and in the process of document recycling.

In this context, two observations are pertinent here: although the messiness of writing is well known, it becomes especially pronounced in the context of the economic crisis. Employees often go by a more flexible ‘what works’ approach in addition to adhering to official duties and company policies to meet economic exigencies. As indicated in the quote above, parties with the writing skills to ‘fix things’ stand better chances of retaining their job or progressing to higher levels. Companies can similarly adapt to the economic pressures. Also, this strategic ambiguity (Angouri, 2013) raises the issue of how democratic the modern workplace is (Gunnarsson, 2009). Power imbalances have been reported to develop and be reinforced in the less visible ‘backstage regions’ (Erickson, 1999; Cook-Gumperz & Messerman, 1999) of the workplace. This becomes particularly relevant as employees with writing competence enjoy better chances at retention and advancement when they write outside their official duties or as they are unsure whether it is within their duties to do so. Implications thus arise as to whether informal types of collaboration foment the development of power imbalances.

In this light, formal and informal types of collaboration become especially relevant and point to the need to look in more detail into who collaborates with whom and why. The following section elucidates this in more detail.

RQ3C. Who is involved in collaborative writing.

With regard to the parties involved in the production of the documents, insights can be gained from the quantitative findings. According to the analysis, significant differences were found in collaborative and individual writing according to the employees’ level of post and years of experience (see table 11).

Table 11. *Writing with Others and Alone in Relation to Level of Post and Years of Experience*

	Level of post		Years of experience	
	Managers	Post holders	Old-timers	Newcomers
Writing in collaboration	55.8	77.1	52.8	92
Writing alone	81.4	71.4	86.8	56

In relation to level of post, although both managers and post holders reported writing alone (no statistical correlation emerged), significant differences emerged when writing in cooperation with others ($\chi^2 = 3.878$, $df=1$, $p=0.049$, $\phi=0.223$). It appeared that more post holders (77.1%) than managers (55.8%) wrote in cooperation with others. Although Gunnarsson (1997) reports collaboration in all stages of writing activity, she also finds that employees in higher positions collaborated more in the early stages of writing than those in lower positions. In particular, more collaboration was observed in the initiative and prewriting stages. Findings here, though, do not support this and the divergence appears to lie in the different reasons for collaboration. In Gunnarsson's (1997) study, high position holders were assigned more complex, longer and more important documents than those in lower positions and had a wider network of relationships and addressees. In the present study, although collaboration was observed at all hierarchical levels, the issue of complexity of documents in relation to level of post does not emerge in the data. However, far from implying that post holders are assigned more complex documents than managers (in line with Gunnarsson's argument), the findings here appear to suggest that some post holders participate in teams that are involved in the production of complex documents. In light of the different types of collaboration that emerged in the previous section, post holders may also collaborate for reasons other than to participate in officially designated work-teams. The following findings shed further light into the reasons post holders collaborate more than managers.

Significant differences were also discovered in terms of both collaborative ($\chi^2 = 11.515$, $df=1$, $p=0.001$, $\phi=0.384$) and individual writing ($\chi^2 = 9.074$, $df=1$, $p=0.004$, $\phi=0.341$) between those who had more years of experience and those who had fewer. As indicated

in table 11, more newcomers than old-timers collaborated on the production of documents providing further support to this. In contrast to Gunnarsson's (1997) study, here collaboration appears to be related to experience in the company, with the less experienced being more involved in collaborative writing possibly due to difficulties encountered in the process of writing. As discussed in section 4.2., the different assignment of documents according to level of post appears to be attributed to the duties of different hierarchical levels rather than complexity of documents. For example, simpler and daily administrative documents like emails, faxes and memos were not seen to be primarily assigned to lower positions. More studies also indicate the assignment of complex documents to lower positions much unlike a Piagetian approach to writing, where simpler tasks are assigned to the inexperienced writers. Beaufort (2000) talks of newcomers being assigned texts of lower importance though not of lower complexity. Therefore, the possibility that newcomers participate in complex writing tasks (Beaufort, 2000), which emerged in this section, and the existence of informal types of collaboration of asking for help from other employees at the same hierarchical level may explain why more newcomers than old-timers are involved in collaborative writing. Further to this, considering that more post holders collaborate in writing than managers lead to a possible association between years of experience and level of post. Far from claiming that the hiring of an employee at a high position is unlikely, the possibility is raised in the present data that a tendency may exist to hire people at lower posts before advancing them to higher positions, an issue that further research can address in more detail.

Looking at the overall findings on collaboration, in line with previous research employees spend a great deal of their time writing together and are involved in different types of collaboration. Here, they appear to be involved in formal and informal types of collaboration according to their hierarchical level and years of experience. Particularly interesting here is the less visible, more informal, and more flexible ways of collaborating by assisting or performing the writing tasks of other employees who seem unable to do so. In light of the economic crisis, this creates a divide between those who can and cannot write.

Implications are raised about how democratic the workplace is as writing skills enable some employees to retain their job or advance their career. Similarly the adoption of

informal writing practices and strategic ambiguity can further strengthen power relations at work (also see rationale for formality section 1.3.4). Relevant becomes the need to further explore the types of difficulties employees face upon writing, ways of overcoming them and the parties that face them most. The following section investigates these issues in more detail.

4.4. Writing difficulties and potential solutions

RQ4A. Difficulties encountered when composing the written documents

This section addresses the problems employees report they encounter when writing. The analysis will primarily discuss the most prominent problems faced by employees based on quantitative (see figure 9)³¹ and qualitative findings (see figure 10). The problems that will be discussed here concern the ones met at the time of the questionnaire completion in order of their prominence according to quantitative findings and in conjunction with the parties that faced them most. The thematic analysis serves to verify and elucidate further the quantitative findings.

In the present study writing problems were reported in both GR and ENG. 35.9% participants found writing in ENG to be difficult (3.8% of whom found it very difficult) and 17.9 % the same for GR. Although the numbers are not particularly high, they illustrate the existence of problems in writing in both languages. Hence figure 9 addresses problems encountered when writing in both languages.

³¹ Although there is a degree of inherent subjectivity in what is meant by the various terms referring to writing problems (e.g., clarity), this is not controlled and is not considered a problem as the questionnaire's main intention is to assess the participants' general perceptions.

■ At the onset of employment ■ At the time of the questionnaire completion

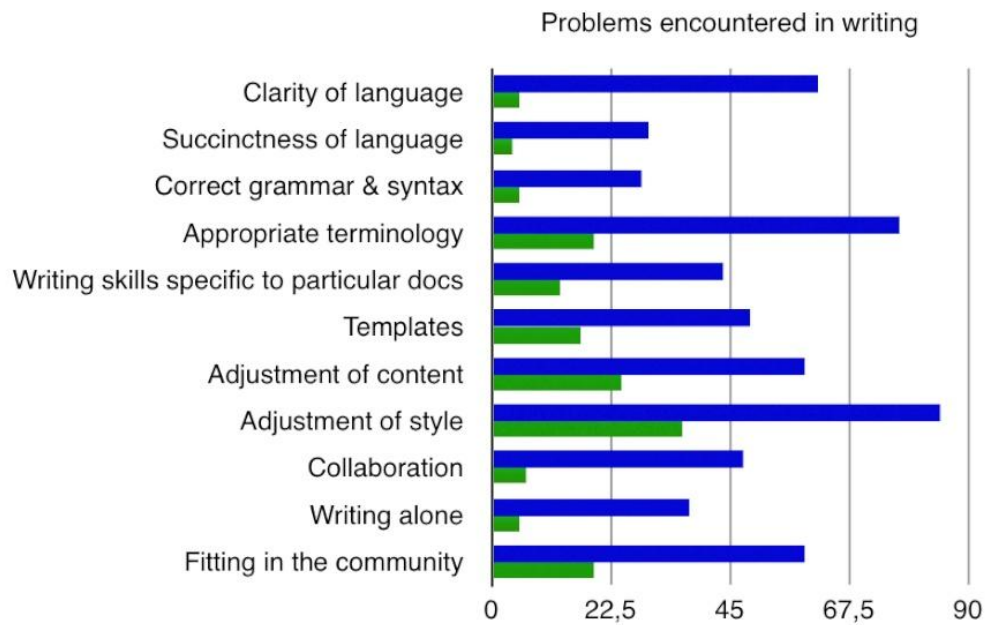


Figure 9. Writing difficulties encountered at the onset of employment and at the time of questionnaire completion

Note. Numbers indicate people in %

According to quantitative and qualitative findings, the most prominent problems involved adjustment of style and content to reader, use of appropriate terminology and fitting in, use of templates, and use of writing skills specific to particular documents. These are discussed in turn below.

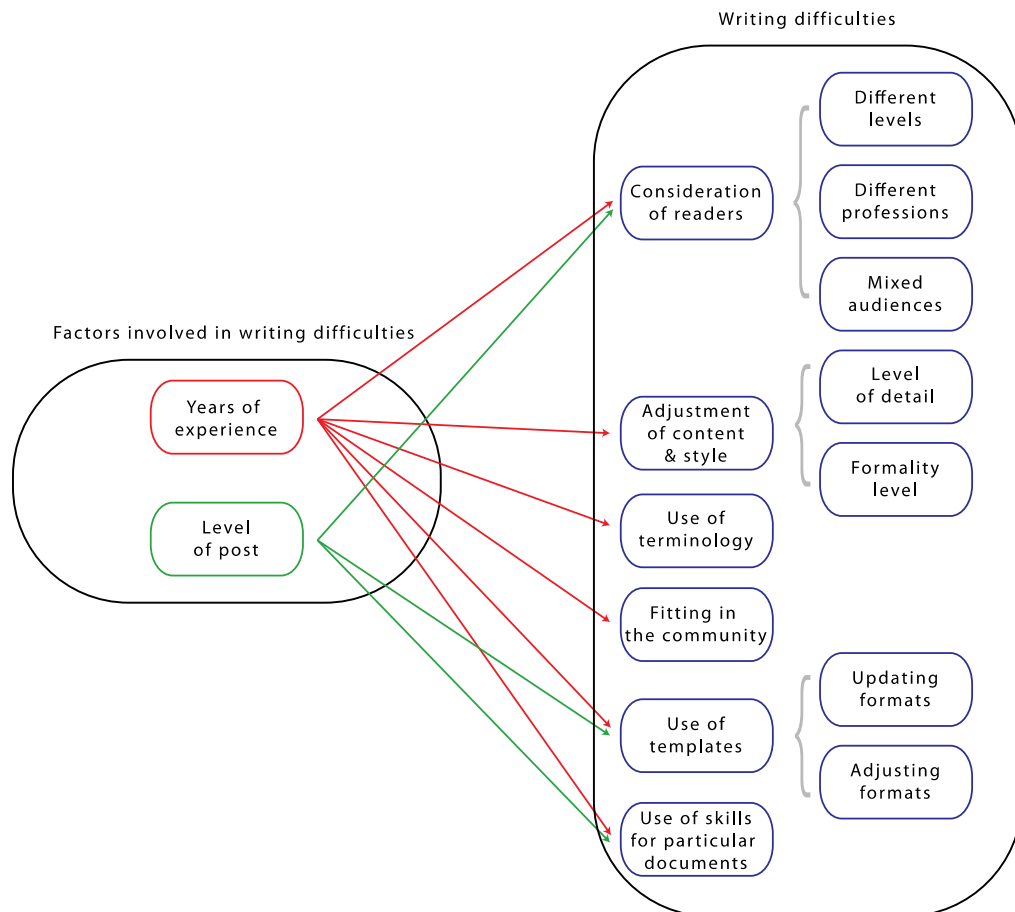


Figure 10. Thematic analysis of the difficulties encountered upon writing

Consideration of readers

Consideration of readership appeared to be the most prominent problem as indicated in the analysis. In particular, adjusting style and tone to reader appeared to be the most prominent problem in the questionnaire analysis (35.9%) and mostly faced by newcomers as chi-square test correlations showed with years of experience ($\chi^2 = 36.996$, $df=1$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.689$). Similarly adjusting content to reader followed next (24.4%) and was faced by more newcomers than old-timers ($\chi^2 = 11.160$, $df=1$, $p=0.002$, $\phi=0.378$). As figure 10 shows, adjustment to readership involved addressing employees at different hierarchical levels, parties from different professions, and mixed audiences. Adjustment of content and style entailed presenting information that is clear to the reader and using formality that is appropriate to the reader. In the following quote, Jim talks of having to adjust style (formality in particular) according to the social distance and power between him and his reader as well as the predicament of adjusting style to mixed audiences.

(15)

you can't write to the general manager the same way you write to your colleague next door [...] or when you write to both [...] and of course you write differently to your clients whom you need [...] even worse how do you complain to someone higher than you [...] and how do you ask why you didn't get the promotion you were expecting (?)

Chris talks of having to adjust content (level of detail in particular) to people in different departments with different professional orientations.

(16)

even when you write to your colleagues in another department you have to write in a way they can understand you [...] of course a lot can be assumed here but for example when service writes to us [...] to me as a financial controller they have to explain every technical detail otherwise I won't understand a thing [...] Maria in sales will understand more but not me and when I write about budgets I make sure I am being very clear and simple

The quotes above illustrate the difficulty encountered with adjusting style and content according to the degree of familiarity or the hierarchical difference between them. This is especially pronounced when sensitive issues are negotiated between people at different hierarchical levels. As nicely put by Chris (Financial Controller), “*to have to write to my subordinates is one thing to have to also cc my boss is quite another*”. The difficulty in having to adjust style and content according to the reader's hierarchical level, level of knowledge, degree of familiarity with the writer or experience in the company, and what is considered acceptable in the particular company expectedly places the writer in a predicament and has been widely discussed in the literature (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Beaufort, 2000; Bremmer, 2012; Dias et al., 1999). For example, simplifying technical information so as to make it client-friendly has been seen to trouble accountants (Northey, 1990). Similarly, architects may have trouble including narrative commentary in their proposals of architectural designs to their clients (Dias et al., 1999) and engineers to use persuasive techniques in their engineering proposals (McIsaac & Aschauer, 1990). The problems are often attributed to the different writing goals and

perspectives of people in different departments and areas of specialisation (Ledwell-Brown, 2000; Kleimann, 1993). Having to write in a language other than one's native tongue is also reported to add an extra layer of complexity to the task (Bremmer, 2012).

Added to this, more difficulties also arise when professional identities are negotiated and constructed on situ in the course of the interaction by using specific linguistic features. For example, a newcomer may call on the informality closely associated with an old-timer to present himself as an old-timer. Such negotiation of identities presents difficulties and misunderstandings among the interactants as it builds on deviating from what is considered appropriate in the particular workplace community. The negotiation of identities has been widely discussed in the literature (Bremmer, 2006; Sarangi and Roberts, 1999) and is analysed in depth in the discourse analysis of emails in chapter 5. As discussed earlier (section 1.1.5.), producing reader-oriented texts is a challenge particularly for new employees.

Findings also point to another category of employees who have difficulty in adjusting to their readers. In particular more post holders than managers had difficulty in adjusting style, tone ($\chi^2 = 16.028$, $df=1$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.453$) and content ($\chi^2 = 5.631$, $df=1$, $p=0.032$, $\phi=0.269$) to reader. Two explanations are suggested here: one lies in a possible link between level of post and years of experience also discussed earlier in relation to the collaboration employees engage in. In particular, post holders similarly to newcomers were also found to be involved in more collaboration than managers and old-timers as participants in formal work teams and in informal types of writing together. As suggested by Paradis et al. (1985),

People learn how to write as they gain experience. People at senior level understood their organization better and seemed to understand who their audiences were and what these audiences needed. Unlike beginners, experienced employees were not writing to abstract positions or levels. They were writing to real people, whom they often knew by their first name. This makes a difference (p. 303).

Although the association between lower level employees and lack of experience in writing needs to be substantiated with further research, it appears to be suitable to the Greek corporate context in times of crisis. Given the tight budgets of companies in times of economic pressures, post holders - and in some cases particularly highly paid

executives – tend to be the first to be laid off rendering their retention more temporary and subject to risk. Given the high rate of staff turnover, it is possible that post holders do not remain in the same company long enough to overcome their difficulties in writing to the extent that the (management of the) company would like them to. As they are also part of the teams contributing to the composition of complex documents, it is possible that they experience more difficulties than managers especially in what appear to be the most problematic tasks of having to adjust their writing to various audiences.

A second explanation why consideration of readership is more difficult for post holders than managers lies in the different types of documents assigned to them and the importance they ascribed to them; as seen in sections 4.1. and 4.2., managers are engaged in financial reports, which imply a wider range of responsibility and accountability than post holders, and they attribute greater importance to wider range of documents than post holders. In this light, post holders, especially those in the same position or level for a number of years, are likely to encounter more problems when they engage in different writing tasks in new posts. The suggestion appears to be that managers' wider range of responsibilities may enable them to cope better with variable readership than post holders, something that further research can look into in more detail.

Use of appropriate terminology

The next most prominent writing problem was use of appropriate terminology particularly in English as a FL. As quoted by one of the participants,

(17)

in the beginning people have all sorts of difficulties [...] especially the new technical terms are so difficult [...] when we first hired our secretary she had to learn all about the different varieties of rice, the processing machinery, how to make an offer, how to say it in English and in Greek too of course these are all problems that you eventually overcome sooner or later (George)

Two observations can be made here: first, the acquisition of the appropriate discourse including technical terms as well as ways of getting things done in writing. Although all participants reported being highly proficient in ENG as either a FL or L2, it is illustrated here that L2 speakers may encounter problems with language proficiency, which further

compounds the difficulties they encounter as beginners – an issue that becomes visible in the case of technical terms. Although the importance of acquiring the discourse of the new workplace communities is widely reported in literature studies, technical terms do not particularly emerge as a persistent problem and FL or L2 proficiency problems appear to be absent with a few minor exceptions (for an overview see Bremmer, 2012). The second could be due to the scarcity of studies conducted in an L2 or FL environment. Another possible explanation is that, although all participants are considered proficient speakers of ENG according to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) certificates, writing in EFL may present an extra layer of difficulty to an already problematic task albeit not necessarily much more serious than writing in the mother tongue. An explanation for the first emerging in participants' reports is that, although the acquisition of technical terms may present a problem, it is more of a recurring nuisance than a serious one. As a number of participants explained, use of the jargon specific to their occupation required continuous updating.

Fitting in

A third most prominent problem according to the questionnaire analysis appeared to be fitting in the workplace community (19.2%). As statistical correlations showed, more newcomers than old-timers faced this problem ($\chi^2 = 32.025$, $df=1$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.641$). Problems with fitting in have been extensively discussed in studies on newcomers' (mainly interns') negative experiences of being socialised in their new workplace communities. These initial negative attitudes have been attributed to both the newcomers' inability to accept constructive criticism on their writing (Anson & Forsberg, 1990; Ledwell-Brown, 2000) or to enter less positive environments (Anson & Forsberg, 1990) in terms of the learning opportunities they offer. Insights from CofP framework (section 2.1.), further point to the way gatekeeping by the powerful members of the community can further obstruct the newcomers' socialisation and question the extent to which workplace is a democratic place. The problems new employees face fitting in and the role the more experienced employees play in it are discussed extensively in chapter 5 on the analysis of emails, where identities in terms of years of experience and power are negotiated in the course of the written interactions.

Use of templates

Further writing problems concerned use of templates faced by 16.7% of the participants. According to quantitative findings they appeared to be faced mostly by newcomers ($\chi^2 = 26.008$, $df=1$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.577$) and post holders ($\chi^2 = 14.190$, $df=1$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.427$). Adoption and adaptation of templates have been similarly reported to cause writing problems (Alford, 1989; Lutz, 1989; Schryer, 2000) to newcomers in past studies although they have not been discussed extensively (Angouri & Harwood, 2008). In the present study, qualitative findings can help explain what types of problems are faced with templates (see figure 10): continuous updating of format and adjustment of personal commentary.

(18)

formats keep changing and it's very tiring once you finally learn how to do one the mother company changes it so you have to learn the new one plus you must always think of how to present your progress in a positive light in your own words to justify the numbers you show (Sandra)

The two problems become particularly visible in the templates used in progress reports by sales people in pharmaceutical companies. Although in theory templates are intended to facilitate the writers' and the readers' writing tasks, both in literature (see section 1.1.3.) and the present study they are shown to be problematic. The continuous updates of formats similar to those of technical terms is expected in subsidiaries of pharmaceutical companies that strive to retain or to achieve a leading position in the market. The fast pace of development in medicinal drugs and equipment/machinery coupled with the fierce competition between pharmaceutical companies entails continuous updating and notification of changes to their subsidiaries. This issue is also discussed in the following section on perceived solutions to these problems and in chapter 5 (see analysis of extract VI).

The insertion of personal commentary in templates has also been reported to present difficulty to writers (see literature section 1.1.3.). Flowerdew & Wan discuss the accountants' concern with structuring their comments in the issue section of their tax letters and how much and when they could diverge from the company's template (2006, p. 148). Other studies similarly point to problems experienced with the way templates

are used in particular companies (Alford, 1989; Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Northey, 1990) pointing to the need to acquire local context-dependent knowledge and to develop skills to adjust to the various rhetorical situations as they emerge.

The data in this study suggest that templates are used in various documents (e.g., progress reports, contracts, quote offers) and formats (numerical data, personal narratives, or both). In this context, although they may sometimes facilitate the production of some documents (e.g., numerical data in reports), they tend to present problems when they include personal narrative that requires consideration of audience and less serious yet recurring difficulties in keeping up to date with new template versions. Also, as both the literature and this study show that particular documents are assigned to different posts and hierarchical levels, employees who change post, especially those who have been in the same post for years, are likely to encounter difficulties in the new templates required in each post even if they are not newcomers to the company. Similarly to the previous writing difficulties encountered by newcomers and post holders alike discussed earlier, the findings highlight the persisting nature of some problems, which cannot be accounted merely on the basis of the employees' lack of experience. Implications thus arise about how important is the acquisition of local knowledge in the company and whether it alone suffices to overcome problems in writing. The participants' views on these issues are relevant here and are discussed in the following section.

RQ4B. Perceived ways to overcome writing problems

Participants reported a number of factors contributing to learning how to write. These factors emerged from both the questionnaire analysis (see appended questionnaire, items 12 and 19) and the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview reports (see figure 11 below).

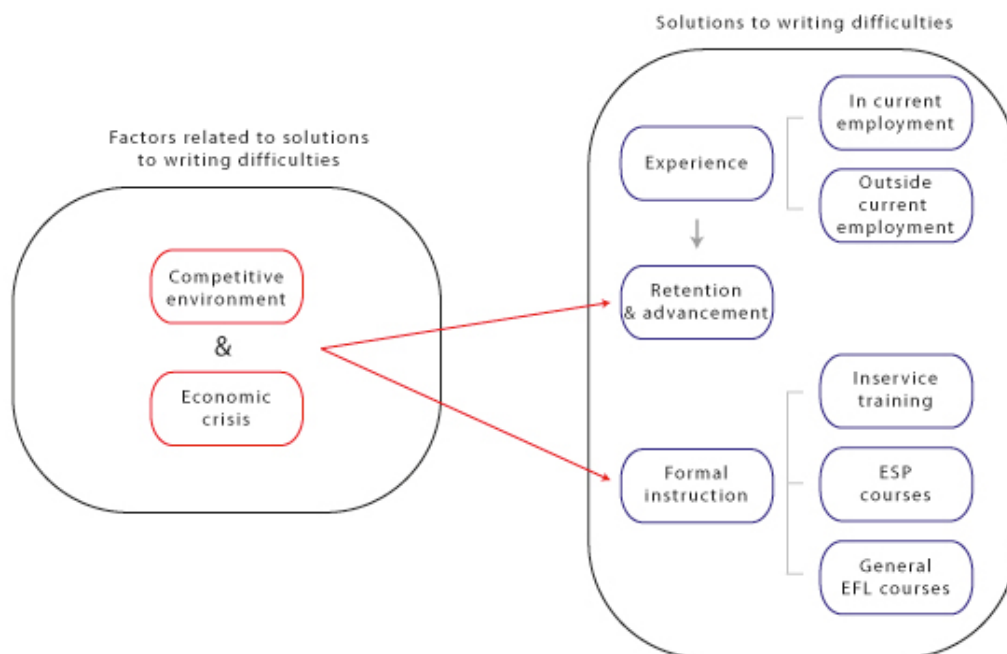


Figure 11. Thematic analysis of ways of overcoming difficulties in writing

Experience

The most widely reported contributor to dealing with writing problems was the experience in writing required during and prior to current employment. Although the contribution of experience to learning how to write is well reported in the literature, it becomes more pronounced in light of the harsh competition and the economic crisis. In particular, 68/80 participants reported experience acquired in current employment helped them significantly overcome their problems in writing (for more details see table F1, appendix F). The literature abounds in references to the importance of local on-the-job knowledge (also see section 1.1.5.). Further to this, 65/80 participants reported that writing with their colleagues significantly helped them to overcome their problems in writing, also in line with the findings in the previous section on collaboration.

(19)

you learn just by working with others being with others in the same place it just happens [...] what you learn you pass on to others and it's also a strong asset for the future with the crisis and all [...] what I've learned from Mr Papadopoulos (main shareholder and general manager) I pass on to the others [...] most people learn just by working and [...] from each other (Simon)

The quote highlights two important features of the way that learning occurs in the workplace: its situated and collaborative nature. Both are also prominent in Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'legitimate peripheral participation' where "learning is not merely situated in practice" it is practice (p. 35). In this context, all employees learn from each other by working together formally and informally (see section 4.3. on collaboration). As discussed in the previous section, problems in writing are not encountered by newcomers alone. Post holders (whether they are also newcomers or not) also have difficulties using new templates and adjusting to their readers. Gatekeepers may also present obstacles to the learning of others as often employees have conflicting and competing interests even in the same workplace community. Thus learning how to face problems in the composition of documents affects all employees as they are all involved in a kind of communal writing in continually evolving roles and relationships. The negotiation of roles and relationships (e.g., in terms of who is in power and more experienced) has serious implications about the access that some employees have to localised experience and the extent to which the workplace is a democratic place. Added to this, according to participants' reports, not all companies provide equal opportunities for learning how to write.

(20)

you just do what you're told here blindly [...] you don't actually write anything difficult or learn anything particularly useful about [...] how to write [...] (Helen)

(21)

it's frustrating trying to concentrate with other people in the room and [...] anyone dropping in for anything that comes up whenever they feel like it you just can't get a word on paper (Maria)

The literature also provides evidence of less than positive learning experiences. Beaufort (2000) talks of writers' perceived failed attempts to be listened to with regard to writing suggestions and to improve one's writing due to lack of socialising with colleagues (pp. 214-215). Anson & Forsberg (1990) discuss interns' perceived frustration with having to work with poor models of writing, with having their initiative stifled, and with engaging in conflicts with their supervisors. Broadhead & Freed (1986) talk of systemic problems

to learning caused by the physical setting and cultural, administrative and managerial constraints (pp. 59-64). It appears that neither do all companies offer or encourage learning opportunities to the same degree nor are all employees receptive to such opportunities when they exist.

Not only wasn't there unanimity in participants' feelings about the positive contribution of on-the-job experience, participants also pointed to the positive value of experience acquired outside the company they were currently employed by. This illustrates that apart from the immediate context of one's company, problems in writing can be alleviated from experiences acquired elsewhere.

(22)

I've been selling medicines in X sector for [...] more than I can remember I've actually been working in large pharmaceuticals in Greece for what (?) more than 10 years I know how things work we all know each other the doctors hospital managers [...] I already knew how to write a report before I came here
(Andrea)

(23)

you can't consider someone who's in the same business as you to be inexperienced only because s/he just started working here especially with the competition being so harsh and the future being so uncertain (Thomas)

The above quotes point to a perception that experience acquired outside the company one is currently employed may prove useful to someone learning how to write in a new workplace. There is evidence in studies that the discourse of one's profession can be learnt apart from local contexts (Freedman et al., 1994). Artemeva (2005) claims that experienced writers can actually write well in a variety of local contexts and can transfer their writing skills from one context to another. Katz (1998) similarly shows how an entry-level employee through her awareness of audience and purpose brought about changes in the writing processes of her organisation while still a newcomer. Implications thus arise about the way experience acquired elsewhere enables these new members to acquire power *to* or *over* (Lane, 1996 cited in Waldvogel, 2005, p. 58) and even lead to

potential conflicts with older members. Extracts III and VI provide further discussion on the way this is reflected in the enactment of formality in emails (section 5.2.3.).

In sum, in addition to the well known and widely acknowledged prominence of localised knowledge and experience, two points are particularly visible here: not all employees may have equal access to it and thus be aided by it in their writing. Also, experience acquired outside the current workplace community can also be seen to positively contribute to overcoming writing difficulties. These acquire greater significance in the context of the power imbalances and the competitive and economically pressing environment.

Retention and advancement

As the questionnaire analysis and the thematic analysis indicate (see figure 11 and table F1, appendix F), a contributing factor to effectively dealing with writing problems was prospects for retention and career advancement. In this study this was true for slightly more than half of the participants (43/80). It is also well supported by workplace literature that has highlighted the importance of workplace writing (Odell and Goswami, 1985).

(24)

you can't get anywhere if you don't know how to write [...] to your clients or to manager [...] how can you (?) on the other hand if you do then some doors will open for you at some point (Jim)

As the quote illustrates, retention and opportunities for career progression offered by the company are important factors in fostering the motivation required to develop writing skills. As the questionnaire findings show, the overwhelming majority of participants considered writing in both GR and ENG significantly important for their retention and promotion. In particular, writing in both languages was considered equally important for hiring and retention in the same post (80%), and both GR and ENG were important for one's further career development (91% vs. 97.4% respectively). As discussed in previous sections, this skills based view of employees becomes further pronounced in light of the economic crisis, which makes the job market more competitive and unstable.

(25)

as things are becoming worse with the economic crisis the only thing we can do is learn more things to increase our chances of being hired again if the company closes (Alexia)

The reasons employees give for investing in additional skills on top of their formal qualifications, e.g., being able to write or speak a number of FLs well, seem to relate to the pressure and insecurity employees feel in light of the economic crisis and the imminent danger of their losing their jobs or being relocated to other posts or geographical areas (Mahili, 2014). For example, the consequences of the company's downsizing might entail shifting from clearly designated official writing duties to a more flexible 'what works' and 'who can do what' approach. In this context although the assignment of particular documents (section 4.1.) and processes of writing (e.g., the amount and type of collaboration in section 4.3.) was associated with different levels of post, multiple competences and the ability to further develop one's writing skills become even more important in times of instability and change. Thus there appears to be reason to believe that for some employees unstable economic conditions motivate them to develop their writing skills and overcome their current writing difficulties.

In short, although a view of employee writing skills as 'commodities' that can secure them better career prospects has been criticised in the literature, it becomes especially pronounced in light of the economic crisis. This is considered an important finding that needs to be foregrounded. In this light, the economic crisis in Greece appears to acquire a prominent role in the interpretation of the findings. Admittedly this view could be seen as a possible threat to the universality of the conclusions of the study, restricting them to severely crisis hit Greece. However, it raises implications about the potential other types of socioeconomic pressures (i.e., pressures caused by unemployment or harsh competition), possibly in other countries, has to help understand employee perceptions of their communication practices and skills.

Formal instruction

Formal instruction was attributed the least importance of all other factors from the participants. This becomes particularly visible when comparing the number of participants who received formal instruction in writing to those who felt they benefited

from it (respectively questionnaire items 12 and 19). As the findings show, out of 15 participants who received some instruction in workplace writing, only six felt they significantly benefited from it (for more details see table F1). Qualitative results as shown in figure 11 concur with this showing that participants did not feel they had learnt anything useful or related to the current professional needs:

(26)

we've had initiation seminars on communication in this company on how to approach and talk to clients and how to sell but not on writing [...] the only lessons I've had was in the English language courses I had taken in the past and [...] that's very different from what we have to do here (Andrea)

(27)

mmm we did have terminology courses at the university [...] we did some texts on business and economics and all [...] it's so far back now [...] wrote letters of application complaint but [...] they didn't help much (Simon)

Two possible reasons are suggested to explain why respondents did not generally consider formal instruction to be important: the inadequacy of formal instruction in Greece, lack of training in firms themselves and lack of interest from managers. Each of these will be discussed in turn in more detail in the paragraphs which follow.

Formal instruction in FLs in Greece does not generally address preparation specifically for the workplace. In the Greek context, training in workplace writing takes place as part of English for Specific Purposes courses in tertiary education and to a smaller degree in English as FL courses offered in private language schools. As the above quotes suggest, neither of the two settings seem to adequately prepare for the needs of the workplace. This has been widely discussed in the literature, which highlights several potential weaknesses in formal instruction. Some cases in point are the safe environment of the classroom where the goal of writing is learning, static teacher-student roles, the adoption of prescriptive models for written genres, and the inevitably decontextualised nature of writing which do not adequately cater for the real-world needs of the workplace. This may explain the difficulties employees have in adjusting their writing to their readers and

their reluctance to keep up to date with the continuous changes in formats, templates and technical terms.

A type of formal instruction that in theory may seem more promising is in-service specialised training in written communication offered in or by the organisations themselves. However, as findings show, there is a lack of formal specialised training offered *in* the participant organisations or funded *by* them in outside private language schools. This to some extent can reasonably be attributed to lack of funding especially in times of economic crisis. As the questionnaire analysis shows, only one company offered specialised training in workplace communication and only four participants took English for Specific Purposes courses outside their company on their own budget and initiative. However, although financial investment in the training of their staff usually translates into more profits in the future, investing in training in workplace writing did not emerge in the present study, with one exception (see table F1 in appendix F and above quote). As the findings suggest, under the pressure to cut budgets and facing a highly insecure fate, the management of companies based in Greece may be unable or unwilling to invest in specialised training in workplace writing.

The weaknesses of formal instruction to aid employees to learn how to improve their written communication skills are well documented in the literature and become clearly visible in the participants' reports in this study. On the contrary, working experience appears to contribute more to the alleviation of numerous persisting problems in writing. What becomes more pronounced in this study is that localised experience may not always be equally positive for all employees and that experience acquired in other companies in the employees' same area of specialisation may be beneficial. This raises implications about how can we best help employees to overcome their problems in writing and better prepare students for the real writing needs they will have to meet in the workplace. These issues are addressed in section 6.4.

4.5. Conclusion

As Part A of the findings reveals, writing products and processes vary significantly according to company size, and employees' hierarchical level and years of experience. A number of formal documents were found to be used more frequently and to be attributed greater importance by people in large than small companies. Managers and post holders

across companies wrote different documents and attributed different importance to them according to the official writing duties of their post. At the same time, unofficial writing duties also played a role as employees reported to collaborate unofficially in the form of advice and consultation. The opportunity thus arises for power imbalances to develop and implications are drawn about how democratic the workplace is. Writing practices were also accounted for in the context of the economic crisis; old-timers, largely sensitised by the prospect of being unemployed in light of the economic pressures, were found to place importance on a greater range of documents than newcomers.

Regarding difficulties in writing, the findings show that apart from newcomers, post holders also encounter problems primarily in adjusting content and style to their readers. According to the participants, the difficulties were also more effectively dealt with through experience gained informally while working with others than through formal instruction. Also, beside the well-known beneficial effect of localised experience, experience acquired outside the company of current employment was perceived to help alleviate writing difficulties.

In light of the above, formality appeared to play a significant role in the variation in the writing practices of the companies investigated: formal documents were written less frequently in ENG than informal everyday documents, which were written more frequently in GR; employees collaborated formally and informally; implications thus rise about the role of formality in the official organisational policies and actual employee practices in the more visible frontstage and less visible backstage regions of the organisation; further implications are drawn about whether and how formalisation of communication practices can help organisations adjust to socioeconomic pressures and the extent to which the workplace is a democratic arena where employees compete on fair ground. Against this background and considering the observed lack of past linguistic studies in formal writing style, it was decided to explore further what it means for the employees and the way it is enacted in a manageable corpus of naturally occurring data. Emails were considered an ideal candidate for the investigation of formality in light of their well-reported highly variable writing style and functions, and formal and informal uses. Hence Part B of the findings investigates the functions of emails and then focuses on the enactment of formality in an attempt to investigate written communication from a deeper micro perspective.

Chapter 5. Analysis and discussion of findings

Part B: Naturally-occurring data

5.0. Introduction

The following chapter reports on the results from the analysis of the emails collected from three companies with highly different profiles. Section 5.1. deals with the functions email serves in the companies under investigation and the way they differ according to company and hierarchical relationship between sender and receiver. Section 5.2. focuses on the instantiation of formality in a sub corpus of email chains. It starts with a description of the taxonomy of situational and linguistic factors of formality, which form the basis for the analysis of emails. It then moves to the analysis of a number of email chains grouped into three thematic categories, SD, power, and socialisation. The chapter ends with a consideration of the factors that affect the interaction between the situational and the linguistic features of formality.

5.1. The functions of email in three companies.

5.1.1. Similarities in email functions across the three companies.

Given the multiplicity of functions emails serve in the organisational context they are employed as indicated in section 1.2.1., and the highly different profiles of the three companies investigated (see ‘profile of companies’, chapter 3), it was decided to investigate the types of functions email serves in the three companies the written samples were collected from; PharmaMed, Rysy, and Infoquest!

With regard to use of functions in the companies investigated, figure 12 shows patterns of similarities and differences in four types of functions, namely directives, information-giving, information-seeking, expressives and commissives (for their classification see section 3.7.3.).

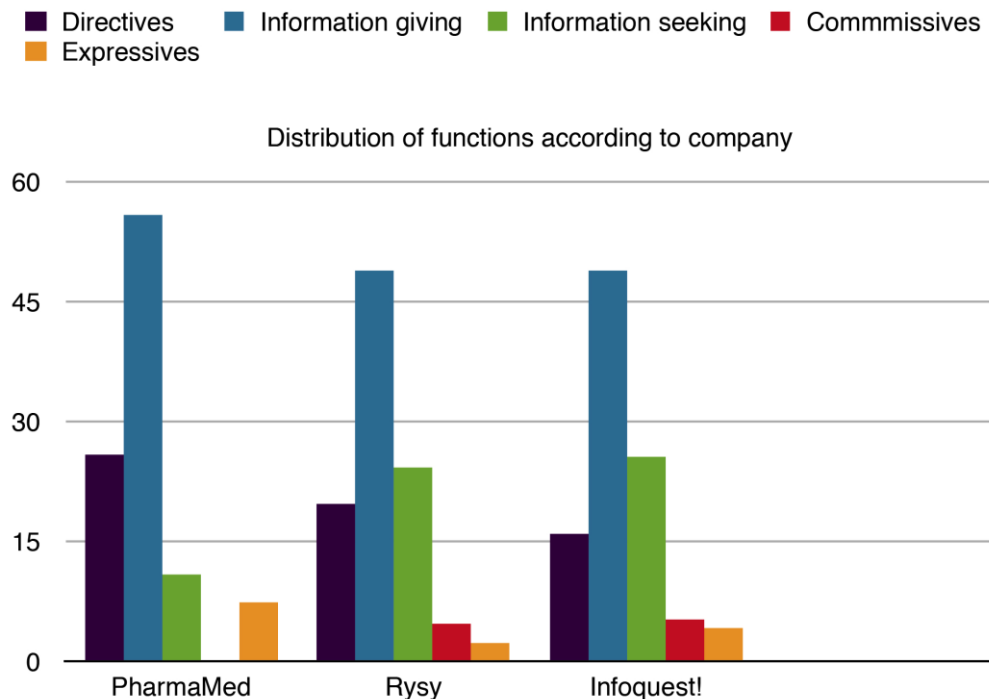


Figure 12. Distribution of email functions according to company

Note. Numbers in vertical axis indicate percentages

According to the findings, the ranking of functions according to their prominence in all three companies is in line with previous email literature. Information-giving is the most prominent function in all companies as it comprises close to half of all functions emails have in each company. Next in prominence come information-seeking and directives with fairly small differences in frequency. Sherblom (1988) also found that nearly 80% of his corpus served these three functions. By far the least used functions appear to be expressives and commissives similar to past studies using similar functional categories (Gains, 1999; Sherblom, 1988; Waldvogel, 2005) and those using notionally different categories (e.g., Kankaanranta, 2006).

The frequency of expressives and requests, albeit low in comparison to the other three, shows that email is used for a variety of primary functions. A multiplicity of functions has been seen in the same email in both previous studies and in the present one. In this data, more than half of the sample served multiple functions (141 emails served one, 133 served two and 34 served three and four functions). Similarly in Waldvogel's corpora, about 48% of emails were unifunctional, about the same percentage were bifunctional (44%-42%) with the multifunctional varying between the corpora depending on the

complexity of the issues discussed. It appears, therefore, that although email is primarily used for doing business, it also has a relational orientation, both of which are needed to further corporate activities (Kankaanranta, 2006).

Apart from the similar patterns in email functions that emerge in the three companies, inter- and intra-company differences are also noticed across the three companies and depending on the hierarchical status of the employees.

5.1.2. Variation in functions according to company

As figure 12 shows, differences can be discerned across companies, which become particularly visible in light of the significant correlations between company and function ($\chi^2 = 19.612$, $df=8$, $p=0.010$, $\phi=0.256$). One such difference is in the greater number of directives and fewer information-seeking functions between PharmaMed and the other two companies.

In an attempt to further explain these differences, correlations were sought between the more specific categories of functions and company and were shown to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 78.353$, $df=24$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.511$). For more details on the distribution of specific functions according to company see table G1 (appendix G). Results show the different ways email was used in each company. Especially visible are two differences between PharmaMed and the other two companies. First, as the table G1 in appendix G shows, PharmaMed used email to issue many more orders, a subcategory of directives, than Rysy and Infoquest! (10% vs. 0% and 3.2% respectively). Under the assumption that directives, and its subcategory of orders in particular, may play a role in implementing the management policies of the organisation (Gains, 1999, p. 84), the difference might be explained by PharmaMed's greater emphasis on hierarchical divides, in contrast to Rysy, a small family business with no such divides and to Infoquest! with its reported flat and team based structure. Second, the use of email to issue complaints (a subcategory of expressives together with apologies and contentment) was much more frequent in PharmaMed than in the other two companies (5% vs 1.2% and 1.1%). The same, although to a smaller extent, was for apologies and contentment/thanks. In light of the more official status accorded to written forms of communication (e.g., than oral communication), the issuing of more expressives through email in PharmaMed may suggest that it is accorded more formal status in PharmaMed than in the other two

companies. The assumption is a written complaint, apology or contentment in an email acquires a more formal status than if expressed orally especially when the communicators share the same space or are placed in adjacent offices. The suggestion appears to extend to the conflicts that take place in the workplace and the potential of email to be used both formally and informally for the resolution of problematic transactional and interpersonal issues as discussed in section 1.2.1. Given the close proximity of the offices in PharmaMed, it is quite possible that other functions (with the exception of reports), not as prominent as the above, e.g., opinion giving and requests, are carried out orally face-to-face or by telephone.

An additional observation is made about the difference in the use of email to issue reports (a subcategory of the information giving function) between PharmaMed and the other two companies. The particularly low number of reports in the PharmaMed data (1.7%), especially in contrast to those in the Infoquest! data (19.1%), is also indicative of company differences. Although the use of reports may illustrate a company's emphasis on hierarchical divides, the lower number of reporting functions of email here points to a different explanation. According to informants, the main types of reports produced in PharmaMed (on employee performance and progress of projects) primarily took the form of figures inserted in templates rather than descriptive or expository texts apart from a few short occasional informal reporting comments on visits to clients by email or orally face to face and by telephone. In short, it appears that the functions of email in PharmaMed reflect or even reinforce its formal hierarchical structure and its practice to share information both more formally through emails and more informally face to face in the office.

Similarly, the specific functions of email in Rysy help illustrate two of its characteristics, which set it apart from the other two companies: its small size and restriction of email to external correspondence. In its use of email with external clients only, Rysy seems to predominantly give and ask for factual information. As became clear from my observations and visits to the company, the bulk of internal communication was done between the main two parties on equal standing who shared the same office space face to face and by telephone. External communication was conducted by email and social networking (see table C1 on company profiles). In this context, it is expected to see total lack of orders and permission requests and the advice, opinion, complaints and apologies

to be expressed informally and orally. As the Rysy data show, email was used for only two reports, which were written from external clients to Rysy about the safe arrival and dispatch of consignments.

Like the other two companies, Infoquest! made its own uses of email. It had a higher number of reports than the other two (19.1% vs. 1.7% for PharmaMed and 2.3% for Rysy). The reason for this lies in its practice of following up each teleconference with a report recapitulating the decisions made, setting plans of actions, assigning individual responsibilities, and coordinating work among employees who worked at a distance from each other. Also worth noting is that its functions, i.e. requests, reports, giving and requesting factual information, are more evenly distributed than those of the other two companies. This suggests that email is used for a wider variety of primary purposes in this company than in the other two possibly in light of the teleworking nature of communication in Infoquest! and the extensive travel of its employees. Needless to say the Infoquest! data illustrate the well documented variety of functions email serves in workplace communication (also see section 1.2.1.).

Overall, the differences in email functions across the three companies appear to reflect the different uses email has according to the different activities, nature of work and organisational structure of each company as recognised by the participants. This further supports a view of email as a genre that, although may appear variable in form, is meaningful within the workplace community it is employed according to the recurrent and important functions it serves in the organisation, which are recognised by its members.

5.1.3. Variation in functions according to status

Statistical differences also emerged between general functions and status. ($\chi^2 = 50.707$, $df=12$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.411$).

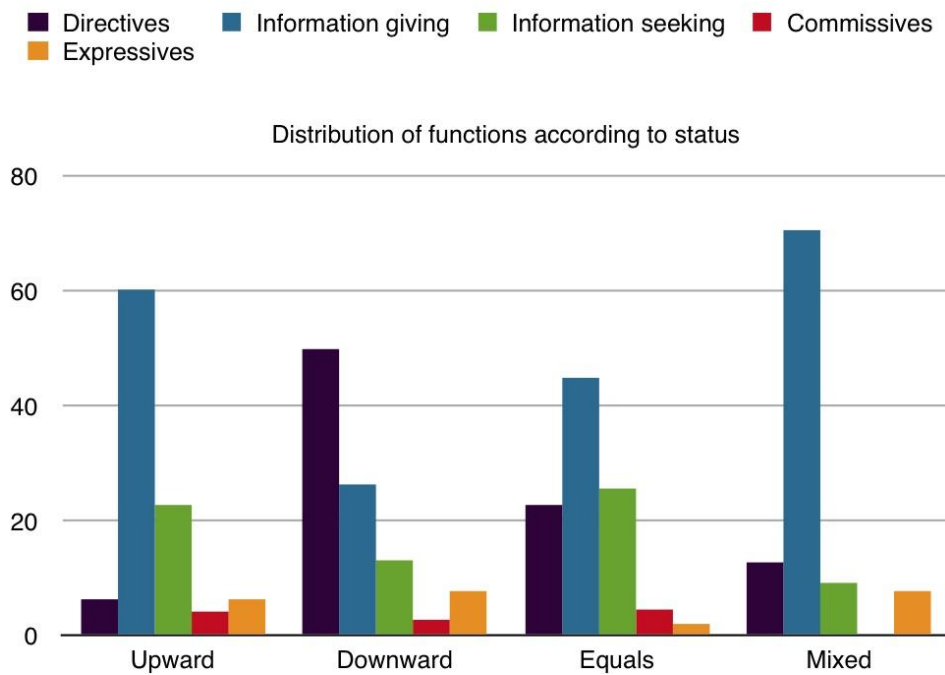


Figure 13. Distribution of email functions according to status

Note. Numbers in vertical axis represent %

The different functional items (directives, information-giving and so on) were divided into those directed at higher status (upward direction), lower-status (downward direction), status-equal and mixed-status recipients. Half of the directives were addressed to subordinates (50%) in contrast to the much lower percentage of directives addressed to other categories, particularly superiors (6.3%), suggesting a connection between status and directives. The majority of information-giving functions were addressed to mixed audiences (70.5%), illustrating the widely known use of email as a means of wide distribution of information (see section 1.2.1.). Also worth noting is the difference between those addressed to mixed audiences (70.5%) and subordinates (26.2%). The difference may suggest that, when mixed audiences are addressed, the range of functions is more narrowly focused to information giving than when addressing other categories of employees, particularly subordinates. The higher number of information seeking emails towards equals (25.8%) than towards all other directions appear to suggest email use for collegiality³². The next two functions have much lower percentages pretty much equally distributed across categories of recipient with the exception of mixed audiences. As

³² Collegiality here means interaction among colleagues in lateral and horizontal rather than vertical and hierarchical relationship.

expressives are generally intended to express feelings, the suggestion may be that, although email does have a relational function in vertical communication, the distribution of specific functions across categories of recipient tends to lead to a slightly different explanation. Although the findings above are not surprising, the small corpus of email functions as a result of the categorisation scheme (also noted in section 3.7.3. p. 82), poses inherent limitations in considering possible confounding factors or drawing generalisations with more certainty.

Having said that, a look at the distribution of specific functions, characterised by statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 141.531$, $df=36$, $p=0.000$, $\phi=0.687$) corroborates the trends alluded to above (see table G2 in appendix G). With regard to the different functions subsumed under directives (orders, requests and suggestions/advice), the overwhelming majority of orders were addressed to subordinates (34.2%) in sharp contrast to the lack of orders in upward and horizontal communication (.0). Similarly, requests were primarily addressed to equals (22.8%). The difference in the distribution of the specific functions of orders and requests illustrates that email is used for different purposes by different hierarchical levels and confirms the association revealed between status and directives in general.

The information-giving function was sub-categorised into factual information, reports and opinion. Factual information-giving emails were more commonly directed towards mixed audiences, confirming the trend revealed by the general information giving emails; reports (14.6%) and opinion (10.4%) - albeit not advice - were primarily addressed to superiors. The visible difference between reports used in an upward and downward direction attests to the fact that the reporting function in emails is primarily intended for the accountability of subordinates and their supervision by their superiors and secondarily for the information given to the wider public (10.3%). The concentration of information-giving and particularly factual information-giving function towards mixed audiences may appear to partly diverge from Sherblom's (1988) finding that vertically directed emails were more narrowly focused than other directions. His finding, however, relates to the total range of functions when here the suggestion seems to apply to information-giving emails. The differences between the findings in the two studies can also be attributed in the different use of email in the different participant organisations.

However, a much bigger sample of email functions would be needed here to draw conclusions with more certainty.

Factual information-seeking emails were primarily addressed to equals (22.1%), possibly reflecting the use of email for everyday clarification about the status of procedures, quotations for orders etc. In light of the much smaller number of information-seeking emails used in vertical communication (16.7% were addressed to superiors and 10.5% to subordinates), the suggestion appears to be that information is preferably (or even more comfortably) sought laterally among equals, further clarifying the results in the figure 13, which was not visible in the general categories of functions and status. Along the same lines, Gains observes, a high proportion of requests points to email as a popular way for asking people “without the necessity of elaborate rituals of social pleasantries and status observance that a telephone call or face-to-face interaction would demand” (1999, p. 98). Opinion-seeking emails were similarly addressed to equals providing further support to the suggestion. In short, regarding information exchange the data suggest that information was primarily given to mixed audiences and sought among equals in email.

Complaints (as a specific category under expressives) appeared to be addressed to both subordinates (5.3%) and superiors (6.3%) more than to status-equal or mixed-status recipients, a pattern which is not visible in the distribution of general functions according to status. The results appear to suggest that email as a written record of data may facilitate the expression of complaints across hierarchical levels through its accountability and its potential to address grievances and face threatening interactions from a distance (Sproul & Kiesler, 1986). Email provides access to high levels of the organisation. Whether the expression of a complaint, an apology, contentment, or thanks falls within a relational or a transactional function is unclear as it both expresses a feeling as well as facilitates the transaction. The divide goes back to direct and indirect speech acts and depends on the perspective one adopts. On the one hand, the feeling is still expressed and whether intended to be interpreted as an order or a threat, it still comprises an example of relational purpose.

With perhaps one exception (Sherblom, 1988), there is a gap in the literature in connection with the relation between email functions and recipient hierarchical status

although insights can be gained from the debate on richness theory; Sherblom (1988) reports quantitative differences between email functions according to status but not in the same direction as here. He finds that the vertically directed emails were more restricted in their functions than horizontally directed ones. 74% provided information to superiors and 46% to subordinates. The data support email as a lean medium as the hierarchy of the organisation affects the frequency of email functions and further that communication patterns impact social relations of power. Several of the theory's opponents, however, have debunked this; Markus (1994) has shown that managers use email heavily for a wide range of tasks, which are affected by social processes like sponsorship, socialisation and social control. Despite their insights, these studies may not reflect modern uses of email, and recent literature shows a gap in quantitative analysis of email functions. In this study, the data illustrate that email is used for different purposes by different hierarchical levels. However, rather than arguing that email is solely used for the exercise of hierarchical power, the suggestion is that email serves different functions in different hierarchical levels because of the different official duties employees have in different levels. This suggestion was also supported earlier in the study with regard to the differences in the types of documents produced and their ascribed importance by post holders and managers (see sections 4.1. and 4.2.). Also, although reports are usually addressed to superiors, here they additionally appear to be sent to mixed audiences, and information and opinion are requested from equals. Information-exchange appears to take place across recipients of all the different categories. In short, the data appear to suggest that egalitarian as well as non-egalitarian relations are reflected in the functions of email. Seen in light of the different email functions in the three companies, these relations vary according to the formal hierarchical divides in each company.

In conclusion, the findings suggest intercompany variation in the way email is used by employees in different hierarchical posts. Also, regarding the relational and transactional uses of email, the results point to the predominance of transactional uses and the existence of relational functions, albeit in small numbers. This ultimately points to the need to investigate this issue further in the discourse analysis of the linguistic features of emails, where the relational function is most visible. The above conclusions about email functions should be treated with caution, given the small sample of emails particularly the singly addressed ones, an inherent limitation caused by the problem of multiple addressability. However, although the findings cannot be generalised outside the

participants who were involved in their production, they provide further support as to the inter- and intra-company variation in function and useful background information for the discourse analysis of email samples collected from the same three companies.

5.2. Analysis of written samples and discourse based interviews

5.2.1. Approach to the definition of formality

As explained in section 1.3 on the discussion on formality, it is argued here that a thorough understanding of the social meaning of language necessitates investigating the context in which it is used. It follows that the understanding of formality similarly necessitates investigating both situation and code. This is primarily based on the assumption that the relationship between them is one of interdependency. Linguistic features do not exist alone as “language does not work on its own, and no linguistic variant works on its own” (Eckert, 2004, p. 47). Given the “tremendous amount of symbolic work [variation does]” (Eckert, 2004, p. 47), understanding language entails looking at the situation in which it is used; the use of corporate “we” outside an official situation acquires no meaning or a different meaning. Similarly one cannot investigate the formality of a situation without looking at its linguistic realisation; within the context of the company where it is used, an email cannot be considered formal if it does not have some formal linguistic features. Similarly, a situation in which formal linguistic features are used renders it ‘formal’. It follows then that situation and code are interdependent in the present data. In agreement with other studies on formality (Irvine, 1979) and stylistic practices (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Bremmer, 2006; Eckert, 2004; Harris, 2003), they are also reciprocally related. A formal situation will trigger some formal features and the repetition of informal features will cause a situation to be perceived as informal. According to the social constructionist perspective (see section 2.3.), the specific dimensions of context, be they national, regional, or organisational significantly contribute to gaining a thorough understanding of the ways and the reasons workplace texts affect and are affected by the particular context/s in which they are produced.

In light of the above, the investigation of formality in the writing of emails in this study comprises a) a description of situational characteristics, b) a description of linguistic features and c) a delineation/explication of the relation between them. The relation between the two can be seen in figure 14 below, which presents a visualisation of the

analysis of my data and is further exemplified in the analysis of the written data and the conclusions to the chapter.

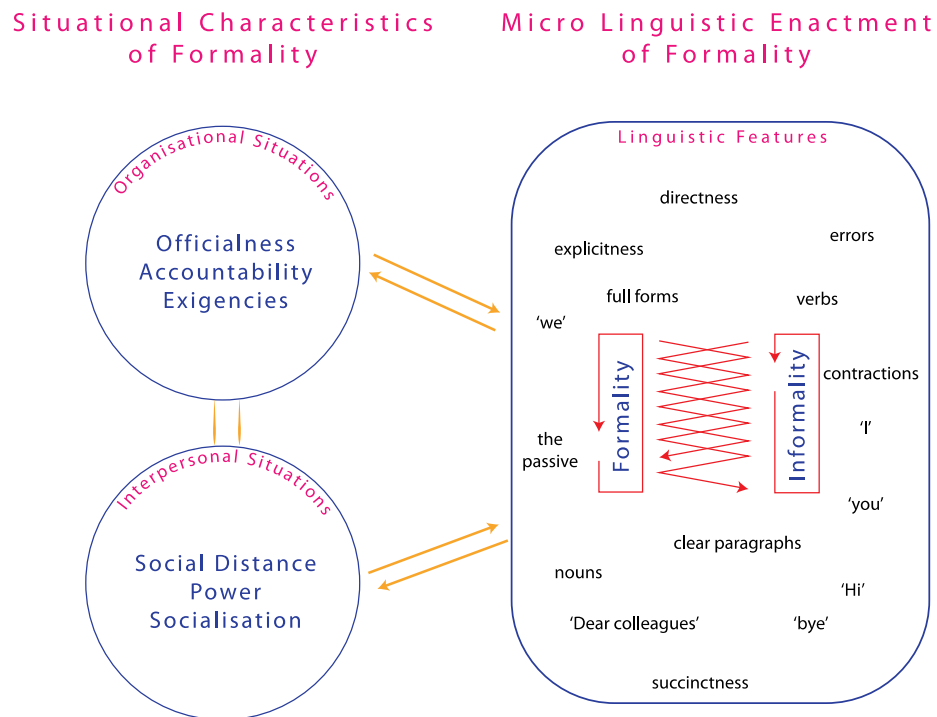


Figure 14. Interaction between situational factors and linguistic features of formality

Based on the participants' interview reports and the analysis of the written samples, a number of characteristics emerged of situation and code, as seen in the respective tables 11 and 12 following below. Each table shows the corresponding formal and informal aspects of situation and code. As the concepts of context, code, situation and interpersonal relations have been used in different ways by different researchers, working definitions adopted in this study are summarised as follows: situation is seen as the context in which formality is enacted and comprises two types: organisational and interpersonal i.e., it refers to the circumstances and occasions as well as the workplace interpersonal relations that pertain to the issue of formality and have a formal and informal aspect. Code refers to the linguistic representations of the situation and in particular the micro linguistic enactment of formality.

Table 12 displays the organisational and interpersonal factors of situation and their formal and informal aspects, and table 13 the linguistic features of formality. Given the

inherent limitations of categorisation, the two tables present a simplification of the complex reality of the written interaction as captured by the researcher and as such show a summary of my findings.

Table 12. *Situational Factors of Formality*

Situation		
Types of situations	Aspects of situations	
	Formality	Informality
Organisational factors		
Officialness	Company representativeness (in external communication) Adherence to procedures (in internal communication)	Individualised communication (in external communication) Breakage of procedures (in internal communication)
Accountability	Accountability to superiors	Lack of accountability to superiors
Situational exigencies	No time pressure Lack of language proficiency Sensitive issues	Time pressure Lack of language proficiency Sensitive issues
Interpersonal factors		
Social distance	Distant relations	Close relations
Power	Upward & downward direction	Horizontal & downward direction
Socialisation	Newcomers & old-timers	Newcomers & old-timers

Organisational factors are seen here as types of situation specific to an organisation's substance or characteristics (i.e., workings, procedures, norms, needs, exigencies, and values) rather than to other social institutions' characteristics such as an educational or health establishment, a social event, a ceremony, a court trial or sports race, which have appeared in previous formality studies (Irvine, 1979). Interpersonal factors are seen as

types of situation related to interpersonal relationships between employees, which have similarly been discussed in politeness studies (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Bremmer, 2006; Harris, 2003). The table above is intended to show the general formal and informal aspects that situations in organisations tend to acquire according to participants' perceptions and the real-life data analysis. For example, when a company is represented in its external correspondence, the situation is considered a formal one, and individualised correspondence addressed externally tends to be considered an informal one. However, not all situational factors in this study appear to have a distinct formal and informal aspect. Situations with the same aspect (e.g., lack of language proficiency, sensitive issues, newcomers & old-timers) were perceived to be related to issues of appropriacy rather than to aspects of formality. For example, when writers are doing power in discourse in this study, they do not evoke an either formal or informal situation, but one that is perceived by the participants as appropriate or inappropriate with regard to formality. These issues are further exemplified in the analysis of the written data and are specifically addressed in the conclusion.

Table 13 illustrates the linguistic representations of the situations in terms of linguistic features and their formal and informal aspects. Examples of each aspect of the linguistic features are included in appendix I (table I1).

Table 13. *Linguistic Features of Formality*

Code/Linguistic features		
Types of linguistic features	Aspects of linguistic features	
	Formality	Informality
Reference	Corporate 'we' Collective & impersonal reference Impersonal & passive structures	Individualised 'I' & 'you' Individualised reference Personal structures & active voice
Fullness of linguistic forms	Full forms	Contractions, abbreviations, word omission
(In)tolerance of grammatical errors	Attention to grammatical correctness	Tolerance of grammatical errors
Lexical register	Technical scientific lexical items Standardised phrases Unemotional detached lexical items	Everyday conversational lexical items Innovative, creative language Powerful, emotionally charged lexical items
Organisational clarity & complexity	Clear & linear paragraphing Tightly structured long & complex sentences	Loose, circular, absent paragraphing Short, simple sentences/phrases Loosely connected sentences
Degree of succinctness	Succinct language	Redundancies, additional individualised comments & wishes
Degree of explicitness	Explicit language	Implicit language
Degree of directness	Fronting/Backgrounding Indirectness in speech acts	Directness Directness in speech acts
Greetings	Impersonal	Personal

The linguistic features presented here span a variety of levels of abstraction and notional differences including grammatical categories (reference), forms of linguistic items (full-contracted forms, word omission) and attitudes towards them (in/tolerance of errors),

lexical register, and discourse strategies (degree of explicitness, directness, and succinctness, organisational clarity and complexity, critical evaluations, and greetings). Although this may be a heterogeneous array of features, a number of points are relevant here. Numerous past studies on email style and formality (Gains 1999; Rice, 1997; Sheika & Inkpen, 2010) similarly report such a variety of notionally different features. Also, the present categorisation facilitates the presentation of the most prevalent linguistic features as they emerged in past and recent literature studies discussing formality, in participants' interview reports and in the analysis of the written samples. It also facilitates the investigation of a highly complex concept like formality, which is seen to be enacted in variable levels of abstraction and notional differences. As section 1.3.3. on the quantification of formality shows, the use of more homogeneous measures of formality such as the F-measure, based only on grammatical categories (nouns, verbs, articles etc.), has proven to be inadequate to account for the formality choices made in emails.

Below, I will explain the terms used in table 13 and the categorisation employed. Although pronoun reference can be seen under both 'reference' and 'explicitness', in the first it is restricted to the difference between the corporate 'we' and the individualised 'I' and 'you', and in the latter it concerns the use of deixis in place of nouns. Innovative/creative language is seen here as unconventional/unusual to the wider workplace public e.g., MX for Mexico may have become recognisable for those living or dealing with Mexican issues, but it remains an unconventional form for those who do not. Concerning abbreviations, which can be seen under 'technical and innovative language' as well as 'fullness of linguistic forms', different abbreviations are used in each case and are categorised as such. The ones which are considered neither technical nor creative fall within the 'fullness of forms' category. Organisational complexity refers to variety, not difficulty in organisational patterns. For the purposes of this study, a short sentence/phrase is considered to be up to 10-12 words long and an excessively long one more than 25 words. Following Heylighen & Dewaele's definition, explicitness is seen here as "avoidance of ambiguity by minimising the context dependence and fuzziness of expressions" (1999, n.p.) and implicitness as context-dependence which entails clarity for the interactants who share a common understanding and fuzziness for those who do not.

5.2.2. Choice of written samples and organisation of the analysis

The email chains, situations, and linguistic features that were chosen for discussion here were the ones that were particularly illuminating in terms of formality choices both in the participants' interview reports and in the analysis of the written samples. They provided richer data sets and were also deemed by the researcher as most pertinent to the three main interpersonal relations discussed, namely social distance (SD), power, and socialisation (for discussion see section 1.3.2.). It was decided to examine chains rather than individual emails, as they provide more information about the context of the interaction (Gimenez, 2006), and present the interaction as a communicative activity (chain) made up of an evolving sequence of events (emails). Such a view facilitates the investigation of both identity construction (see section 2.3.) through the interactions between situational factors, and linguistic features.

In this chapter I will analyse six extracts each comprising a chain of emails. The analysis of extracts 1-2 focuses on the enactment of SD, 3-4 of power and 5-6 of socialisation. Although these interpersonal factors are interrelated and some may have claimed a more prominent position in the interests of researchers' than others, they are analysed in separate subsections for two reasons: the subtler meanings of each interpersonal factor and the issues that arise from each one can be investigated in more depth. For instance, SD presents interest for analysis by virtue of its evolution through time and the differences in readership. Power can also attract the interest of researchers particularly in the different ways it is perceived and enacted by the interactants. Secondly, examining these factors separately allows a better identification and delineation of their interconnectedness in terms of causality, co-occurrence, conflict, and/or prominence, if, when, and as these occur in the real-life data examined. In particular, although a great deal of work on workplace discourse has pointed to power imbalances as affecting the stylistic choices of the interactants mostly in terms of politeness (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), formality has neither been investigated in depth nor been systematically associated only with power. Instead of looking for power relationships taking a CDA perspective, the intention is to give a clear picture of all the interpersonal factors that are pertinent to the enactment of formality in the present corpus, which might have been previously overlooked. Each thematic subsection (namely on SD, power and socialisation) includes the analysis of two extracts comprising one chain each and ends with a conclusion on each thematic category.

The analysis of each extract is foregrounded with some contextual information. It is also systematically structured so as to enhance the visibility of the main points raised in each chain. In particular, the analysis of extracts I, II, and III is structured along the time progression of emails using enumeration of emails in headings (e.g., ‘email 1’, ‘emails 2 and 3’). This is to facilitate the visibility of differences between the emails in each chain. Extracts IV, V and VI are structured according to the most prominent linguistic features using representative headings (e.g., ‘greetings’, ‘explicitness’, ‘directness’) to facilitate the visibility of variation within the same linguistic feature. The analysis of the data is supplemented with interviewee quotes which are representative of the main themes that emerged in the analysis in relation to the situational and linguistic features of formality (see figure 14 and tables 12 and 13).

5.2.3. Analysis and discussion of extracts

5.2.3.1. Enactment of social distance

Extract I

Context: The first two emails are an enquiry and a response between George, the Rysy SA manager, and an unknown party in China. The third and fourth exchanges take place after a month, during which the interactants are communicating orally via Skype and MSN, where a number of enquiries are made and addressed. Informant: George

(1)

From: George

Sent: 11-4-2010 08:32:37

To: Jinan Technology Development Co

Subject: What is the FOB price on your artificial rice production line, artificial rice, artificial rice machine

Dear sir/madame

I am representing Rysy SA a family owned Greek rice milling company and we would like more information about the artificial rice machinery such as its technical details the details of the artificial rice itself and the capabilities that there are in the market (for example if it possible to mix it with liquid substances such as syrup so as to produce rice with flavour or mix it with corn etc finally we would like to have an idea of how much it costs (in general) and its capacity.

Thank you in advance

g melas

(2)

From: Yuan

Sent: Mon, 12 April 2010 17:17:28

To: George

Subject: Artificial rice production line

Dear Mr. George Melas,

Have a good day! I'm Yuan from Jinan Technology Development Co in China. I'm very pleased to receive your inquiry of artificial rice processing line..

Jinan Technology Development Co., Ltd. is a leading manufacturer of high quality Twin Screw Extruders for the food industries. We have ten years' experience of working with our customers providing specialist designs and practical solutions for a wide range of process needs. The latest computer Aided Design (CAD) technology is used by our experienced design team.

About the artificial rice processing line, it can be classified into two types with different output: 100kg/hr, 200kg/hr. Could you tell me which one is better for you?

Sure, we can add some liquid substances and corn.

It will be appreciated if you can send the pictures of artificial rice you wanted to us.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. I will try my best to support you.

Best regards

Yuan

Signature

(3)

From: George

Sent: 11-5- 2010 18:07:15

To: Yuan

Subject: Greece for rice restructuring machine

Hi Yuan, I would like to ask you some things. I am planning to come to China next month, actually I have other two companies to see, one at your region at Zhangqiu in Shandong province which should be close (or relatively close) to your company. I would like to ask however for a plane route within China that you could propose, a target airport etc.

Moreover, I would like about the spare part service of the machine, what would happen if something breaks etc. Moreover, I would like to ask whether there is any machine operating within the European Middle East region so as to ask about some techniques that could be used such as producing noodles and (one more thing) if there is a possibility to change the colour and make it more white (like Arborio or Roma rice which are Italian varieties that are more white in the centre of the kernel)

Thank you in advance

g melas

(4)

From: Yuan

Sent: Mon, 12 May 2010 15:45:35

To: George

Subject: Artificial rice production line

Dear George,

First welcome to visit our factory.

Zhangqiu belongs to Jinan, it is not far from Jinan. And I can arrange it for you, pls don't worry.

After test the machine, we can discuss the spare parts you need.

I don't have customer to produce artificial rice in Europe, but if you have any questions, welcome to ask my engineer, wish I can give you some help.

I can change the material and temperature to change the color (more white). Pls don't forget to take some samples for our reference.

And can you tell me which capacity you wanted?

Once you booked the tickets, pls don't hesitate to tell me. And we will pick you up in the Jinan international airport.

Look forward to seeing you.

Best regards

Yuan

The chain is an example of the changing formality trend of the email chain as a result of the evolving familiarity of the interactants. In terms of organisational situation all four emails are official yet not accountable - exchanges between the two parties. Both companies being small sole traders, the interactants are not accountable to anyone else but themselves. However, the analysis will show that SD predominates over other

situational factors in affecting the formality of email chain. In terms of interpersonal factors, (1) and (2) being first time information- seeking and -giving exchanges between unknown parties reflect high social distance between the interactants and (3) and (4) as subsequent exchanges following an intervening period of communication reflect the evolving familiarity and closer social distance between the interactants, points also highly visible in the interactant's self-reported data.

Emails (1) and (2)

On the basis of linguistic features, the first two emails appear to be formal in terms of their greetings, organisational clarity, and reference. With regard to greetings, the analysis points to the use of the formal opening 'dear sir/ madame' and closure 'thank you in advance'+first letter initial followed by last name, that being his own way of signing off - in (1). Yuan addresses George similarly, if not more, formally with 'Dear'+title+first+last name in the opening and 'Best regards'+first name+signature in the closure.

In a clear organisational structure the two interactants proceed to present themselves and state the purpose of their writing. George introduces himself and his business 'i am representing rysy sa a family owned greek rice milling company' and directly makes his enquiry allowing no ambiguities in 'I would like more information about...'. After a short good day wish and acknowledgement of receipt of the enquiry in 'I'm very pleased to receive your inquiry...', Yuan structures the reply similarly by presenting her company ('Jinan Technology Development Co., Ltd. is ... team'), although much more extensively than George, and addressing the queries ('About the artificial rice ... and corn'). Both emails appear to have clearly organised moves in similar fashion.

Reference, as illustrated in the use of pronouns, in both (1) and (2) appears to reflect company representation. Out of the three times George is referring to himself in (1), he uses 'we' twice. His use of 'I' can be attributed to an attempt to directly present himself as a or the sole company representative in 'i am representing rysy sa'. Knowing from contextual information that his company is a sole trader, this is very likely the case. In (2), Yuan similarly uses 'we' when presenting the company in 'We have ten years' experience' and addressing the queries in 'we can add some liquid substances'. She also uses the first person plural possessive pronoun 'our' in 'our customers', 'our experienced

design team’ and the first person plural object pronoun ‘us’ in ‘send the pictures ... to us’.

The analysis also shows a number of additional formal linguistic elements in Yuan’s reply in terms of reference, degree of directness, and lexical register: respectively the passive is used twice in ‘the CAD technology is used by our experienced team’ and ‘it can be classified into two types.’ Further the fronting in the mitigated request ‘could you tell me ...?’ and in the standardised phrase ‘if you have any questions, pls don’t hesitate to ...’ seem to politely create a distance between the two to denote a relationship of respect. The further passive and fronting of the request for photos of the rice in ‘It will be appreciated if you can send’ makes it even more formal. Regarding formality in lexical register, the technical noun phrases ‘leading manufacturer’, ‘high quality Twin Screw Extruders’, ‘food industries’, ‘specialist designs’, ‘process needs’, ‘experienced design team’ as well as technical verbs like ‘support’, ‘provide’, and ‘classify’, make the text highly formal. Informant views further support this and suggest that such formality is reminiscent of cut- and- paste extracts from company website profiles in an attempt to present the company in a positive light and encourage sales.

(28)

she probably wanted to look professional and all [...] you know [...] formal and they end up cutting and pasting from their website but you can tell [...] it doesn’t fit in (with the rest) they are trying to sell this way to promote themselves their products

Emails (3) and (4)

The linguistic analysis of the following two emails illustrates a shift in the interactants’ initial formality in the use of greetings and pronoun reference. George’s initial ‘Dear sir/madam’ preceding the body of his message in (1) shifts into ‘Hi Yuan’ embedded in the body of his first paragraph in (3). Similarly Yuan’s initial opening salutation ‘Dear Mr. George Melas’ in (2) shifts to ‘Dear Mr. George’ in (4) and in the closures the signature she used in (2) is absent in (4). Similar changes can be seen in the use of pronouns in the body of the messages. George shifts from using ‘I’ once in (1) to using ‘I’ five times as verb subject in all five of his sentences in (3). Although to some extent this is inevitable in light of being the only traveller to China, all his enquiries about his

client's products also begin with 'I'. Yuan similarly shifts pronouns from the repeated 'we' in (2) to 'I' in 'I can arrange...', 'I can change...', and 'may I know...' in (4). The changes in greetings and use of pronouns, particularly visible in the interviewee's self-reported data illustrated that the communication between the two interactants was shifting/had shifted from an official company representing enquiry-reply exchange toward more personal communication (see formal and informal aspects of 'Officialness', table 12).

Apart from the above, the analysis points to a shift in yet other linguistic features from the two interactants' initial to follow-up emails. George's (3) shows a tolerance for incorrectness not apparent in (1); a tendency can be seen to reduce capitalisation in a number of cases which call for it. As an illustration, the use of the first personal pronoun as 'i' is used in four out of the five times it is required in (3). In contrast, 'I' only shows once in (1). More tolerance of grammatical incorrectness can also be seen in the omission of 'to ask' as object of 'would like' in the beginning of the second paragraph, and in the intensely repetitive structure of three sentences; 'I would like to ask' is invariably repeated four times in George's four requests. Added to this is the conversational tone in the use of 'actually' and in the addition of '(one more thing)' in (3).

Yuan's shift in formality in the second exchange is particularly visible in the different way she expresses the same request in (2) and (4): 'It will be appreciated if you can send the pictures of artificial rice you wanted to us' changes into 'Pls don't forget to take some samples for our reference'. The first request fronted with the impersonal construction, the conditional, and the modal 'can' appears indirect and more polite than the second, which appears to be more directly expressed with an imperative and the use of 'pls' and 'don't forget to'. Studies of politeness have similarly linked indirectness in requests with social distance relationships (Holmes et al., 1999, p. 369). Added to that, Yuan abbreviates 'please' in her second email three times when she uses it in its full form in her first email.

In short, in the last two emails both interactants show a change of footing in terms of their SD relationship. This change, evidenced in their use of formality, can be explained in the context of the intervening period between the two exchanges and the related

interview data: the two interactants had developed a closer working relationship as communication between them in the intervening month was conducted via Skype. The shift in the linguistic features illustrates a realignment of identities as the two interactants reposition themselves from unknown hence distant acquaintances in (1) and (2) to closer ones in (3) and (4). Literature on CMC supports that the use of synchronous social networking promotes more informal relationships even to the point of discouraging formal working relationships at work (Crystal, 2006; Herring, 2003; Sproul & Kiesler, 1991). It is expected then to witness a change in the SD between the two interactants reflected in their choice of linguistic features after a period of instant chatting on Skype. Having said that, developments like George actually going to China and their correspondence about this would also precipitate closer SD. However, as his interview data reveal, his decision to travel to China was based on his growing familiarity with Yuan and his intention to look further into a possible cooperation with her in the future.

An additional observation can be made here concerning differences in formality between the two interactants' emails. As such differences might interfere in the extent to which the development of social distance is reflected in the overall formality trend of the chain, they are worth discussing. Although all emails have informal linguistic elements that have been frequently referred to in the studies which associate email with informality (Crystal, 2006; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000), George's emails might seem more informal than Yuan's in terms of paragraphing and sentence structure (see 'organisational clarity & complexity', table 13) and tolerance for errors, an observation also visible in George's interview data. In his first email George fits all the information in one paragraph, which is one sentence long. In one unpunctuated long run-on sentence counting 90 words, a number of requests for information are made and clarifications are given in brackets. Although he fits his second email in two paragraphs, he uses two run-ons, 'i am planning ... your company' and 'Moreover i would like about ... breaks etc.', and one long sentence, 'Moreover i would like to ask whether ... the kernel).' counting 70 words, where he gives explanations about the enquiries he is making. Added to this is the particularly visible lack of capitalisation in both of his emails. In short, George appears to have a tendency for loose organisational structure and a disregard for grammatical correctness.

Yuan's emails, on the other hand, are more clearly structured in paragraphs; (2) is written in five and (4) in seven paragraphs. Her sentences are much shorter than George's averaging 11.5 words, the longest counting 28³³. Although she may appear to overuse paragraphing, her shorter sentences might potentially render her writing more easily read and comprehended than George's long run-ons. Regarding grammatical incorrectness, Yuan's emails show few such instances in (4), which are not significantly distracting to her reader. These can be seen in the use of the present participle 'After test the machine ..' and in the omission of 'you're' in 'welcome to visit our factory' and 'welcome to ask my engineer' and of the subject pronoun 'I' in 'wish I can give you some help'. In short, from an analyst's perspective, it appears that Yuan's organisation of paragraphs and grammatical errors carry less potential to impede speed of reading and ease of understanding than George's. Asked about it, George attributed his disregard for correctness in his sentence and paragraph construction to his intention to adapt to the style of most of his audiences, who are very poor speakers of English.

(29)

most of the people I communicate with from Egypt Syria China Bulgaria speak very poor English [...] you can't even understand them [...] sometimes [...] formality is far beyond their capabilities they will use [...] ready made expressions to sound formal you know [...] or even cut and paste from the internet and end up sounding too formal or too informal so [...] reading these all the time I also end up writing like them [...] they will not know the difference anyway and I also don't have the time to think how to write this and that

The quote above points to the important differentiation between the expressed intentions of a writer and final linguistic representation by highlighting the challenges faced by non-native speakers of English or the pressure placed by time constraints (see 'situational exigencies', table 12). These factors are also reported in the literature (Rice, 1997). Although the attribution of errors to lack of knowledge of the language spoken

³³ The computation of some linguistic features of formality is intended to facilitate the differences in formal and informal linguistic features rather than to comprise the base of the analysis. The primary purpose here is to trace the interactants' transitions from formal to informal linguistic features, from one (in)formal linguistic feature to another, or the mixture of indices as they enact their professional identities in terms of SD, power, and socialisation .

does not seem to find agreement with CMC scholars (Herring, 2003), the quote also illustrates the way the importance of linguistic correctness – hence appropriate formality - seems to be undermined by time constraints and language proficiency deficits preventing one from expressing subtle stylistic features. As explained by the interviewee, standardised phrases and the use of pronouns as clear indicators of formality are perceived as doing the job when one is rushing against time or is at a loss for words.

George further pointed to cultural differences as an additional factor influencing the choice of formality elements.

(30)

I get the feeling she would have been more informal if she could express it plus she's Chinese and the Chinese usually tend to be very formal they want to show respect for the other person not like us (Greeks)

The quote above is relevant in that it shows how culture is used as an explanatory variable to explain differences in formality. George seems to attribute the differences he perceived in standardised expressions between his own and Yuan's writing to national differences. Although the analysis illustrates the existence of a number of differences in formality between the two interactants, in agreement with a significant body of literature (Roberts et al., 2005; Sarangi, 1994;) the view adopted here is that culture is a complex highly contested issue used as an abstract notion to explain differences. Adopting a post-structuralist anti-essentialist approach³⁴, the view held here is that culture is the “product of the contextualised exchanges of the interactants ... discursively constructed” rather than a priori national, organisational or gender differences (Angouri & Glynos, 2009, p. 8). In the present study viewing culture as an abstract resource one uses to explain differences that may not be attributed elsewhere by the actor becomes relevant insofar it accounts for the formality choices of the interactants which emerge in the analysis. In the

³⁴ The literature points to two major schools of thought on organisational studies: the essentialist cross-cultural tradition supports and builds on the existence of identifiable a priori national and/or organisational structures, capacities, and interests to explain observable differences in behaviour and practices. The post-structuralist anti-essentialist approach accepts the situated and contextualised nature of structures, practices and beliefs, whose very meaning is acquired through the contingency of social relations and is dependent on the actors' subjective experiences rather than objective ahistorical realities.

present study examining whether such national differences between Greek and Chinese exist is beyond the scope and the purpose of this thesis. Even so, although the participant may rightly perceive differences in the degree of formality used between himself and his interactant, the analysis predominately illustrates differences in the types of linguistic features employed by each interactant. For example, George's most visible informal linguistic features are his loose organisation and lack of capitalisation in contrast to Yuan's grammatical errors and more frequent use of paragraphs. The analysis therefore illustrates that although George's emails might be more informal than Yuan's, making such a claim with more certainty would require a more detailed analysis. What seems to emerge more clearly, instead, is that formality in George's and Yuan's emails is expressed in different linguistic features. This can problematise if and how discourse analysts can be led into conclusions about whether a text is more formal than another when different linguistic items are employed in each one. An issue that is open to further investigation.

In light of the above, an observation is made about the reflection of situational factors and their overall effect on the linguistic features in this chain. In particular, situational exigencies like language proficiency (when evidenced in the linguistic analysis), time pressure (when emerging in interview data) and culture (seen as a snapshot of the participants' subjective realities) are reflected in the mixture of formal and informal linguistic items within each individual email. Also, all emails are official correspondence between the two companies. However, only the first two are formal in both situation and linguistic features. Hence, the above situational factors do not seem to significantly affect the overall formality *trend* of the chain, which seems to primarily reflect the evolving social distance relationship between the two interactants.

In this context, the appropriacy of the formality used becomes relevant. In relation to social distance relationships, all emails appear to be appropriate. Officialness may not seem so important in the linguistic representations of formality in emails in Rysy given its small workforce size, concentration of decisions and duties on one to two persons and resultant lack of accountability to superiors. As the informant reported:

(31)

we're not very formal here (in this company)[.] whether we're formal or appropriate [.] is not important [.] well it's only us two running the mill and we're relatives [..] and basically only I do the writing here

The point made above is that appropriacy of formality, apart from being seen in the context of interpersonal relationships, can also be understood in relation to company practices. Given that in this small family business with centralised duties and decisions one person is responsible for external written communication, appropriacy of formality is not as important as it would be in larger companies with a larger workforce and layers of management, where documents play a different role and issues of the appropriacy of formality are ascribed different importance. The discussion of SD in the following extract, which comes from a large MNC addresses these issues further.

Extract II

***Context:** The exchange takes place between three people: Bill is the GetHired (online job search engine) senior Marketing Manager at Infoquest! and Susan is his boss. Tom is an external party in the organising committee of a number of events and in this case dealing with conference participation issues. In this email Tom fails to reply to Bill's enquiries - reason unknown- (2) and Bill sends a reminder (3). Bill discusses this with Susan (5, 6). ORC stands for Online Recruitment conference. AboutCom and Career are employment websites similar to Infoquest. Beacons are devices used to track user activity on web sites. **Informant:** Bill*

(1)

From: Bill

Sent: Thursday, January 7, 2010 2:40 PM

To: Tom

Subject: ORC Expo spring and Fall 2010

Hi Tom,

My name is Bill Samaras and I am the Sr. Marketing Manager for Infoquest!GetHired. I am contacting you today to discuss the possibility of having one of our seasoned speakers present/speak at the ORC Expo Spring and Fall 2010 on behalf of Infoquest!GetHired. If there are any such openings, please let me know when the best time would be to discuss next steps.

In addition, if there are no speaking engagements available, we would like to discuss any other sponsorship opportunities such as workshops, booth presence, etc.?

Best,
Bill

Signature

(2)
From: Bill
Sent: Friday, January 8, 2010 9:41 AM
To: Tom
Subject: RE: ORC Expo 2010

Hi Tom,

This is Bill again. Just a reminder about the possibility of discussing speaking opportunities in ORC Expo 2010. Participating in ORC Expo 2010 is really important to us at this time. Please, let me know when is a good time to chat. I'm on Chicago time.

Best Bill,

Signature

(3)
From: Tom
Sent: Friday, January 8, 2010 6:50 PM
To: Bill
Subject: RE: ORC Expo 2010

Hi Bill,

Thanks for your interest in OrcExpo 2010. We had a fantastic show in 2009, and based on the resulting «buzz», we've already had a great amount of interest in the 2010 show!! I have a definite interest in talking with you

Per our conversation, I felt I could answer all your questions via email. Attached are the two sponsor guides for the expo and summit. If you are interested in other events listed below, let me know and I will send you more information on those conferences as well. We're holding six conferences next year.

In addition to the dates below, we're also going to be holding two social recruiting summits in April on corporate campuses in Seattle.

Best,
Tom Erickson
VP of Sales-ERE Media
Signature

(4)
From: Bill
Sent: Friday, January 8, 2010 8:16 PM
To: Tom
Subject: RE: ORC Expo 2010

Hi Tom,

Thanks for the info. When would be a good time to chat tomorrow or Wednesday?

Best Bill,
Signature

(5)
From: Bill
Sent: Saturday, January 9, 2010 7:00 PM
To: Susan
Subject: RE: ORC Expo 2010

Do you still want to have a call w/[him](#). He declined my invite, but I can ask him to have a call.

(6)
From: Susan
Sent: Saturday, January 9, 2010 8:00 PM
To: Bill
Subject: RE: ORC Expo 2010

Well, he's answered all my questions. Do you think he understands/cares how important our presence in ORC is to us?

It is interesting that AboutCom and Career aren't adding beacons (according to Taylor).

This chain mainly illustrates the way formality changes according to the different social distance relationships of the interactants in their external and internal correspondence in the context of InfoQuest!'s communication practices. With regard to organisational factors, the first four exchanges are official correspondence with external parties on behalf of Infoquest! and the last two are personal internal emails although all exchanges are on work related matters. In terms of interpersonal factors the linguistic analysis shows the way the reflection of SD dominates that of other types of interpersonal relationships as this is reflected in the formal and informal linguistic features of the interaction.

Email (1)

The linguistic analysis shows that (1) is mostly characterised by formal linguistic features in its use of organisational clarity and complexity, lexical register, reference, fullness of language forms and greetings. This being the writer's first contact with an unknown person, in clear organisational structure he introduces himself and makes his enquiries for information and the possibility of a follow up call. Sentence structure is consistent with the formality of clear move organisation. The message is written in four long sentences averaging 22 words, the shortest being 14 and the longest 29 words. Apart from length, variation in sentence structure further adds to their formality. With the exception of the only simple sentence 'I am contacting ... InfoQuest!GetHired', the message is composed with one compound and two complex sentences. Lexical register appears to be consistently formal through the use of standardised phrases in the writer's

primary intention ‘I am contacting you today to ...’, ‘please let me know’, ‘we would like to discuss’, and ‘My name is ...’. Numerous books on business correspondence teach such stock phrases, the use of which has been associated with formality (Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000). In particular, Gains (1999) links the adherence to standard conventions in business communication to formal language. Crystal (2006) provides an explanation for this as most guidebooks tend to be restrictive and prescriptive in what is considered appropriate for business communication. The use of such standardised expressions is also made explicit in the writer’s self reported data.

(32)

you don't need much novelty or improvisation here so that everybody can easily recognise the purpose of the letter [...] what the other person wants from you exactly (Bill)

Regarding pronoun reference, despite the prevalence of ‘I’ in the body of the message, linking it with personal or informal style, a shift is noted from ‘I’ to ‘we’ in ‘we would like to discuss’ appearing to signify official company representation according to the analysis and the informant’s reports. All language units are complete with no contractions or abbreviations. Against this background the informality in the greetings appears inconsistent. Although the closure includes Bill’s signature (this being his first contact with Tom), the use of ‘hi’+first name in the opening and the use of the mere ‘best’+first name seem to be a strong signal of informality especially given that this is the first contact with an unknown party and the use of first and last name in the writer’s introduction of himself in the body of the message. Examined outside company practices and in isolation from the rest of the emails in the chain, one might see such inconsistency with the higher degree of formality of the body of the message as a divergence from the distant SD relationship of the interactants. However, background information from Infoquest! interviewees consistently point to the informal code in their company communication and attribute it to organisational practices.

(33)

yeap (laughs) this is how we write here [...] this is normal in this company [...] we use first names most of the time and between us we may even not have that at all (Bill)

The link between communication and organisational practices has been found to be a strong one especially within a CofP framework (see section 2.1.). A defining characteristic of a CofP, whether in the form of a small group or a large constellation of many CofPs, is the “discourse by which the members create meaningful statements about the world as well as the styles by which they express their forms of membership and their identities as members” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). A number of scholars have discussed the way the discourse of employees signifies their belonging to CofPs in workplace communication (Angouri, 2007; Angouri & Harwood, 2008; Holmes & Mara, 2002) and the existence of differences in communication practices between companies (Gimenez, 2002; Lutz, 1989). Accordingly, the linguistic analysis of the present email and of all the samples written by Infoquest! employees in the present study (also extracts IV and V) as well as the self-reported data illustrate that Infoquest! has a tendency towards an informal code in its email communication. This is more visible when seen in comparison to the emails of the other companies in the sample particularly in the manifestation of greetings.

Despite the consistency in formality in situation and form in this email, no party is copied in. This possibly indicates that accountability to superiors, insofar it is indicated in the CC function, does not carry as much weight in the communication practices of this company as in the other participant companies like PharmaMed, where there might be a greater need to account for and be transparent in external correspondence moves to superiors (this is also evident in PharmaMed data, extracts III and VI). Interview data further corroborate this:

(34)

there is no need, I don't cc my boss in every email I request information or make a new business contact [...] she trusts me [...] we only cc if necessary here
(Bill)

Email (2)

The analysis of Bill's reminder upon receiving no reply shows a shift towards a less formal tone than (1) in the fullness of language forms, reference, lexical register, degree of explicitness, tolerance of incorrectness and greetings. Concerning the first, the use of

elliptical language is noted in the fragment ‘Just a reminder about ... Expo2010’ in line with the more common contraction ‘I’m’ in ‘I’m on Chicago time’. The use of pronoun reference indicates a mixture of the corporate first person plural object pronoun ‘us’ in ‘[participation in the event] is really important to us’ and first person singular pronoun ‘me’ in ‘let me know’ and ‘I’ in ‘I’m on Chicago time’, which appears to be neutralising the two extreme ends of company representation and personal reference. Added to this is an instance of a more informal use of lexical items than its respective use in email (1); compare ‘chat’ in (2) with the more formal ‘discuss’ used three times in (1) and the impersonal structure ‘This is Bill again’ in (2) with the personal structure ‘My name is Bill Samaras’ in (1). The second example is also a case of difference in explicitness as ‘This’ is less explicit than ‘my name’. Along the same lines, the object of the verb ‘discuss’ is made explicit in (1), as ‘first steps’, but the one of ‘chat’ is absent in (2).

An illustrative example of shift in formality is the difference between ‘please let me know when the best time would be to discuss next steps’ in (1) with ‘Please let me know when is a good time to chat’ in (2). The comparison between the two sentences reveals two grammatical differences: ‘would be’ changes into ‘is’, the modality in the first indicates possibility and the second certainty. The implication appears to be here that expressing possibility is less direct and more polite than the more direct expression of certainty allowing the reader the freedom to decide on the best time to chat. Hence (1) appears to be more formal than (2).

With reference to greetings, the analysis shows that both emails begin with the informal ‘hi’+first name and end with the mere ‘best’+ first name and the added signature. Greetings seem to be a strong signal of informality especially in the context of a first time contact.

Overall, as can be seen, the examined linguistic features above seem to appear occasionally rather than repeatedly in the same text indicating a mixture of richly variable yet fairly consistent degree of formality with respect to linguistic features as the analysis has shown. However, the second email appears to be less formal than the first and both emails can be placed towards the informal end of the continuum. Self reported data confirm the analysis pointing to the company’s preference for informality despite the writer’s annoyance at not receiving a reply to his request for a chat.

(35)

I was a bit upset of course [...] but I couldn't show it [...] I didn't know him at the time so I wrote to him again in the same way I usually write [...] you know in the same style (Bill)

The writer's admission that, despite his annoyance, he resorts to the usual (i.e. informal) way he writes is relevant in three ways: it illustrates the potential grievances have for causing a shift in formality (see 'sensitive issues', table 11); it indicates that in the particular instantiation of formality, SD overrides sensitive issues; in line with the linguistic analysis, it indicates that the effect social distance has on formality should be placed in the context of the company's communication practices.

Email (3)

Tom responds to the request in what appears to be a mixture of formal and informal elements as seen in the use of lexical register, pronoun reference, completeness of language units and greetings. The first paragraph seems to be informal illustrating the emergence of the themes of personal stance and reference. This can be seen in the use of powerful emotional language in 'fantastic show' and the 'resulting buzz'. Similarly the punctuation of the three dots and the two exclamation marks similarly ties in with the informal diction and the pronouns 'I' and 'you' in 'I have a definite interest in talking with you' seem to give it a personalised tone. It appears that Tom is either expressing enthusiasm about last year's success and Bill's interest in a future event or is simply being apologetic for delaying to reply.

In the next paragraph, the informal tone seems to shift with the use of formal lexical items in the bureaucratic 'Per our conversation' subsequently marking a shift in formality (also see section 1.3.1.). The shift becomes particularly visible in both the analyst's and the informant's interpretations. It is not coincidental that, although Tom is providing Bill with the necessary information, the request for a chat is turned down and Bill perceives it as explaining his interactant's shift in formality. As he reports in his interview,

(36)

I would imagine if he had just said yes he would have said it more informally he would have been friendlier sometimes we distance ourselves when we [...] give bad news or displease someone (Bill)

The above shift in formality and its interpretation by the interactant further support the potential the discussion of sensitive issues has to cause a shift in formality discussed earlier. Particularly interesting is that the participant interpretation of the shift not only converges with the literature discussions (e.g. Gains, 1999) and the analysis but it extends them; although according to the literature and the analysis (also see extract VI), the shift can be directed at either end of formality, in this chain the refusal is expressed with a shift toward the formal end. The shift becomes even more visible considering the linguistic features and the situational context of the rest of the email. Regarding the first, the rest of the email seems to be characterised by a mixture of formal and informal elements: As an illustration, both ‘I’ as an indicator of informality and ‘we’ as an indicator of formality (see table 12) are used four times in this email. Similarly, structures like ‘If you are interested’ and ‘We’re holding’ are both in abbreviated and full form. Regarding the second, theoretically, the interactants’ high SD (in terms of interpersonal context) should signal a pull toward the formal end but the informality characterising Infoquest! emails (in terms of organisational context) should signal a pull toward the opposite end. Hence, in this email the conflicting situational factors appear to reflect the blend of formal and informal linguistic features.

Email (4)

Bill’s reply seems to be similarly - if not slightly more - informal than his previous emails, which can be seen in his use of abbreviations, his directness and greetings. Accordingly, one may note the abbreviated ‘info’ and his direct question in his invitation for a chat. Similarly to the closure in his previous email but in contrast to his first, he places his first name in the same line as ‘Best’, a minor divergence from the convention of separating the two in different lines. His minimal reply appears to be placed toward the informal end of the continuum possibly reflecting the closer familiarity with his interactant and/or the informal code in Infoquest! communication practices.

Emails (5) & (6)

Worth noting in the exchange is the degree of (in)formality employed between Bill and his boss in (5) and (6). Although one might expect more formality in upward than downward or horizontal communication, the two parties communicate in an informal style that resembles casual oral conversation. This can be seen in the sporadic rather than repeated appearance of various linguistic features: their greetings, organisational complexity, form fullness, degree of explicitness and lexical register. Openings and closures and paragraph structuring are omitted in both emails. The structure of texts as minimal as these (comprising two to three sentences each) might best be seen in terms of sentences than paragraphs and resemble more the occasional oral bursts of impulsive thoughts than carefully or linearly organised written ideas. Susan does not provide a clear or direct answer despite being asked for her intervention as her hint at Tom's lack of understanding and follow up question imply. The organisation of the two written exchanges seems to resemble the dropping of ideas on the table (see 'organisational clarity & complexity', table 13) rather than providing direct question-answer responses, more suitable for more structured oral or written communication. In her study of emails, Chen (2006) similarly views looseness in message structure as a feature of informality.

Also note Bill's unconventional abbreviation 'w/him'. The implicit shared contextual information is visible in Bill's addition of 'still' in 'do you still want to have a call with him' and his heavy use of deixis in the five personal and one possessive pronouns. In her highly short reply Susan similarly uses four personal and two possessive pronouns. She also neither specifies which questions she had in mind or Tom has answered nor provides an explicit link between the two points she raises in her email: participation in ORC and the use of beacons by their competitors. She also starts with the conversational 'well'. The above show that the two interactants share background knowledge without which the conversation would be hard to follow. In line with Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), the implicitness observed between the two interactants indicates the informality of their exchanges.

The combination of all the above linguistic features in (5) and (6) is suitable for a casual exchange of ideas between well-acquainted people. This is corroborated by Bill who characterises the two exchanges between himself and his boss as 'informal unofficial talk between colleagues'. Goffman's (1961) 'underlife' of an institution becomes relevant

here. That is, the backstage interactions that take place behind the scenes and do not get recorded in official accounts are seen to comprise a substantial part of the everyday life of an institution. Backstage in this chain is seen as the internal correspondence between Infoquest! employees and frontstage as external correspondence between Infoquest! employees and potential clients. In this context, illustrated is the potential of email to be used for more informal, unofficial and personal discussions of workplace issues. It is worth noting that the backstage interaction takes place between two employees of different hierarchical status in frequent contact with each other. Thus the informal style of (5) and (6) primarily reflects the close SD relationship of the interactants in contrast to the previous more formal exchanges between Bill and Tom, who were in higher SD.

In this context, a few observations are worth adding further supported by Bill's interview data:

(37)

that's how we generally talk here (in this company) to our boss to the people we work with you know to our clients it's generally informal (laughs) [...] well [...] sometimes you can be more or less informal or in different ways [...] with my boss I don't say much we understand each other she writes like that to me I write back the same way [...] with people outside the company we say hi Bill hi Tom [...] but sometimes they write more informally like you know 'fantastic show' and all [...] now I don't particularly follow this (their informality) if it's too much [...] some words annoy me you know it depends on who is the client here

The above quote is relevant in different ways: in the first two lines it shows that informality is part of organisational practice in this company. More importantly, given this informality it makes a distinction between its instantiation in different linguistic features: between Bill and his boss informality is expressed mainly through shared implicit context but between Bill and external parties it is expressed mainly through other linguistic features (here the use of emotionally charged language). The quote also points to the co-construction of work relationships within company practices as the style a writer uses as an initiator of an interaction (one reflecting the way he perceives his relationships with his reader) in turn affects the way the reader perceives it too and responds accordingly. The dependence of an email receiver's style on that of the sender's

has also been reported in literature (Crystal, 2006, p. 112). Susan writes informally to Bill, and Bill replies in a similar style illustrating that language constructs and is constructed by the relationship of the interactants. Quite interestingly, though, Bill decides not to always take up other people's style when they initiate the exchange. This may possibly point to power issues, where Bill takes up his boss's writing style and not his client's. If this was the case, the enactment of power (in this exchange) and of close social distance would both result in informal linguistic elements. However, although Bill may be informal here because his boss is, this did not emerge in the interview data. Instead, both the analysis of the formality used in all the emails in the chain and the interview data illustrate that the social distance relationship is primarily reflected in the chain. Clearly illustrated in the above is that the writer is actually involved, although to a different degree according to his readers, in a process of co-construction of work relationships and of the linguistic means of expressing them in line with a social constructionist perspective (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995).

Overall the enactment of formality in the two extracts becomes interesting in three ways: First, they indicate the ways formal and informal linguistic features are employed as identities in terms of SD are constructed and negotiated. Although other identities (e.g., in relation to power) and situational factors may affect a number of formality elements, the overall trend of formality in both extracts primarily reflects the SD relationship of the interactants. This is shown in two principal ways: in the way the SD of the same interactants changes in time and in the different readers the writers address, with whom they share a different SD relationship.

Also, the enactment of formality in relation to the consistency situation and form differs in the two extracts. In the first, despite the officialness of the external correspondence, the linguistic features employed are informal progressing to even more informal ones following the evolution of the SD relationship of the interactants. In contrast, the second chain illustrates consistency between situation and form as the first three emails are more formal official exchanges between parties in high SD than the last two unofficial exchanges between parties in close social distance.

Finally, under the assumption that the emails above are representative samples of the usual email communication in their companies, the analysis also points to inter-company

differences in communication practices with regard to the degree and appropriacy of formality. The informality and its appropriacy in Rysy is associated with the one-man type of business; inappropriacy is tolerated as decisions about how appropriate the language is fall on the only gatekeeper of the community who probably does not consider that stylistically inappropriate language may have serious consequences on the commercial efficiency of the company given the equally low level of language proficiency of his interactants. By contrast, in Infoquest! informality is appropriate as it comprises part of the company's informal style in email communication.

5.2.3.2. Enactment of power

Extract III

Context: In (1) Chris, PharmaMed's financial controller, issues a directive to department managers and copies in the two senior managers, Andrew and Koliias. (2) is a reminder of the first sent on the date of the deadline. The first email was in Greek and the second in English. *Informants:* Maria and Chris

(1) (Translated from Greek)

From: Chris

Sent: Wednesday, September 01, 2010 10:40 AM

To: [Dep Head 1]; [Dep Head 2]; [Dep Head 3]; Maria; [Dep Head 4]

Cc: Andrew; Koliias; Gregory

Subject: Sales 31/8/2010

Importance: High

Good morning to all,

I am sending eight month sales. This data will form the basis on which you will prepare the sales budget for 2011 (in whichever form of analysis suits you at this stage).

The budget draft will have to be returned to me by Friday 17/9.

At your disposal for any clarifications.

Chris.

(2)

From: Chris

Sent: Friday, September 17, 2010 9:00 AM

To: [Dep Head 1]; [Dep Head 2]; [Dep Head 3]; Maria; [Dep Head 4]

Subject: RE: Sales 31/8/2010

Reminder

Budget

Today

In this email chain, the way formality is used illustrates the predicament writers are in when addressing readers in different hierarchies and departments in their official internal

correspondence. As the analysis shows, this is evidenced in the consistency between interpersonal factors and form and inconsistency between organisational factors and form.

Email (1)

In relation to the organisational factors of situation, the first email is formal in terms of officialness and accountability. It is a formal directive by virtue of the writer's post as a financial controller and its internal distribution to equal and higher posts. Worth noting is that Chris is not at a higher post than his direct addressees; the directive is primarily communicated horizontally as his expertise and post duties, rather than his level of post, allows him to do so. In this email, Chris copies in his two superiors, Andrew and Kolia, whom he is accountable to.

In terms of linguistic features, the analysis shows consistency with the organisational factors. In the context of PharmaMed, the email is a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features as can be seen in its greetings, reference, degree of explicitness and directness (see 'types of linguistic features', table 13). Regarding greetings, one may note the use of the neutral in terms of formality opening salutation 'good morning to all', the writer's name, 'Chris', and the polite addition 'at your disposal for any clarifications'. Although closure with the writer's first name may appear informal in comparison to more formal closures with the last name and signature, its actual presence – rather than absence, which would make it more informal – may appear to add a tone of formality yet friendliness placing it somewhere in the middle of the continuum for an internal directive in PharmaMed.

Concerning reference, the use of 'I' and 'you' seems to reflect a tone of informality suited to internal correspondence of restricted distribution. The email is sent only to the group of department heads, the official duties of which involve budget preparation.

Particularly visible in the analysis is the high degree of explicitness in the writer's clarifications on the budget preparation, which is indicative of formality. The writer specifies the form of analysis required, the deadline for the budget submission, and invitation for clarification queries. Asked about it Chris pointed to the need for absolute

clarity in interdepartmental communication in what one writes as well as the way s/he expresses it:

(38)

a big problem we have here [...] is in our interdepartmental communication [...] each department has its own code of communication [...] it names and understands things in its own way differently [...] but first you must think who are you are writing to (?) [...] find a common code and then write [...] it's something I learned in my previous company [...] there the problem was more serious so it helped me realise how important this is [...] if you ask me it's so important it should be explicitly officially stated because people don't often understand

Chris' comments point to the problem employees have in understanding the discourse of their colleagues in other departments. Well supported by the CofP framework, this difficulty is attributed to the inaccessibility non- and new members have to the specialised discourse of workplace communities. Illustrated here is the existence of CofPs at a departmental level with their own specialised discourse. Also, the resulting problems in miscommunication of content and intentions between employees in different departments and from different cultures has been well reported in the literature (see section 1.1.5.) and rightly characterised as “endemic to workplace discourse” (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 31). In this light relevant becomes the way formality (through explicitness) ensures avoidance of miscommunication critical in high stake or high-risk interactions (also see rationale for formality, section 1.3.4.).

Interestingly the importance of avoiding such miscommunication is something Chris learned in his previous employment in another company, which he carried over to his present one. Illustrated here is membership in CofPs at an organisation level and the potential experience acquired in other CofPs has to carry over to new communities (also see section 4.4. on solutions to problems). In this way, although upon their socialisation members are affected by the organisation, they can also be agents of change. “[The process] is almost always interactional - a process wherein the writer has the potential to affect the organisation, just as the organisation has the potential to affect the writer” (Lutz, 1989, p. 128). Although this is more extensively discussed in the analysis of extracts V and VI on the employees' socialisation, it becomes relevant here in relation to

the strong positioning Chris makes on the issue of explicitness and clarity. As illustrated in his quote, such is the need for a common understanding between departments that it should be made official. A strong positioning emanating from power by virtue of his experience and expertise is possible here; Chris perceives formality as explicitness and officialness. He also finds his own solution (explicitness) to the problem he identifies (miscommunication), acts upon it, and attempts to impose it.

The analysis also illustrates the use of directness with which Chris writes ‘You will prepare the budget’ and ‘The budget draft will have to be returned to me’ without any mitigation. According to feedback from interview reports, the above two acts were meant as directives not as predictions. Directness in linguistics often marks closeness in relations, and directness in directives according to politeness theory may indicate power (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Harris, 2003). However, with regard to formality in the present study according to participant perceptions, it is associated with informality, the implication being a more formal directive would be more politely issued.

Looking at the formality of this email overall, it appears to show a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features. Its greetings are neutral, the use of ‘I’ and ‘you’ is informal, its explicitness is formal, and its directness is informal. Such a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features prevents its placement in the very formal end of continuum. Chris perceives it as lying somewhere in the middle between the two ends in the context of PharmaMed’s communication practices.

(39)

one needs to be careful in how s/he phrases things [...] I wouldn't like to sound too authoritative but I need to sound firm [...] at the same time I've got the big boss over my head so I've chosen direct ways of giving the directive and at the same time add a touch of mmm informality for [...] collegiality.

Both the quote and the mixture of formal and informal elements in the analysis point to the predicament Chris is in terms of power relations as he is both issuing a directive to his colleagues and accounting for it to his superiors. As a party in power, the power of his expertise as a Financial Controller (one that cannot be acquired by sales or service staff), grants him the right to determine issues of appropriacy, something that has been

extensively discussed by critical discourse theorists (Fairclough, 1992) and analysts (Holmes et al., 1999). Given his predicament in having to include his superiors in the same correspondence, Chris appears to keep a neutral position. This shows in his decision to avoid sounding “*too authoritative*” and to sound “*firm*” and his choice of what he perceives as both formal and informal elements: simply put, he greets his colleagues formally and expresses the directive informally. However, as explained in his quote ‘*he’s got the big boss over his head*’. So power seems to affect Chris’ choices in two visible ways: by virtue of his expertise over his colleagues and by his superiors’ legitimate inherent power over him whom he is accountable to in the same correspondence. Possibly less visibly the aspect of power emanating from Chris’ experience in the field as a Financial Controller but not in the current company is also reflected here. The email is an example of the predicament writers are in when addressing multiple audiences both horizontally and vertically, a predicament that other researchers have also discussed (Bremmer, 2006).

Email (2)

Things become clearer by looking at (2), illustrated in the analysis as an informally expressed but still official reminder of a clear directive by virtue of its implicitness and elliptical language (see ‘degree of explicitness’ and ‘fullness of forms’, table 13); the highly telegrammatic text comprises only three words, no greetings and is addressed to department heads only.

(40)

if I wanted to be more formal mmm [...] I [...] would have said more mmm please can you (?) [...] and I would also send it to the big boss but the people here [...] know what they have to do [...] I can afford to be a bit informal sometimes even you know with official reminders like this (Chris)

The above dialogue points to implicitness as an indicator of informality in agreement with other researchers (Gimenez, 2000; Heylighen and Dewaele, 1999). Although a reminder can inherently be less detailed than the original exchange, the use of three words, two of which are in English, giving it a slightly light-hearted tone may seem too minimal and ‘serious’ to make it a formal reminder especially when compared to the previous highly explicit directive counting 51 words. Hidden is also the assumption that

all addressees speak English or at least that they are all familiar with the English terms ‘reminder’ and ‘budget’. Rice (1997) similarly associates the tendency to itemise with informality and the rush to get information on page (pp. 14-15) and Chen (2006) and Gimenez (2000) link elliptical language with informality.

Apart from Chris’ assumption that no clarifications are further needed in the reminder, the second email is also a better chance to establish solidarity among his colleagues than his previous email in line with a number of researchers (Chen, 2006; Gimenez, 2000) who link informality with collegiality among peers. In light of the above, the shift in formality from the first to the second email illustrates Chris’ realignment of identities from a powerful position to one of equal standing with his colleagues similar to other sociolinguistic studies on power relationships (Bremmer, 2006; Holmes et al., 1999). Although he seems to be placing himself closer to his superiors whom he appears to be overtly accountable to in his CCing function in (1), he seems to reposition himself closer to his equals without using the CC function and addressing them in a lighter tone in (2). Parallel to this realignment comes a change in footing (Goffman, 1983), as perceived and intended by the writer, from issuing a directive to a reminder. Although to the analyst, a reminder of a directive should be considered a directive, according to the participant’s self reported data in the discourse based interview, it was intended as a reminder, revealing a divergence between the participant’s and the researcher’s account. As the insights of this study are primarily informed by the participant perceptions similar to other discourse-based analyses of written data (e.g., Harwood, 2006) and unlike corpus-based approaches that are informed by the researcher’s perceptions, it was decided to retain the writer’s intention of the email as a reminder. Although there is an inherent risk of subjectivity in such an approach, the participants’ perceptions were considered alongside the discourse analysis of the data as both writers and researcher contributed to the interpretation of the results (also discussed in section 3.6). As Chris reports,

(41)

(laughs) oh this is only a kind of [...] last minute thing [...] a reminder [...] an official reminder but nothing more

Such parallel changes in footing and alignment have been reported in other sociolinguistic studies (Candlin et al., 1999) adding further support to Goffman’s theory

of footing (1983) and the view of professional identities as constructed in and through discourse rather than predetermined static traits (see section 2.2.2.).

The chain above is an example of inconsistency between organisational factors of situation and form as the official directive is expressed with a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features, rather than only formal, and the official reminder with informal features. It is however, an example of consistency between the interpersonal variable of power and form as the first shows the predicament the writer is in when addressing people at different levels of power and the second illustrates solidarity among colleagues. With regard to appropriacy it also comprises an example of what is considered appropriate formality for internal communication in the particular company-one that seems to value hierarchy and competition and as a result strengthens the ground for power imbalances and various forms of power to emerge.

Extract IV

***Context:** Bill and Luis are senior managers in Infoquest! Luis is president of the company's Mexico office. Ricardo is the company's Vice President of Global Media Alliances sector, 'Global Monster', preoccupied with the company's global rather than local concerns. In the first email, Bill invites the team to a meeting to solve the problem the Mexico office is having with GetHired's low rates and funding, the company's new Facebook application. Among others, he invites Ricardo (at the top in the hierarchy of the team) and Luis, and copies in the rest of the team. As known from contextual information, a number of calls follow the invitation, where the invited parties confirm their presence. The meeting takes place the following day, but Ricardo, having cut Mexico's funding for the program and thus a key player in the meeting, is not present and decisions are taken without him. The conflict between the parties is addressed in (2) and (3). According to the two informants, although (3) was written by Luis alone, it clearly represented both Bill and himself in content and in style. **Informants:** Bill and Luis*

(1)

From: Bill

Sent: Mon, 31 October 2011 11:30 AM

To: Bill; Ricardo; [member 1]; [member 2]; Luis

Cc: [member 3]; [member 4]; [member 5]

Subject: Discuss GetHired Mexico CPA Obstacles

When: Tuesday, November 01, 2011 3:30 PM – 4:00 PM (GMT-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).

Where: [TEXT]; access code: [TEXT]

Hi Team.

I am currently in Mexico City, and we are going to be meeting with OMD Mexico to discuss how they can help improve CPA GetHired rates. Are you available at this time?

Thanks!

-Bill

(2)

From: Ricardo

Sent: Mon, 1 November 2011 02:51 p.m.

To: Bill; Luis

Cc: Dave

Subject: RE: Discuss GetHired Mexico CPA Obstacles

Bill and Luis-unfortunately I was unable to make the call today as I was tied up with GetHired issues related to the errors we're seeing with the app but I heard that the teams were ambushed and berated for turning Mexico's spend off and not communicating about it properly.

This is unacceptable and untrue.

If anyone has issues with how the budget is being managed they should come to me as this is ultimately the global InfoQuest team's decision.

The adjustment was communicated within 24 hours of the decision being made.

My team and the global OMD team have been working very hard to make BeHired a success and I will not stand for this type of treatment of them.

We very clearly laid out the approach to budgets from the beginning and reiterated that approach several times to you and Will so there should be no surprise when budgets get shifted quickly as we are under a lot of pressure to drive global adoption. As was explained, the optimizations that worked in other markets did not work in Mexico so we had to shift the dollars elsewhere in order to maintain global GetHired install growth.

If Mexico wants to build a test plan with guidance from global teams/learning and fund it locally to try to figure out how to increase performance as have other markets then that makes sense, but we cannot continue to fund Mexico from the global budget if it performs worse than the other markets we are funding.

In the future, I would appreciate it if you came to me to discuss directly rather than getting the team on the phone under the guise of discussing what the challenges were and berating them for the budget being paused.

Thanks,

Ric

(3)

From: Luis

Sent: Wednesday, 2 November 2011 01:13 p.m.

To: Ricardo; Bill

Cc: Dave; Will

Subject: RE: Discuss GetHired Mexico CPA Obstacles

Ric,

Your team was in no way ambushed and berated, I was just very clear on what my opinion was and wanted to find a solution. We were never rude or out of line, I was just very direct. We did go to you, that was why Bill invited you to participate in the call, if your agenda didn't permit it maybe we should have cancelled the meeting and wait for your attendance since evidently your presence was essential to the outcome of the reunion; Next time I'll make sure you are there or that we simply don't have the call at all.

There was no double agenda in this meeting, and certainly there was no foul play intended, my plan all the time and Bill knows it well, was to find a way to get Mexico back in the budget list and that is exactly what I did.

On the other hand we did come up with some good actionable items, that could help us build a case in the future weeks to get the spend back again in MX, in fact we already had our first meeting with OMD locally to get the ball running.

Lastly, I do find some of your remarks offensive and with no fundament; I think that confronting «Status Quo» and finding solutions is the best way to innovate and evolve, so even if your rules were communicated clearly, It is still my fiduciary obligation to fight for what I believe is important for InfoQuest! Mexico and InfoQuest! overall.

I'm sorry if your team got upset, I also apologize if you got upset, but I will continue to fight for what I feel is critical for our operation and company, we will be respectful, but respect includes clear expectations and getting to next steps to solve the problem.

That is exactly what I did.

If you want to talk any more on the subject Bill and myself are available later this week.

Best and look forward to continue working with you.

The chain is interesting in the numerous inconsistencies it reveals between form and situation as well as among its various linguistic features. Regarding organisational factors of situation all emails appear to be formal by virtue of their officialness, accountability, and transparency as they are all being communicated to all parties involved at various hierarchical ranks. Dave – copied in (2) and (3) - is Bill's superior, and Will - copied in (3) - is Luis' superior. The first email, although not copying in superiors initially, was forwarded to them later. However, in terms of form the analysis shows that the overall style of the chain is informal. At a micro level analysis of the resolution of their conflict, each of the two interactants is found to be employing a mixture of formality elements according to their arguments.

Consistencies in linguistic features

In support of the overall informality of the chain the analysis points to greetings, lexical register and organisational structure. With regard to the first, 'hi team' used in (1), the

unconventional ‘Bill and Luis-’ inserted in the body of (2) and ‘Ric’ rather than ‘Ricardo’ in (3) are all clearly informal openings. Similar are the closures ‘thanks’+first name in (1) and (2) and absence of salutations in (3). Similar salutations have been reported as informal by other researchers (Crystal, 2006; Bjorge, 2007).

Concerning lexical register, everyday conversational language is used in ‘to make the call’, ‘I was tied up’, and ‘getting the team on the phone’ in (2) and ‘I was just very clear’, ‘we were never rude’, ‘we did go to you’ and ‘I’m sorry if your team got upset’ in (3). Such colloquialisms have been repeatedly associated with oral language and as such considered indicators of informality. Gimenez (2000) and Crystal (2006) talk of colloquial expressions and abbreviations often present in institutional emails. Hence the “telephone analogy” suggested by Gains (1999).

To this one can add the loose paragraph structure and the long sentences that can sometimes resemble more speech than writing. Loose paragraphing in the form of one sentence or long non-linear paragraphs has been found to characterise more personal correspondence than institutional or commercial, hence its link to informality; for example, Chen (2006) attributed the loose organisation of her students’ paragraphs to an intention to give a personal touch. A tendency for simplification in the presentation of ideas followed by a lack of linguistic cohesive devices between paragraphs has also been found as characteristic of emails and linked to writing under pressure, to a carefree attitude -emails can easily be deleted and forgotten (Crystal, 2006; Panteli, 2002)- urging a “reactive rather than reflective attitude” to writing (Rice, 1997, p. 14). Hence the association with informality. Similar is the length of the sentences. Apart from one with two sentences, all eight paragraphs in (2) are one-sentence long, averaging three lines long each. Similarly the eight paragraphs in (3) are either one or two sentences each, nine of which are run-ons (e.g., ‘Your team was in no way ambushed and berated, I was just very clear on what my opinion was and wanted to find a solution.’). As Rice (1997) nicely puts it, when referring to “the serial fashion [of composing sentences] using few transitions, short rudimentary paragraphs ... more closely resemble brief conversational bursts than complete units” (p. 13) in the form of an oral casual dialogue rather than a well-developed and structured piece of writing. However, despite the apparent loose structure, lack of cohesive devices and numerous run-ons, understanding is impeded neither in the particular exchange nor in email communication in general (Crystal, 2006).

The above features are also visible and further explained in the self-reported data. As Bill reported,

(42)

this is the style of this company [...] this is how we write to each other (laughs) like we talk we are very informal in this company it may sound informal to you and [...] it is (laughs) but it's ok it's how we do things here

The quote above seems to make a generalisation about the overall writing style adopted in the company and its appropriacy as part of its writing practices. It also implies that appropriacy may differ from company to company, a point similarly emerged in the discussion of the previous chains and is well reported in the literature on workplace communication (e.g., Gimenez, 2002; Lutz, 1989). “[T]he way they handle technical writing at Kodak is very different from the way they do at Corning, and each way is tied up with the corporation’s organisation, its self-image, its decisions about what is acceptable behaviour, its evaluations of judgment and knowledge, and so on” (Dobrin, 1983, p. 248).

With regard to the appropriacy of the inconsistency between situation and linguistic features, the chain appears to be appropriate in the context of the given company as confirmed by both informants in their interview. The various inconsistencies in each email are discussed in detail below.

Inconsistencies in linguistic features

Email (1)

The inconsistency between the formality (in terms of officialness) of the situation and informality (in terms of explicitness) of form is particularly visible in a micro-analysis of email (1), which, as a general announcement call, an outsider might expect to have a formal form. On the contrary, the analysis shows extensive use of implicitness evident in the personal pronouns ‘I’ in ‘I am currently in Mexico City’, ‘you’ in ‘are you available’, ‘we’ in ‘we are going to be meeting’ and ‘they’ in ‘how they can help improve’. Such use of personal pronouns tends to make the text more personalised and build solidarity and involves a great deal of shared implicit context. By contrast, a more formal

invitation would include names of people, teams and companies instead (Gimenez, 2000; Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). In the context of Infoquest! writing practices, such informality is considered appropriate.

Emails (2) & (3)

In the following two emails interactants shift formality elements to construct their roles, vehemently support their beliefs, and negotiate their relationships with each other as they struggle to win in their argumentation. Conflict resolution has always been a fruitful context for the investigation of the way the different aspects of power are claimed and manipulated by the interactants (Angouri & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2011; Bremmer, 2006).

The analysis of email (2) shows a mixture of formality and informality in the linguistic features of reference, lexical register, and degree of directness to suit the interactants' arguments.

The use of reference shows a mixture of degrees of formality: the repeated use of the individualised 'I' in 'I was unable', 'I was tied up', and 'I heard' is informal consistent with the lexical register used in the writer's indirect apology for his absence. However, as he invokes the correct procedures and substantiates his own viewpoint, his references become more impersonal references in pronouns (e.g., 'anyone', 'they') and nouns (e.g., 'the global Infoquest team's decision', 'my team', 'the global OMD team', and 'Mexico'). Added to this is the use of passives in his talk on procedures: 'the budget is being managed', 'The adjustment was communicated within 24 hours of the decision being made', 'the budgets get shifted', and 'as was explained'. This formality with reference to procedures can be seen as the writer's attempt to present the conflict as a breakage of procedures and to gain credibility. As an illustration, the inconsistency in the formality of reference is particularly visible within the same sentence from "My team and the global OMD team" to "I will not stand for this type of treatment of them."

It appears that when accounting for his absence Ricardo seemed to become informal and personal in his use of the phrasal verbs and colloquialisms in 'to make the call', 'tied up', 'the errors we're seeing with the app', 'Mexico's spend off'. Apart from the conversational register, when making his complaint he also uses emotionally charged language in 'the teams were ambushed and berated' and 'This is highly unacceptable and

untrue'. In his closing remark, however, evident is a shift to formality in the use of the typical standardised (as well as heavily fronted) request 'In the future I would appreciate it if you came to me'. Similarly visible inconsistencies in formal and informal register appear within his closing remarks 'In the future I would appreciate it if you came to me to discuss directly rather than getting the team on the phone under the guise of discussing what the challenges were and berating them for the budget being paused' where the initial standardised expression of request contrasts with the conversational 'getting the team on the phone' and emotional 'under the guise of discussing'.

Regarding degree of directness (see 'indirectness', table 13), worth noting is the indirect way Ricardo attempts to apologise for missing the meeting 'unfortunately I was unable to make the call as I was tied up with...'. In the context of his official duties to attend the meeting and his responsibility for the cause of this conflict, Ricardo seems to be explaining himself more with a potential implication of an apology rather than a direct apology. Indirect speech acts have been claimed to add to politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and as such are perceived here as a further indication of formality in the context of the present exchange. A possible explanation for this indirectness as well as for the mixture of formal and informal elements can be found in Ricardo's attempt to avoid losing face and see through the challenge of his legitimate power, which he holds by virtue of his high post. The mixture of formality in the writer's email and the explanation were particularly visible in both informants' self-reported data³⁵. Asked about it, Luis explained

(43)

I can only assume he was in a difficult position [...] he didn't see it coming [...] on the one hand he's talking to his colleagues you know [...] his team we're all together in this and where we'll continue to be [...] on the other he's high up in global monster and his decision was challenged behind his back [...] he was angry

Bill's interview data converge

³⁵ Although the analysis of this chain might be seen as partly inherently limited given that the two informants are on the same side of the conflict, the primary concern of this study is not to pursue truth in its objective sense but to reveal reality as perceived through the eyes of the interactants so as to better understand the reasons behind their linguistic choices.

(44)

I think he's taken it too personally he's global monster and all

The quotes point to the predicament writers are sometimes in when they have to express themselves in writing under tension or frustration. This seems to apply especially to people in higher posts who risk losing face to their subordinates or having their authority challenged by others.

Email (3) similarly illustrates a mixture of formal and informal elements in reference, lexical register, and degree of explicitness.

With regard to reference, the wide variety of personal and impersonal choices make patterns difficult to discern as Luis appears to use both personal references to 'you' on the one hand and 'I', 'Bill' and 'we' on the other as well as impersonal references (e.g., 'there was no double agenda' and 'there was no foul play intended'). Having said that, worth noting is his shift to 'I' when justifying his decision, which could be seen as an attempt to assume personal responsibility for it.

Informality can be seen in the use of simple everyday phrases Luis uses to apologise in 'I'm sorry if your team got upset or even if you got upset' and similarly explains his actions in 'we were never rude or out of line, I was just very direct' and 'we did go to you'. However, formality can also be seen in more detached devoid of strong connotations language (e.g., 'Next time I'll make sure you are there or that we simply don't have the call at all') particularly evident when in direct juxtaposition with Ricardo's diction: Luis' being 'clear' and 'direct' contrasts with Ricardo's '[teams being] ambushed and berated' in emotional involvement/emotive language. Similarly to Ricardo, he seems to become formal too both when accusing his adversary as well as when asserting his power over his interactant: note that 'rude' to refer to his own team turns into 'offensive' to refer to Ricardo, which apart from its formality implies respect toward his interactant. Contrary to Ricardo's emotional involvement, when making his strongest statement he becomes even more formal in 'It is still my fiduciary obligation to fight for whatever I feel is important.' Asked about them Luis said,

(45)

yeap 'offensive' is respectful Ricardo is Global Monster [...] 'fiduciary' mm (laughs) 'fiduciary' is a very formal word some would need to even look it up but that's exactly how I feel [...] respect towards people higher up is not given you earn respect through your actions and decisions [...] the company promotes team work equality [...] decisions are rewarded by merit of their impact and success not rank you know this may be part of the reason we are being so informal when we write to each other I respect Ricardo but if it comes between him and a better solution I'll go for the solution

The quote brings to light another aspect of power that allows Luis to behave so, that of relative power in Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris' (1996) terms by virtue of what he believes in and his temporary role as a decision maker in the meeting on the Mexico CPA obstacles. Luis seems to clearly make a strong claim for power through this role and expresses it in his linguistic choice of the formal 'fiduciary obligation'. It appears that it is this exact fiduciary relationship he perceives he has with the company he works for that gives him the right to hold this power, which challenges that of Ricardo. This becomes even clearer in the following excerpt from (3):

'I think confronting "Status Quo" and finding solutions is the best way to innovate and evolve, so even if your rules were communicated clearly, it is still my fiduciary obligation to fight for whatever I feel is important for Infoquest Mexico and Infoquest overall.'

Also,

'I will continue to fight for what I feel is critical for our operation and company, we will be respectful, but respect includes setting clear expectations and getting to next steps to solve the problem.'

Evident here becomes Luis and Bill's predetermined agenda to challenge Ricardo's plan by virtue of an alternative solution to Mexico budget cuts, which was to be discussed at the meeting: 'we did find some good actionable items that could help us build a case in the future weeks to get the spend back again in MX'. What becomes apparent here is that

Luis' role as decision maker at the meeting gives him the power to defend his solution, one against the status quo, by virtue of what he believes is the best course of action. One might even be tempted to say that this power to impose alternative innovative solutions, at least as presented here, is the opposite of 'systemic power', which according to Fletcher (1999) is "the systems of shared meaning that reinforce mainstream ideas and silence alternatives" (cited in Waldvogel, 2005, p. 58). The analysis illustrates here a temporary activity-based aspect of the role/identity interactants assume when claiming power in contrast to potentially more lasting legitimate aspects of power acquired by virtue of one's level of post, or expertise. Witnessed in this conflict is a reconfiguration of identities, where the activity-based, along Cook-Gumperz/Messerman's (1999) "local"³⁶ identities, [which] are *brought about* in the meeting [context] override the professional hierarchical positions that are *brought along* to the meeting" (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 63). As discussed in section 2.2.2 on IS, although local identities referred to chairing and record-keeping roles by Sarangi & Roberts (1999) and to the reputations people have within the group or the local workplace scene (Cook-Gumperz/Messerman, 1999), the term is particularly relevant to the power role Luis and Bill occupied in the conflict as decision makers by virtue of their predetermined agenda.

Overall, looking at the two conflicting sides in terms of power and formality through the eyes of the informants, the holder of legitimate power seems to use more informal language than his interactant because of his annoyance, which appears to be less appropriate for a man of his status. By contrast, the holder of the relative power seems to use more formal language than his adversary by virtue of his role as decision maker and his beliefs, which is more appropriate than his adversary. As numerous discourse analyses have shown (e.g., Bremmer, 2006; Harris, 2003), the right to linguistic means resides in the hands of those in power. Although in most such discussions power is seen in terms of hierarchical status, here interestingly we see a tension between different forms of power, the legitimate and the relative one and the different ways parties holding

³⁶ The term 'local identities' was originally used by Cook-Gumperz/Messerman (1999) to refer to the identities that are constructed in meetings and through interactional networks based mostly on people's character and shared local histories in contrast to the professional identities substantiated in one's job title (p.150).

or claiming these forms of power use language to counter each other. Thus, in their hands, formality appears to be a tool that can be employed at either end.

The construction and further negotiation of power is particularly evident in the different degree of directness the two interactants employ to express their apologies; although both apologies are expressed informally, only Luis directly apologises by asking 'I'm sorry' in contrast to Ricardo's indirect explanation. The directness of the first apology was perceived by Luis as an indication of power. Asked about it in terms of formality, Luis saw it as slightly informal but appropriate given his fiduciary obligation. One can see that by virtue of the strength of his power, Luis seems unafraid to directly apologise and opts for an informal way to do it. By contrast, Ricardo apologises in what appears to be fear of losing face. From an analyst perspective, to express an apology in this challenge to power, the holder of legitimate power opts for a formal and indirect means and the holder of legitimate power opts for an informal and direct means.

On the basis of the analysis, the mixture of formal and informal elements illustrates that formality toward either end is instantiated by the interactants to reflect the different faces of power when in annoyance or frustration. The interactants instantiate the power they perceive they have by being formal (as in 'I would appreciate it if you came to me') or informal (as in 'ambushed and berated teams'). This is further supported by Bill in his concluding comments on formality and power:

(46)

you can get people to do things formally [...] politely by the book [...] but informally too sometimes you may feel annoyed insulted the way we speak but it's ok here [...] other times people get others to do things under the table [...] this sort of thing [...] less obviously more between you and me [...] there are always hidden agendas and [...] you don't know who's called the shots

Three points are made here with regard to power: First, formality appears to be a tool that can be manipulated at both ends to get things done. The right to use language within people's own discretion, either by being formal or informal, polite or impolite, direct or indirect, rather than in any one of the two ends, has been seen to fall within the rights of those in power. The possibility that Bill is informal because his boss sets the tone in

extract II further attests to it. Similarly, Holmes et al. (1999) report that managers can be either more or less direct when ‘doing power’ (p. 364).

Second, the recognition of existence of backstage hidden agendas, well discussed in discourse studies (e.g., Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 22-24) illustrates that the shots may be called backstage (as discussed in section 1.6.5.). This further supports the right of those in power to use language (here formality) as they decide and to make decisions where they decide (here backstage).

Third, both Bill’s and Luis’ agreement that the informality that results from the conflict in this chain “*is ok here*” places appropriacy within the context of the company but at the same time allows individuals to make their interpretations of it depending on how they perceive their relations. Based on the social local meaning they attach to the recognisable linguistic resources and norms of a CofP, people make their own stylistic moves and assessments (Eckert, 2004, p. 44).

In sum, in agreement with other recent discourse studies on power (Angouri & Bargiella-Chiappini, 2011; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003), the analysis of the above two extracts indicates that power is not a monolithic concept but has a number of different facets. As the analysis shows, these are partly convergent or conflicting and distinct or overlapping. In particular, power is seen to emerge as legitimate and relative and as permanent and temporary. Although its legitimate aspect is distinct and self-explanatory, its relative aspect is seen in different facets: expertise of post duties (in Chris’ role as Financial Controller), and temporary decision making (in Luis’ role in the meeting). These facets may be conflicting and overlapping in the same person (in Chris’ expertise as Financial Controller over his colleagues and his accountability to his superiors). They may also appear in different persons and be negotiated between them (Ricardo’s legitimate and more permanent power is compromised by Luis’ more temporary power as the meeting’s decision maker). In the written interactions, formality appears to be affected by both those who hold power and those who address people in power. It follows from the above that interpersonal factors (at least in terms of power relations) can strongly affect the formality (choices) of the interactants.

Having said that, these cannot be viewed outside the context of each company's practices. In addition to the interpersonal factors, organisational factors also play a role in affecting the formality of the interactants. The interactants' formality choices tend to fall within the range of the formality deemed appropriate in their company. For example, in Infoquest!, with its more homogeneous informal style in its communication and its value of team based organisation, power relationships are expected to be reflected with formality choices close to the informal end of the continuum. By contrast in PharmaMed, which seemed to be accepting a wider range of formality choices and to place emphasis on hierarchical differences, more variation is seen in the reflection of power relations from the one end of the continuum to the other. Intercompany differences in both style of email communication and in the emphasis placed on hierarchies are thus further explained.

5.2.3.3. Enactment of socialisation

Extract V

Context: *Victoria is a newcomer to Infoquest!. Together with Bill, her superior, who is copied in, she is working on the Twitter banner advertisement. Lei is an old-timer working in Infoquest! for 5 years. The exchange comprises Victoria's enquires for statistical data (1, 5, 6, 8, 10) and clarifications (3) and Lei's responses (2, 4, 7, 9). IQGH stands for Infoquest!GetHired. CTR stands for Click-through rate (a way of measuring the success of an online ad/website, defined as the number of clicks on the site divided by the times the ad is shown, expressed as a percentage). Informants: Bill and Victoria*

(1)
From: Victoria
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2010 8:28 PM
To: Lei
Cc: Bill
Subject: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lei,

I just joined Bill's team a couple of weeks ago as a contractor. I will help Bill with the Twitter job seeker efforts. He referred me to you to review the Infoquest!GetHired Twitter banner ad stats at ...[site]

Let me know how to access the banner ad performance analysis.

Regards,

Victoria Mesner

(2)
From: Lei
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 8:15 AM
To: Victoria
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Here are the stats:

[text]

Thanks,
Lei

(3)
From: Victoria
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 1:25 PM
To: Lei
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lei,

I received the IQGH Twitter banner ad stats, thanks. I assume the numbers include impressions, clicks and click rate %. It would be great if you could provide the run dates as a reference.

Regards,
Victoria

(4)
From: Lei
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2010 10: 28 AM
To: Victoria
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi yes sorry – the numbers read as impressions, clicks and CTR.
The campaign started 11/16/09 and stats are through today.

(5)
From: Victoria
Sent: Tuesday, February 2, 2010 10:31 AM
To: Lei
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lydia,

I would like to review the latest performance numbers for the IQGH Twitter banner ad. Let me know if you can provide a break down per two weeks for general benchmarking on clicks, impressions and CTR since the launch on 11/16.

Regards,
Victoria

(6)
From: Victoria
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2010 2:23 PM
To: Lei
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lei,

We are trying to validate the need to refresh the Twitter banner ad creative. We would like to measure the effectiveness of the ad and review its response rates to make a decision. Please let me know if you can provide the latest performance numbers by two weeks since its launch, on 11/16.

FYI, The ad is influencing search activity which is great.

Regards,
Victoria

(7)
From: Lei
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2010 11:54 AM
To: Victoria
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Victoria,

Here you go:

Numbers are: impressions served /clicks/click thru rate

[text]

(8)
From: Victoria
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2010 3: 39 PM
To: Lei
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lei,

Great! Thanks for the rapid response. The number of ad clicks had doubled since January but the CTR has dropped by .01%.

Do you think you can provide a breakdown by month to understand the clicks and impression rates for each month?

Regards,
Victoria

(9)
From: Lei
Sent: Thursday, February 4, 2010 2:22 PM
To: Victoria
Cc: Bill
Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Sure-here you go|

|(10)

From: Victoria

Sent: Monday, March 1, 2010 9:28 AM

To: Lei

Cc: Bill

Subject: RE: Twitter banner ad on GetHired home page

Hi Lei,

I would like to review the IQGH Twitter banner performance for January and February. Attached is the Twitter MBH monthly report as a reference. Can you please provide the stats for January and February early next week?

On a related topic, we have developed a new Twitter MBH banner which we plan to rotate with the existing Twitter banner at ...[site] early April. Let me know if I should forward the banner assets to you for posting. Also, will you be able to provide performance stats on both banners?

Regards,
Victoria

According to the analysis, in terms of organisational situation the chain is a formal one by virtue of being an official and accounted for exchange of information; in all emails the interactants' superior is copied in. Background information on the chain also indicates that requesting and receiving traffic data on various applications is standard practice in Infoquest!. In terms of linguistic features, the analysis shows that although all the emails tend to be informal, they differ in the degree and appropriacy of formality used by the two interactants. The analysis will illustrate the above through the linguistic features of greetings, lexical register, directness, and degree of explicitness.

Greetings

Easily visible in the analysis become the absence of greetings and the informality of the ones present especially in the openings. 'Hi'+first name is used in seven of the ten openings, 'hi' is used once, and two emails have no salutation in their openings. Also two emails end with 'thanks'+first name and another two have no salutation. The informality of the greetings is particularly evident in Lei's exchanges, which are devoid of openings and closures. A closer look shows that in Lei's four exchanges, two have no opening, and the other two start with 'hi', which in (4) is embedded in the body of a two-line text. Three of her closures have no greeting and one writes 'thanks'+first name. Lei's greetings are found to be clear indicators of informality both from the analyst's and the two informants' perspectives and as such were attributed to the company's tendency towards an informal style in communication, an observation also made in the previous

email chains of InfoQuest!. By contrast Victoria's greetings appear to be less informal. She consistently starts with 'Hi'+first name and ends with 'Regards'+first name. Contextual information from discourse-based interviews provides explanations for the difference in the formality of the greetings. It points to the different degrees of socialisation of the two writers and Victoria's attempt to adjust to the company's style as a newcomer.

(47)

well yea [...] I do use 'regards' and my name [...] when I wrote this [...] I was [...] I must have been here for what (?) a week (?) trying to make a good impression [...] I know they are all being more informal I'm too [...] but at the time I just felt a little uncomfortable with it I still do [...] I still try to do things right (Victoria)

The quote reveals the challenges faced by newcomers as they try to become part of the new workplace community and fit in (also discussed in 2.1.2.). Based on her newcoming status Victoria perceives the absence of greeting as inappropriately informal for her to use with the particular interactant at that time. Bill's comments further add to this as he too finds that Victoria was being more formal in her initial exchanges in comparison to her later responses and to Lei's as well as other InfoQuest! employees' exchanges. The identity of a newcomer appears to be constructed as one who is aware of the type of (in)formality used in the company, but cannot seem ready to adopt it yet. Victoria has yet to experience hands-on the style emails are written in her new workplace environment until her relationship with the more experienced members matures and she feels ready to adopt it. The case of Victoria comprises an example of identity construction in its early stages of transformation from newcomer to old-timer. Extensively discussed in the theory of situated learning, the early stages of initiation in a new workplace community involve learning the inferential processes of socialisation and not just a body of facts (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 36), and in doing so the person as a whole (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33).

Lexical register, organisational structure, explicitness

Differences in the degree of formality between the two interactants also emerged in the lexical register, organisational structure and degree of explicitness in the body of the messages. Note Lei's repeated conversational phrases 'here you go', 'sure here you go',

'hi yes sorry' absent from Victoria's emails with the exception of 'Great!' and 'Thanks'. Literature further supports the link between short colloquial phrases and informality (Chen, 2006; Crystal 2006; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000) and links them to working under time pressure and the medium's resemblance to oral language. In terms of organisational complexity, Lei's short and simply structured sentences contrast with Victoria's sentences, which are lengthier and more complex in structure. As an illustration, Lei's number of words per sentence average 6.3 in contrast to Victoria's, which average 14.2. Explanations based on contextual information from the participants point to Lei's long experience in InfoQuest! and adoption of its informal style in email communication and the strong time pressure behind all actions as well as to Victoria's newcoming status and will further be discussed in combination with the remaining form features in the analysis.

Directness

The difference in the formality of the responses is further supported by the difference in the fronting of the information requests and replies. Compare Lei's direct replies to Victoria's fronted requests: Lei's 'Here are the stats' and 'here you go' contrast with Victoria's 'Let me know if I should forward', 'will you be able to provide', 'can you please provide', 'please let me know if you can provide' and 'it would be great if you can provide'. In politeness theory (also discussed in section 1.3.1.), the fronting of requests signals mitigation and a higher degree of politeness and has been linked to respect and power (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Harris, 2003), and lengthy sentences have been associated with formal institutional writing (Gains, 1999). Asked to comment on the politeness and formality of their responses, Victoria commented:

(48)

see to an outsider I seem more polite [...] well more polite than Lei and she seems mmm maybe a bit impolite (?) but she isn't really [...] she's definitely more informal than me (laughs) I'm sure Bill can tell you more about this [...] both our emails are appropriate here but I am being more formal and more polite here

The quote shows that Victoria sees the linguistic choices more as a matter of appropriacy than politeness equating impoliteness with inappropriacy in light of the style usually

adopted in Infoquest! emails. This is shown by highlighting the different ways insiders and outsiders to a community may perceive the style of that community, in line with the CofP perspective. To an outsider, although Lei's replies may be seen as potentially impolite and inappropriate, Victoria's responses are seen as both polite and more formal. By contrast, to an insider, Lei's informal replies are clearly appropriate and Victoria's less appropriate. Bill's characterisation of the replies converged and is in line with the informality of previous Infoquest! chains discussed here (extracts II and IV).

(49)

it largely has to do with the pressure the time pressure we have to respond to often the response is via mobile phone on the way out and so on one could be in Mexico I could be in Greece and some things are urgent so informal [...] short does it here [...] among ourselves we don't write much [...] like Victoria (Bill)

Bill's quote illustrates an additional organisational factor that is related to informality, that of time pressure. As seen in table 12, writing under time pressure is seen as a type of situational exigency, i.e., something that is situationally caused, which causes email writing to be short, elliptical, abbreviated and possibly erroneous in grammar, typos, etc. In combination with the distant teleworking nature of work in Infoquest!, this further explains the informality in the company's correspondence.

Explicitness

Added to this the analysis pointed to yet another indication of difference between the two texts, that of explicitness. One may note that Victoria is providing additional information in her requests to explain the reason she is making them; she would like to review performance numbers for the ad in (1) and (5), to validate the need to refresh the ad in (6), to 'measure the effectiveness of the ad ... and make a decision' in (6), 'to understand the clicks and impression rates' in (8), to have as reference in (3) and to consider using in combination with a new banner they are thinking of rotating in (10). Such richly backgrounded requests contrast with Lei's replies. This could be attributed to the different amount of implied contextual information in the two interactants. Asked about it, Victoria expressed the need to be as explicit as possible to avoid potential misunderstandings and to facilitate the work of her reader. Commenting on Lei's terseness, both informants agreed that Lei appeared to be assuming more than what

Victoria was actually assuming, which is evident in the clarification Victoria is asking in (2) and the apology Lei is giving in ‘Hi yes sorry- the numbers read as impressions, clicks and CTR’ in (3). The different degree of shared explicitness that is assumed by the two writers falls within Heylighen & Dewaele’s (1999) concept of deep formality (discussed in section 1.3.1.), according to which formal writing makes little to no assumptions, which in turn is further linked to the experience one has in the company. Bill further corroborates this:

(50)

it is quite possible that Victoria said all this because she’s new in the team I don’t think she’s like that now not at least to the same extent [...] Lei on the other hand [...] thought that Victoria knew what the numbers stood for [...] she probably did it without much thinking

As a newcomer, Victoria is being explicit as she lacks the shared contextual information that Lei, as an old-timer appears to have.

Reference

Further to the above the analysis illustrated differences in the interactants’ use of pronoun reference with regard to formality. In her highly elliptical replies, Lei makes no use of personal pronouns apart from once, the use of ‘you’ in the twice repeated ‘here you go’. By contrast Victoria appears to make extensive use of ‘I’, ‘you’, and ‘we’ in all her emails: In the 19 sentences using personal pronouns as subjects (imperatives and impersonal structures are excluded), ‘I’ appears seven times, ‘you’ appears seven times, and ‘we’ shows four times. One possible explanation for the use of the two singular pronouns can be traced in the teleworking and virtual nature of work in Infoquest! (also visible in the time difference of the locations of the interactants), where employees isolated from each other tend to reflect a one to one relation in their communication. The two informants’ self reported data corroborate this.

Regarding the use of the plural pronoun, in the context of a company that seems to be based mostly on team-work rather than strict hierarchies, ‘we’ could reflect Victoria’s perception of an egalitarian cooperation between her and Bill. However, given the status difference between her and Bill, it could also reflect the type of power people acquire by

virtue of their connections. As Jenny Thomas (1995) argues, ‘connection power’ is the type of power one holds by virtue of who knows whom (also see section 1.3.2). Asked to comment on her use of ‘we’, Victoria reported:

(51)

Mm it's hard to tell [...] basically it could be a bit of everything actually I enjoy the fact that I can say we are into this together [...] I report to Bill and all but as new in this I felt it's good for Lei to know that I've been working with him (Bill) [...] I also copy him in. [...] on second thoughts «we» makes me sound more formal than «I» [...] using «I» too many times is too repetitive [...] too much attention on me don't you think (?) now is it insecurity (?) my being here only a few days (?) I don't know

What is hinted at here is an interrelation between power - both in the relative form of ‘connection’ and legitimate form of ‘hierarchy’ - and socialisation. Bill is copied in and referred to as the more experienced in the interaction. This is particularly visible considering that in Bill is not copied in by Lei. Although hierarchies are not pronounced in this company, the existence of power relations appears to affect the perceptions of the interactants and their choices of formality. Whether Victoria uses ‘we’ to show that she cooperates with her superior, to avoid being repetitive or to distract attention from herself, she attributes her linguistic choices to her role as a newcomer. An association is seen here between the more experienced and the more powerful members of a community. Although the literature reports of cases of newcomers with more powerful roles than Victoria, who brought about changes in the organisations (Katz, 1998), this is not visible in this exchange.

Overall, two observations become pertinent here. The first is the major role socialisation plays in the interactants’ instantiation of formality. This can be seen in Victoria’s insecurity when appropriately expressing herself trying to fit in the new CofP illustrating the need for newcomers to feel safe and how this translates into opting for safer more formal (or potentially more informal) variants. Faced with the challenge of sounding inappropriately informal (e.g., by being repetitive), it seems that a newcomer may choose to sound formal or risk sounding too formal in the context of his/her organisation. Having said that, equally possible is that a newcomer may sound too informal in

comparison to his more experienced colleagues. Note that Lei, with her Infoquest! typically informal replies, has no problem being repetitive in ‘here you go’, and ‘sure here you go’. Although not referring to newcomers’ insecurity, Chen (2006) similarly finds EFL speakers resorting to grammatically correct and formal language when at a loss for the appropriate way to address their superiors.

The second observation regards the relation of power to socialisation. The power old-timers hold is well discussed in the literature. Further to this, as seen in this exchange, power is seen as deriving from the experience in the company leading to a causal relation between the two. Because Victoria is new, she feels more insecure (less powerful) as she struggles to adjust to the stylistic norms appropriate to the workplace community.

However, socialisation and power are not the only situational factors affecting the linguistic choices of the interactants. As the analysis showed, time pressure and community norms also played a role. In particular, although the officialness of the situation should expectedly lead to more formality in both interactants, the informality of the interactions seemed to be more strongly affected by situational exigencies and the relations of the interactants in terms of socialisation and power. The written interactions appear to be written in the degree of formality that results from the pull of these situational factors toward opposite directions and their weight against each other. The emails tend to be informal because this is how Infoquest! employees write to each other, the interaction takes place under time pressure, and varies between Victoria and Lei because Victoria is still new in the company. Although the newcomer’s divergent linguistic choices are closer to the formal end of the continuum here, the following extract will show that they can also be placed toward the informal end.

Extract VI

Context: *The exchange is taking place between the company branch of PharmaMed in Thessaloniki, where George (branch manager), Thomas (junior manager) and Lina (secretary) are employed, and the Athens headquarters, where the rest of parties are based. Andrew and Koliass are the two senior managers, Maria, George, Thomas and Gregory are junior department/division managers, and Lina, a post holder. MA stands for Monoclonal Antibodies (liquid substance used in the operation of diagnostic equipment). Informants: Maria and Thomas*

(1)

From: LINA (secretary Thes/niki office)
Sent: Tuesday, November 02, 2010 3:49 PM
To: DIAGNOSTICSWAREHOUSE
Cc: [Junior LM]; [Post Holder 1]; [George]; [Maria]; [Post Holder 2]
Subject: DISPATCH OF MA

GOOD AFTERNOON TO ALL,

THIS MORNING A PACKET WITH MA SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE IN THE PHARMAMED WAREHOUSE IN PIREAS WAS DISPATCHED FROM THESSALONIKI BY SPEED COURIER (NO 99513138-4).

THE PRODUCTS ABOVE ARE BEING RETURNED TO PHARMAMED WAREHOUSE BY COLLEAGUE TASOS MOUSIOS.

THE PACKET WRITES «C/O (ANTONIOU G., COSTANTINIDIS C.)»

PLEASE INFORM US IN CASE THE PACKET IS NOT DELIVERED, IT INCLUDES REFRIGERATED PRODUCTS OF BIG VALUE.

MR MOUSIOS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ANY CLARIFICATIONS CONCERNING REASONS FOR RETURN OF PRODUCTS, CODES, EXPIRATION DATES AND QUANTITIES. I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY DETAILS.

NICK, PLEASE GIVE US THE NUMBER OF THE CONSIGNMENT NOTE FOR EVERYONE'S KNOWLEDGE.

THANK YOU ALL,

LINA KARRAS

(2)

From: Maria
Sent: Thursday, November 04, 2010 12:05 PM
To: Andrew, Kostas
Subject: FW: DISPATCH OF MA

I have repeatedly discussed that whether we have return of MA from clients or simple dispatch of warehouse products we should be informed about them from Thessaloniki because they may affect our orders and our stock.

Is this proper notification and cooperation among departments?

When we received the email on Tuesday, we had already sent the order abroad and we didn't know his intentions - not even orally - to make a note of the codes.

Today I sent a question to Thomas and I'm expecting a reply.

(3)

From: Andrew
Sent: Thursday, November 04, 2010 1:13 PM
To: George
Cc: Thomas; Koliass; Lina; Gregory; Jim
Subject: FW: DISPATCH OF MA

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Please respect procedures. It is really intriguing why you behave in this way. Not everyone here runs his own small shop we are a company!!!!
You will not return anything unless it has been previously approved by Gregory Georgopoulos.

Andrew Castellanos

Signature

(4)

From: Thomas
Sent: Thursday, November 04, 2010 6:11 PM
To: Andrew; George
Cc: Koliass; Lina; Gregory
Subject: RE: DISPATCH OF MA

The oversight is mine, I had prepared the list and I had submitted them (the products) to the accountants late Friday afternoon and we would talk on Monday to complete the procedure on Monday and Tuesday I was absent urgently for health reasons and the (type of products) left without having previously told anyone.

(5)

From: Gregory
Sent: Friday, November 05, 2010 9:25 AM
To: Thomas; Andrew; George; Jim
Cc: Koliass; Maria
Subject: RE: DISPATCH OF MA

Good morning to all,

The problem is that too many types of products have been returned (about 40 codes!!) and some of them have a very close expiration date. (maybe half of them).
This is not an issue that has risen just this time.
We cannot have Thessaloniki stocking such quantities for such a long time.
It should simply have one piece from each of about 10-12 codes to be able to accommodate occasional clients.

I'll make sure these are accepted as soon as possible so that we can see what stock will be formed
And we should soon see which products have a close expiration date so that they are distributed.

In addition, every Tuesday we will print Thessaloniki's stock too so that we can take it into consideration.

Gregory Georgopoulos

Signature

(6)

From: George
Sent: Friday, November 05, 2010 9:41 AM
To: Gregory; Thomas; Andrew
Cc: Kollias; Maria
Subject: RE: DISPATCH OF MA

Send us the list

(7)

From: Maria
Sent: Friday, November 05, 2010 9:55 AM
To: George; Gregory; Thomas; Andrew; Jim
Cc: Kollias
Subject: RE: DISPATCH OF MA

Good morning,

I am sending you the list as Thomas forwarded it to me.

They are relatively few with a close expiration date, but the problem is not just that. It's to what extent these codes can be absorbed in north Greece since some codes, either due to different contracts or different applications, are not sold easily or not at all.

We've agreed with Gregory to accept them in PharmaMed Warehouse until Monday 8/11 so that we can distribute some with a close expiration date the sooner the possible since we are currently expecting orders. We also agreed to take them into consideration in our next order.

In addition, there are two codes that are not (name of company) but of a third company (the two code numbers) which must have been ordered for some clients and were never given to them. We could also handle those differently. We will see how later.

In a different email I will analytically note the codes that we will have difficulty distributing and the possibilities to promote them in north Greece.

Maria

The analysis shows that in terms of organisational situation the chain is a formal resolution of an internal issue by virtue of its officialness and accountability; on the basis of company background information we know that in accordance with company procedures a problem was openly brought up to the attention of the senior managers and relevant parties, and its resolution was sought and achieved with the contribution of all the parties involved, as seen in the multiple direct and indirect copied in addressees.

With regard to linguistic features, however, the analysis points to differences in formality between emails written by George (6) and Thomas (4), the ones accountable for the problem, and those written by everybody else, primarily people in the Athens base. This can be seen in the use of greetings, degree of explicitness and organisational structure.

Greetings

The analysis shows that the two men do not use any greetings in contrast to the rest of the writers; with the exception of (2), all other emails start and end with a salutation. ‘GOOD AFTERNOON TO ALL’ in (1), ‘DEAR COLLEAGUES’ in (3), ‘Good morning to all’ in (5), and ‘Good morning’ in (7) are openings showing the collective handling of the problem and according to the literature tending to fall closer to the middle rather than either one end of the formal-informal continuum. In line with studies discussing email greetings (Gains, 1999; Rice, 1997; Waldvogel, 2005), such openings appear to be generally used when situation calls for a neutral rather than a clearly formal or informal salutation. Although a little more variable than the openings, the closures seem to follow a similar pattern. With the exception of (2) all other four closures end with the writers’ names, the three of which are also inclusive of last names. Literature places the use of first and last name closer, although not too close, to the formal end of the continuum (Crystal, 2006; Gimenez, 2000) illustrating that all four emails of the correspondence close with formal salutations. Distinguished from these in its absence of greetings is (2). Asked about it the writer of (2) commented:

(52)

it’s not the first time [...] the new ones in the Thessaloniki branch repeatedly forget to inform us [...] it’s bad for the company but I’ll be held responsible for that [...] so yes I’m definitely angry [...] I don’t even say good morning to the general manager but then I only write the email to them here (Maria)

According to the writer, the absence of greetings stems from her strong annoyance at the breach of procedures, which resulted in the mishandling of products she was responsible for. The problem was attributed to the newcomers based in the Thessaloniki branch, showing that employees’ identities in terms of their socialisation plays a role in how their colleagues perceive their actions. It is worth noting that in attributing the problem to Thomas’ and George’s being new in the company, Maria could be enacting her identity as an old-timer. The analysis points to the way the employment of identities enable employees to defend their professional role in times of conflict. As absence of greetings is attributed to the sensitive issue of the complaint and the more personal nature of the email (see ‘sensitive issues’ and ‘individualised communication’ in table

12) as it was not intended for wider distribution, (2) is distinguished from (4) and (6) in the situational factors that lead to its informality. The factors that lead to the absence of greetings in (4) and (6) are discussed below together with the analysis of the body of their texts.

Degree of directness, explicitness, and organisational structure

The analysis shows that emails (4) and (6) are more informal, if not inappropriately informal, than the rest with regard to degree of explicitness although each one in different way. George's directness in his directive 'send us the list' is a case in point as an outsider might tend to find it too direct especially considering the mixed horizontal and vertical direction of his email. Politely fronting or backgrounding his request might be more appropriately formal as Gregory and Maria appear to be in their suggestions for corrective actions. Gregory backgrounds all four of his suggestions in (5): as he explains in his email, having one piece would help accommodate clients, prompt acceptance of the codes would result in the final formation of stock, recording of expiration dates would speed their distribution, and weekly printing Thessaloniki's stock would ensure its consideration. Although to a lesser extent, Maria similarly backgrounds her corrective suggestions in (7): acceptance of the products in the PharmaMed Warehouse until 8/11 and their consideration in the next order would help distribution of those expiring soon, handling the codes of a third company differently would be looked into later and analytically recording the codes difficult to promote along with promotional suggestions could implicitly help their distribution. Although length of exchange is not one of the linguistic features identified with formality, it can further support the backgrounding-fronting form theme here; Thomas' (4) and George's (6) exchanges are both very short compared to the rest. Email (4) counts 49 and email (6) four words in the body of the message compared to the rest of the emails averaging 105 words, the longest being 169.

Apart from direct, George's short directive is heavy with implicit context as seen in the object pronoun and the definite article in 'send *us the* list'. Thomas similarly, although more extensively, provides an explanation in one long run-on sentence heavy with reference in (4). Examples are 'the' in 'the oversight', 'the list', 'the products', 'the procedure'. Also there is no specification as to the referent of 'we' in 'we would talk', 'them' in 'I had submitted them' and 'they' in 'they left'. A substantial amount of contextual information is assumed here and no attempt is made to solve the problem in

the form of corrective action. Implicit context therefore appears to be one factor contributing to the informality of the text.

Regarding organisational structure, Thomas' email is written in one long run on sentence counting 40 words compared to all the other emails, the sentences of which are all correct in grammatical structure and much shorter; the longest sentence of all other emails counts 36 words and the average sentence length of the sentences in the other emails is 17. Worth adding, all emails with the exception of (4) and (6) are clearly structured in distinct paragraphs.

Overall it appears that the two emails, although different in length, appear to be more inappropriately informal than the rest despite being internally official correspondence and their writers' accountability to their superiors. This is particularly relevant given that Thomas as a post holder had committed an oversight he was accounting for publicly, and George, as his superior and manager of the Thessaloniki branch, was accountable for it too. As Gains observes, in cases of sensitive content such as the occurrence of a mistake or the refusal of a request, it is expected to see a shift in formality (1999, p. 87). However, although one might suppose that the party responsible for the mistake would be more formal possibly in an attempt to make amends, the analysis shows the opposite here. In this light, without the background information from the discourse-based interviews one might wonder which aspect of the interactants' identities is reflected in their informal choices. This further supports the need for emphasising participants' accounts. However, on the basis of the information elicited from the participants, the informality in the two emails is traced to the way the two writers viewed their stage of socialisation in PharmaMed. Although both informants' perceptions of the informality of the two emails and its attribution to the writers' years of experience converge with the analysis, a particular divergence of views emerges with regard to the appropriacy of their informality. Maria seems to find both emails inappropriately informal showing lack of respect towards colleagues given the wide internal distribution of the chain and the writers' responsibility for the breach in procedures. Thomas, on the other hand, finds the two chains appropriately informal not significantly different from the way PharmaMed employees generally write to each other. Although both informants call upon years of experience as a reason behind the evidenced informality, their views diverge with respect to what is expected of each writer given their role in the socialisation process.

(53)

I'm actually one of if not the oldest here I've been here since the company was established ten years ago here in Thessaloniki [...] we were only six people back then see these years can teach you what is appropriate and is not [...] the new ones are more by the book 'dear so and so' 'we would like this and that' [...] I'm older than them (in experience) and know better [...] what's important is how you do business and how much you sell [...] it's similar with George [...] he has very long experience in the field he can't worry with the 'dear sir' or 'madam' 'I would like to apologise' [...] of course he's apologising (Thomas)

Experience seems to play a major role in Thomas' perception of the rights to language employees have. However, he seems to be drawing on two different types of experience in relation to George's and his own informality. He draws on his own experience in this company to justify his own informality and on George's experience in the field, acquired outside this company to justify his informality.

Maria's views diverge with respect to the right to language that both Thomas and George seem to have claimed:

(54)

sometimes we've been having problems with people who are in the company for a long time ten years or something [...] like Thomas [...] they have been here so long they think they know everything and they are not willing to change [...] even after so long some still can't write a report [...] of course these people have others do the work for them [...] Thomas here probably thinks we write like we speak even when his email is addressed to the whole company the problem is things change and people don't change along [...] probably 15 years ago they didn't write about these things and now we have to keep a record of them [...] George [...] George is a newcomer he's been with us for a year I don't know if he's got it yet (Maria)

Maria sees Thomas' informality as a refusal to change and as a carryover of his experience in the company, which, she finds, has become obsolete. She also sees George

as a newcomer, who despite his experience elsewhere, has not yet fully adjusted to the way the other older PharmaMed employees write (see section 2.1.2.).

The quotes above point to the problems caused mainly by the way the participants perceive the stage they think they are in- rather than the stage they may actually be according to the years of experience in the company - in the socialisation process and their role as gatekeepers: what is expected of them, what rights to language they have and whether these rights can be challenged by others. In particular, given his 12 years of working in the company, Thomas is an old-timer. However, by virtue of his long experience in this company he differentiates himself from his other colleagues (also old-timers) by arguing that effective communication is unrelated to company efficiency & sales and 'doing business' is more important than knowing how to express oneself in writing. This differentiation extends the conflict from between old-timers and newcomers to one between old-timers illustrating the different points at which one can be considered an old-timer and the complexity of these identities. Beaufort (2000) similarly foregrounds the rich set of employee relations according to their socialization "newcomer, old newcomer, old-timer and so forth" (p. 190).

It is worth noting that the perspective that writing communication is not very important has actually emerged, albeit to a small extent, as a misconception in the minds of employees who cannot seem to meet the writing demands in the organisation (Northey, 1990) and hardly characterises modern perceptions of workplace writing (see section 1.2.). In this case, although it is not known whether Thomas does not actually see a causal relationship between effective writing and company efficiency, whether he claims so because he doesn't know how to express himself more formally or because his personality is inflexible and incompatible with the new changes in the company, what is pertinent is his insistence on the company's initial communication practices when it was still in its infancy. From a CofP perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991) he does not seem to understand that initial viewpoints on the practice evolve "through changing participation in the division of labour, changing relations to ongoing community practices, and changing social relations in the community" (p. 96). Although he is not hierarchically superior to his other interactants, with his highly informal reply, he seems to be trying to influence the way his colleagues see him, (Bremmer, 2006, p. 414), which quite incidentally might help him lose less face in view of the breach in procedures. The

interactant's attempt to define appropriacy in his own way, a prerogative resting in the hands of gatekeepers (Davies, 2005; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999) is also visible here.

On the other hand, based on the informants' reports, George, as a newcomer, appears to have been carrying over his past experience in previous pharmaceutical companies. As discussed in section 2.1., writers can often bring *to* an organisation knowledge they have already acquired about their profession, a kind of discipline specific knowledge that transcends company boundaries. It is this kind of knowledge that George, as perceived by Thomas, appears to be activating here without having integrated it to the local knowledge acquired *in* the company by virtue of his short experience there. Although George is a newcomer given his one year in the company, Thomas perceives him as an old-timer who has the right to express himself as he finds appropriate.

Illustrated in the above perceptions and also visible in the analysis, is Thomas's and possibly George's attempt to influence the way their colleagues see them through their linguistic choices (Bremmer, 2006, p. 414). They both appear to use more informal language than the rest because of the right to language they claim by virtue of their experience. Not incidentally the two parties are at fault for having caused a breach in procedure, and resorting to their experience and power can help them lose less face. Illustrated is the way experience and power are employed by the interactants to escape from the predicament they are in.

In contrast to the previous extract on socialisation (V), here participants make their formality choices according to the way they perceive their role in the socialisation process rather than their actual years of experience in the company and by extension the power they hold in their CofP. Thomas differentiates himself as the oldest/most experienced old-timer from all other old-timers and George is perceived as an old-timer by virtue of experience other than the one acquired in the company. In this context, experience can be seen as used not only to reflect but also to acquire the right to use language as one decides and to exercise this right *over* others *to make*³⁷ amends for the problem he caused. Illustrated here is the reciprocal relation between language and context (further discussed in section 2.3.).

³⁷ The power *over* others and *to do* something have been discussed in the literature as two different aspects of power.

Similarly to the previous extract on socialisation, this one shows that the formality choices of the interactants can be explained in the way employees position themselves in relation to the experience they have. Newcomers in particular are shown to be inappropriately formal (e.g., Victoria) or informal (e.g., George). According to the analysis, appropriacy rather than degree of formality appears to reflect the identity of newcomers. Hence in table 12 ‘newcomers and old-timers’ appears in both columns indicating the formal and informal aspects of situations. Although old-timers and newcomers are seen to use either formal or informal language, old-timers do it from a position of power and newcomers from not having been able to write in a style appropriate in the company. In this light socialisation and power identities are empowered and disempowered by both perceptions and the actual facts of the employees’ experiences in particular instantiations of formality.

Overall, the variability in the formality of the emails (greetings and body of message included) of the chain appears to reflect the different ways writers perceive their interpersonal relations as they position themselves toward the issue rather than the official nature of the correspondence. In relation to the situational factors of formality, there appears to be an interaction between the ‘officialness’ of the chain, ‘situational exigencies’ and interpersonal relations in terms of ‘socialisation’ and ‘power’. The variability in the formality of the emails shows that interpersonal relations weigh more than the official nature of the correspondence.

5.2.4. Considerations toward the enactment of formality

Given the analysis of the above six extracts, a number of issues arise in relation to the interaction between situation and code, which problematise the discussion on the variability in the linguistic features of formality and the inconsistencies between situational factors and linguistic features. In this context, four considerations are proposed with regard to the enactment of formality in written discourse.

1. Nature of social identities

Along with a number of studies on identity construction within a CofP framework (Bremmer, 2006; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), this study also illustrates the existence of social identities not in terms of stable traits but as they are negotiated and formed in the

process of the interaction. As their social nature indicates, the identification, development, and negotiation of these identities acquires meaning by virtue of their relation to all the other identities and co-participation in their CofP. The study of email, as a genre recognisable within this community, through the micro linguistic enactment of formality is shown to reveal a wealth of cues into the social reality that is created by the interactants (Herring, 2003). This is visible in employees' different and conflicting perceptions of power and socialisation and the evolving nature of SD relations. Along the lines of social constructionism (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995) and workplace discourse studies (Bremmer, 2006; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), it is argued here that, although some social and professional identities are enacted in terms of their stable traits (e.g., of hierarchical status and experience in the company), these identities are primarily constructed, alternated and negotiated in the course of the interaction. In this context, the following clarifications should be made as to the nature of these identities and their implications for the enactment of formality.

The analysis shows that multiple social identities are alternated by the same person and invoked at the same time in the course of one interaction. Similarly to other types of identities, although the ones focused on in the present study, namely in terms of SD, power and socialisation, are theoretically distinct, they are also interrelated, as socialisation has been seen to lead to power (extract VI), quite possibly SD may also lead to power, and SD may lead to socialisation. In practice, they also hold the potential to merge and in doing so to become indistinct. It becomes difficult to discern whether and to what extent one of two or more simultaneous identities weighs more than the other/s. This merger leads to the construction of new identities (Chris writes as both a subordinate to his general manager and as one in power by virtue of his expertise to his colleagues), which pave the way for the construction of new linguistic stylistic varieties (Eckert, 2004, p. 50). This inherently makes the analysis difficult as it poses restrictions to the analyst who is called to decide which professional identity/ties the interactants are enacting in their linguistic choices without the interactants' feedback as in discourse-based interviews (Harwood, 2006).

Also, although "participants may orient to a number of different identities and goals, either simultaneously or at different points in time" (Holmes et al., 1999, p. 378), the linguistic realisation is not affected by the types as much as by the formal or informal

aspects of these identities. As discussed in the analysis, (section 5.2.), the writing of a text will be more informal by a writer in both low social distance *and* in a horizontal relationship with his/her reader/s (consistency in informality of aspects) than one by a writer in high social distance *but* in a horizontal relationship with his/her reader/s (inconsistency in informality of aspects). Hence, Sarangi & Roberts' conceptualisation of "professional managing tension between competing identities" (1999, p. 353) is more accurately extended from the competition between SD (horizontal relationship) and power (vertical relationship) to the competition between the aspect of these identities.

A final point should be made about public-private dimension of these identities. In the past, public³⁸ identities, rather than personal or individualised identities, were considered an important aspect of formality. For example, the speech of a judge was formal and the trials in which it was used were also formal events (Irvine, 1979). However the present data seem to suggest that both public as well as more individualised identities are invoked in the enactment of formality. The widely recognised - hence public - identity of a company's general manager may employ formal language or cause a situation to be considered formal (e.g., that of Andrew in extract IV). Similarly less public more individualised identities can also use formal language. Examples are the identity of a meeting's decision maker (e.g., that of Luis in extract IV) and of a secretary (Lina in extract VI). Worth adding, both public and individualised identities are of a social nature and recognisable within their CofPs.

2. Code consistency

Code consistency refers to the extent to which aspect and type of situation are consistent with aspect and type of code.

In the context of each company, there seems to be some predictability in the consistency between types of situations and types of linguistic features. This particularly applies to organisational situations. For instance, situational exigencies are more likely to invoke organisational length/complexity and (in)tolerance of errors than reference or explicitness. Officialness is more likely to invoke reference, fullness of forms, and

³⁸ Public identities according to Irvine were well recognised identities in terms of their professional role in professional events (or rituals) e.g., a judge and a lawyer of defense in a trial.

organisational clarity/variety than lexical register. However, much less to no predictability can be seen in the consistency between interpersonal variables and code than organisational variables. Having said that, given the limitations of the present research, a more systematic investigation into the consistency between type of situation and type of linguistic feature lies beyond the scope of this study and is subject to future research.

More predictability is in the consistency between aspect of situation and aspect of linguistic features. In the context of each company, formal organisational situations tend to invoke formal linguistic features. For instance, an official request for a quote made by PharmaMed is more likely to be grammatically correct than have serious errors and use first and last names in the greetings. Working under time pressure will more probably result in short phrases than long complex sentences, abbreviations in place of full forms and typos. Cases in point are Infoquest!'s very short emails and abbreviations. Similarly (in)formal interpersonal situations can call for respectively (in)formal language. Subordinates addressing superiors tend to use last names in greetings and background their requests. Addressing an unknown person usually entails the use of titles, last name, and final signature.

Having said that, inconsistencies can emerge in two cases: a) superiors have the freedom to use both formal and informal language, and sensitive issues and lack of socialisation can lead to language that can be both inappropriately formal and informal depending on what is considered appropriate for the interacting parties and in the company they work for. In other words, these exceptions appear to be related more to appropriacy in the context of the interaction and the company the interactants work for than either one of the two ends of formality. b) As discussed in the previous section on invocation of multiple identities, the above interpersonal factors rarely emerge in isolation but co-occur and interact with each other and often it is the mixture of the two or the assessment of one's weight over another that leads to the linguistic choices. However, this mixture does not undermine the significance of the consistency between isolated interpersonal factors and linguistic choices as the first is contingent upon the existence of the second. The linguistic choice of a subordinate addressing a superior (formal), whom he is in close social distance with (informal), may be placed in the middle of the continuum

because of the pull towards the two ends of the continuum. The variety of the pulls in direction and strength leads to the various inconsistencies in code.

In the context of workplace emails the notion of code consistency is thus problematized in terms of whether a code should be consistent. In written genres that researchers have labelled formal (e.g., annual financial reports), codes must be consistent in formality in terms of their social significance (Irvine, 1979, p. 777). However, in workplace email, possibly because of the variable uses it is put to, it appears that writers select from among alternatives that have social significance depending on the context of their interaction. According to the person they are addressing, the identity they decide to adopt in the particular interaction, and what is considered appropriate in the CofP they belong to, they adopt codes that are consistent or inconsistent in formality. In formal events (e.g., trials, ceremonies) and in formal written genres (e.g., technical and scientific genres) code inconsistency may be a process of undercutting one's message with another that qualifies it and even indicate that it should not be taken seriously or really count (Irvine, 1979). However, in workplace email, which cannot be categorised as either a formal or an informal genre, both code consistency and inconsistency enable the writers to adopt the identity they choose vis-à-vis their readers. In other words, in workplace emails, both code-consistent and code-inconsistent linguistic choices count. As Irvine nicely put it, "with complete code consistency little scope would be left for individuality" (1979, p. 786).

3. Interaction of organisational and interpersonal factors

Either at the level of one email or a chain of emails organisational and interpersonal factors do not exist in isolation. They interact with factors of the same type as well as with ones of different type. That is, organisational factors interact with each other and with interpersonal ones, and the same happens with interpersonal factors.

One type of interaction takes place between aspects (i.e., formal and informal) and types of organisational factors (e.g., 'officialness' and 'situational exigencies'). For instance, in the same email, a writer may be torn between 'representing his company' and engaging in 'individualised communication', and a 'sensitive issue' may arise in a part of the email without being the only subject of the entire email. At the level of a chain of emails, more organisational factors are likely to interact. An initially 'official

correspondence' may end up being an instance of 'individualised communication. For example, the chain in extract II started as official interaction between Bill and Tom and ended as a more personal interaction between Bill and Susan). Similarly time pressure may be present as a situational exigency in only a number of the emails of the chain. In the context of workplace emails, the interaction of all the above organisational factors renders the situation of formality multi-faceted. For example, an email is hardly plainly official or unofficial. It can be an official, accountable complaint or an unofficial temporary instance of praise. When the types of organisational situations (i.e., officialness, accountability, situational exigencies) are consistent in aspect (formal-informal), their formality or informality increases i.e., when an unofficial email is also unaccountable to other parties and written under time pressure, the overall organisational situation is pushed towards the informal end of the continuum. When the types of organisational situations are inconsistent in aspect (e.g., when an official – hence formal - email is written under time pressure – hence informal), their formality or informality is pushed towards the middle of the continuum.

Similar to the interaction between organisational factors is the interaction between interpersonal ones. As discussed earlier, writers can invoke different identities at the same time or alternate from one to another. In this way interpersonal factors are multi-faceted and the end result of their interaction depends on the weight of one against the other.

A yet third type of interaction takes place between organisational and interpersonal factors and results in linguistic choices that are either in a middle position in the continuum or a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features in the same email. The conflict between the formal aspect of the officialness of George's second email to Yuan and the informal aspects of the interactants' low SD and of (what has been perceived by George as) lack of language proficiency results in a general rather informal style (extract 1). In the Ricardo-Luis confrontation (extract IV) the conflicts of different facets of power result in a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features in what appears to be multiple shifts in formality and complete lack of consistency within the same email. So we should not only be thinking in terms of the invocation of different identities or the coexistence of multiple organisational factors but in terms of the formal and informal

aspects of all the above factors. The final overall linguistic representation of formality is the result of the interaction of all the above.

4. Contextualising formality within CofPs

An important aspect of the context in which variation in the formality/style of workplace discourse is interpreted and understood is the community/ies in which it emerges. “[When] individuals make stylistic moves ... they do so in cooperation with, or with reference to the people around them” (Eckert, 2004, p. 44). As discussed in section 2.1., CofPs can help account for differences in the formality employees use, as members of several such communities at the same time. These operate in the form of common practices of small work-teams, departments, inter-company projects and areas of specialisation, to constellations of practices in large MNCs. In the present data, CofPs at a departmental level was indicated in Chris’ concern about using a language explicit and simple enough for outside department members to understand (extract III).

At a company level there appeared to be differences in what was considered appropriate in each of the three companies investigated. In Infoquest! a tendency was noted toward a more informal style in its communication than the other two companies particularly visible in the colloquial language and greetings (extracts II, IV, and V). PharmaMed and Rysy employees appeared to employ a wider range of formal choices from very formal to very informal (extracts III and VI). However, different linguistic features were appropriate in each company. For example, the loose paragraphing and lack of capitalisation in George’s emails (the only writer in Rysy and thus gatekeeper of its appropriacy) would most probably be inappropriate in Infoquest! emails, which were shown to be primarily characterised by abbreviations, succinctness and shortness. Similarly the absence of greetings or the presence of informal greetings that seemed to be characteristic of Infoquest!’s correspondence (including its external correspondence) might be inappropriate in Rysy’s external communication. Added to this, accountability, as seen in the use of CCing function, appeared to play a more important role in PharmaMed than Rysy. The explanation appears to lie in the different emphasis placed in hierarchical structures, largely emanating from the differences in size and type of the two organisations. These differences in writing style seen in combination with the differences in email functions between the three companies also support a view of emails as a genre within CofPs, recognised in both purpose and form by its members.

The contextualisation of formality in CofP is also visible in the discussion of the members' socialisation process. The newcomers' linguistic choices are pinpointed as 'inappropriate' or 'deviant' unless they are adjusted to what the community accepts as 'appropriate' and 'normal' (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 36). Their process of socialisation is inherently complex as they mix influences from previous or concurrent CofP they belong to and they are called to adjust and sanction the existing rules and norms or violate and create new ones. In Infoquest! the newcoming Victoria fraught with insecurity is seen to write more formally than the more experienced company members (extract V). In PharmaMed, George's email was perceived as inappropriately informal in light of his one-year experience in the company (extract VI). The membership in multiple CofP and the use of different style in each one is visible in Chris, who recognises he is part of both the community of accountants and that of his company (extract IV). As a well-adjusted old-timer he recognises the contribution of the experience he acquired in his previous company, where he learned the importance of adjusting his language as an accountant to those outside his department. The challenging nature of socialisation further supports the contextualisation of formality in CofP through the determining role of the gatekeepers in the appropriacy of formality. The boundaries of appropriacy are not simply out there waiting to be learnt; they are delineated by the gatekeepers of each community, which the new members need to conform to find themselves a place in the new hierarchy (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999, p. 37). Bill and Lei in Infoquest! (extract V) and Maria and Thomas in PharmaMed (extract VI) are the gatekeepers of the appropriate language that the newcoming Victoria and George have to acquire through their experience.

The above four considerations are instrumental towards gaining an understanding of the way formality is enacted in workplace emails. Although each one makes its own integral contribution to our understanding of formality, they are all interrelated in that one cannot exist without the other. Consistencies are traced along inconsistencies as different identities are invoked in the context of CofP. As Irvine put it "[such considerations] must be interdependent to the extent that cultural definitions of social situations and social identities must have a behavioural content" (1979, p. 785). The variation of human behaviours lead to variation in stylistic choices and stylistic choices index the identity/ies we invoke. As both language and situation mutually construct an inherently dynamic and

complex rather than straightforward and simple social reality, variation in formality, is integral to our understanding of the complex nature of social reality.

5.3. Conclusion

Looking at the functions and linguistic features of workplace emails, it appears that the genre of email is used differently in CofPs across and within companies. Email emerged to serve different functions according to type of company and employees' hierarchical level and to serve a primary transactional and a secondary relational role. Against this backdrop, the linguistic features of formality are used by the employees to enact their professional identities and negotiate their relationships within the CofPs they belong to. The examination of the interaction between organisational and interpersonal situations of formality and its linguistic features show that they affect each other, the end result depending on the weight of one against the other. The findings lend support to the view that "informative and interpersonal modes of linguistic communication interpenetrate in the discourse practices of institutional settings ... even in predominantly transactional contexts" (Harris, 2003, p. 49).

Chapter 6. Summary and Conclusions

6.0. Introduction

This chapter will discuss in turn the key findings of the study, the contribution of the thesis, suggestions for further research, and its pedagogical implications.

6.2. Summary of main findings

I start by discussing the findings related to the first part of the study and research questions 1A and B, 2A and B, 3A, B, and C, and 4A and B (cf. p. 57): in line with the literature on workplace communication, the study reveals substantial inter- and intra company variation in the writing practices employed in various MNCs. However, as the findings suggest here, both the general writing practices and the writing style of employees in their email communication vary in ways different than those discussed in the literature. These are summarised below:

The frequency and importance of written documents

As the findings show, variation in writing practices was linked to company size, level of post and years of experience (section 4.1.). With regard to hierarchical levels, managers and post holders differed in the documents they wrote according to the duties and responsibilities assigned to the hierarchical level of their post. Although differences in the writing of employees according to their level of post within their organisation are not particularly new, the differences here apply across organisations. Also, not widely discussed in previous studies were two factors which visibly appeared to affect the frequency and importance of documents: company size and years of experience. In relation to the first, larger companies tended to produce formal documents (e.g., reports) more often than smaller companies and to attribute greater importance to them. Smaller companies appeared to produce less formal documents like emails, memos and faxes more often.

Also, less formal documents, which were produced more frequently, tended to be written in GR, and more formal documents, which were produced less frequently, were written in ENG. This further supports the recently discussed use of local languages for

operational matters and the use of *Linguae Francae*³⁹ for more formal uses that cross national borders. The coexistence of local languages alongside *Linguae Francae* underlines the importance of multilingualism in the corporate workplace setting.

Additional variation emerged with regard to employees' years of experience (section 4.2.). Even though in past studies complexity and importance of documents have been seen to explain the different documents new and older employees are engaged in, this does not emerge in this study. Findings here suggest that largely sensitised by the insecurity caused by the economic crisis, old-timers place importance to a greater range of documents than newcomers. The ability to write a variety of documents as a way to secure their employment reflects a commodification view of employee skills, in light of the economic pressures afflicting Greece. In the present study this becomes more visible in the old-timers' perceptions. It also relates to and expands findings from previous studies indicating that in a highly uncertain job market, employees need to be able to adapt quickly to a changing job market and their 'value' to the workplace is assessed on the basis of the 'skills' they bring (cf. Gee et al., 1996).

The collaborative nature of workplace writing

In agreement with past literature, the study revealed substantial collaboration among employees and variation according to their level of post and years of experience. In this study, however, more post holders than managers and more newcomers than old-timers reported collaborating in writing. Explanations lie in the different types of collaboration employees engage in. Although all participated in assigned team work for the production of particular documents, the post holders and newcomers were additionally involved in unofficially giving and receiving help in the writing of documents or functioning as writing 'nodes' doing the writing of others. This echoes other research on workplace writing. As Dias suggests: "writing is seldom the product of isolated individuals but rather and seldom obviously, the outcome of continuing collaboration, of interactions that involve other people and other texts. Writing practices are closely linked to their sociocultural contexts" (Dias, et al., 1999, p. 10).

³⁹ Apart from English, other natural languages like Russian in the Baltic states and French in Luxemburg and Belgium and mixed or artificial languages like 'skandinaviska' serve as *linguae francae* in particular regions (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2012).

Writing difficulties and perceived solutions

As the findings reveal, the writing problems that persist over time are adjustment of content and style to readers and continuous format updates. This further highlights the inseparable link between the texts and the environment within which they are produced. The problems were faced not only by newcomers but also by post holders, pointing to either a potential link between years of experience and level of post or the different duties and responsibilities of employees at different hierarchical levels. Participants perceived experience as the major factor which contributed to the alleviation of problems. However, in addition to the widely acknowledged localised experience gained in the company in which they were currently employed, experience gained prior or outside current employment was also perceived as beneficial. In the context of the Greek economic crisis, prospects for retention and advancement appeared to strongly affect employees' motivation to learn how to write better. In this light, formal instruction was perceived as uneconomical and of minor benefit to the alleviation of writing problems. This has significant pedagogic implications, which are discussed in session 6.4.

I now turn to the findings from RQs 5A and B and 6A, B, and C, in the second part of the study.

The functions of emails

The analysis shows that email appeared to serve a variety of functions in the three companies serving as case studies, PharmaMed, Rysy and Infoquest!. In line with past literature, it was primarily used for information exchange, secondarily for directives and less frequently for other functions (expressives and commissives). Differences emerged between the functions email served in the three companies possibly reflecting their different activities, nature of work and emphasis on hierarchical structures (section 5.1.2). Findings also indicated that email was used for different purposes by different hierarchical levels. Although information-giving and -seeking emails were mostly addressed to mixed audiences and equals, directives were primarily addressed to subordinates. In sum, it is suggested here that email is a rich means of communication used by different strata for different purposes reflecting both egalitarian and non-egalitarian relations. Transactional purposes seem to predominate over relational ones in the sample I analysed, but the two are often difficult to separate as job talk and social

talk are not distinct (Angouri and Marra, 2011; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003). Although the main taxonomy foregrounds the transactional function of email (see also 5.1, pp. 131-140), the analysis of the samples shows how the relationship between the employees is enacted through language and reflected in the text.

Enactment of formality in workplace emails

The analysis of the real life samples pointed to four considerations with regard to the enactment of formality in workplace emails. The first concerns the invocation of social identities. Multiple professional public and more private identities can be invoked by the same person, at the same time, or alternated in the course of an interaction, and reflected in their choice of formal or informal linguistic items. The identities studied here in terms of social distance, power and socialisation appeared to be interrelated to the point of becoming often mixed and indistinct. This is well aligned with workplace discourse research (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003) and something that workplace writing research can investigate in further detail.

The second consideration concerns the degree of consistency between aspect and type of situation with that of code. Formal situations tend to invoke formal linguistic features and the same applies to informal situations. We saw for example how Yuan uses formal language in her first contact with George, where both parties speak as representatives of their respective companies in email (2), extract I. However, inconsistencies emerge in the following cases: parties in power and with years of experience in the company can be both formal and informal, and sensitive issues and lack of experience can similarly lead to language that is both formal and informal. In these cases, the linguistic features employed raise issues of appropriacy rather than degree of formality (see extracts IV, V and VI).

In this context, organisational and interpersonal factors are seen to co-occur and interact. As they rarely emerge in isolation, it is often the mixture of the two or the assessment of the weight of one of them over another that leads to the linguistic choices. As the discourse analysis shows, this results in either linguistic choices in the middle of the continuum of the two extreme ends of formality or a mixture of formal and informal linguistic features in the same email. Although it is inherently limited to trace the linguistic choices to particular situational factors, getting the interactants to talk about

their own writing can grant the discourse analyst access to the interactants' intentions and contextual factors behind the linguistic choices (Odell et al., 1983). Thus decisions on the interpretation of the data are made on the basis of participant perceptions and the discourse analysis of the data. Finally, formality in workplace emails is contextualised within CofPs, where its use is recognised and adopted by its members. The linguistic choices can reflect the interactants' membership in constellations of multiple communities at the same time, and the employment of identities in terms of ones' experience in the company can only acquire meaning within a CofPs framework. As the analysis shows, each of the above considerations are interrelated. Consistencies coexist with inconsistencies as different identities are invoked in the context of CofPs. The above considerations are integral to gaining an understanding of the way formality is enacted in workplace emails. They illustrate that formality in discourse is not subject to random choices and that the widely claimed variability in formality particularly visible in emails is systematic and highly relevant to the aspects of context identified here. This supports existing research which links formality directly to the context in which it is produced (Bremmer, 2006; Erickson, 1999; Gains, 1999). Having said that, despite the risk of subjectivity in working with writers' perceptions, the interpretations are also based on the researcher's discourse analysis and past studies on formality (also see 3.7.4).

To conclude, the next three sections are concerned with the contribution and implications of my research:

6.2. Contribution of the present thesis

The thesis contributes to existing research in a number of areas:

The thesis provides one of the few systematic attempts to explore workplace writing in the Greek context. It also adds to the body of work on the relationship between professional documents and the social context within which they are produced. Although attention has been drawn to the importance of companies' writing practices, the volatile environment and the inherently complex nature of business communication necessitate constant investigation or else findings and theories might risk becoming out-dated. The present study sheds light into the way the under researched companies in Greece try to reconcile both the global and the local demands, nicely captured by the term 'glocal'

(Robertson, 1994) in times of economic unrest. It also highlights the different ways formal and informal writing practices are employed by businesses of various sizes and activities and employees at different hierarchical levels and years of experience. It contributes to genre theory and CofP research by showing that written genres are used differently in CofPs at the level of types of companies, departments and groups of employees.

The research also contributes to the study of the business email, which constitutes the most frequent and important genre emerging from the data. It was found to serve different functions across companies and hierarchical levels and to be the prime means for the enactment of professional identities and the negotiation of employee relationships. Although emails have been extensively studied in the past, business emails have not been investigated in the Greek context, and studies conducting discourse analysis outside the Greek context have not yet systematically addressed their formal and informal features.

Most importantly, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the notion of formality. Formality is a key concept in applied and sociolinguistic research (section 1.3.); it is however rarely discussed systematically. The thesis attempted to delineate the concept of formality and explain the way it is enacted in workplace emails through the eyes of the parties involved in their production; organisational and interpersonal factors are balanced against each other, and they engage in interplay with the linguistic features. The process is so dynamic that it has implications for the nature of formality as primarily “constructionist, dynamic and negotiated” (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 2006, p. 12), albeit subject to the norms of the organisation in which formality is employed. Implications thus arise as to whether it is also partly normative.

Finally, although the findings in the present study cannot be generalised outside Greece, the investigated organisations, or the context of the economic crisis, they raise implications about how writers perceive workplace communication in contexts other than yet similar to the above e.g., other countries, MNCs, or socioeconomic pressures. Added to this, the notion of formality as situation and form could have applications in other written and oral genres and other situational contexts.

6.3. Areas for future research

From the analysis of the data a number of areas for future research emerged. Studies could usefully explore in further detail the potential link between level of post and years of experience and frequency and importance of documents. Also in light of the escalating effects of the economic crisis on numerous European countries, research could also address the impact this has on companies' (writing) practices. As the future of numerous corporations looks unstable and unpredictable, it would be interesting to see how stronger pressures to survive lead to conflicting interests and negotiating power relationships and the way these are reflected in discourse.

With regard to the enactment of formality, there is a need for further systematic investigation into the way formality is perceived and enacted in other types of discourse especially in terms of linguistic features and the contextual factors that affect them. Investigations into whether these linguistic features or situational factors vary or are homogeneous across CofPs, into additional linguistic features of formality, and into other types of interactions of situation and code could provide further important insights into the ways formality is employed in written discourse. The exploration of formality particularly in written discourse appears to be still in its infancy, and there is a need for construct development and validation.

Finally, although emails have been studied by numerous discourse analysts for quite some time, their potential to cast a representative glimpse into the workplace written communication of our times makes it a fruitful site for tracing changes in communication and formality and in the interaction of interpersonal and situational factors. Hence, although there is a body of work in this area, given the frequency and significance of the genre, further research is needed to expand our knowledge.

Finally the thesis closes with the pedagogical implications of this work.

6.4. Pedagogical implications

In light of the highly variable and situated nature of workplace written communication, implications arise about whether writing can be taught in a context other than that of the workplace, and if so, how. Adopting an optimistic perspective, I would like to argue here

that a lot can be done to prepare students through instruction for the multivariate and dynamic written communication required in contemporary workplaces in Greece (and elsewhere).

Admittedly, the academic environment is inherently disadvantaged in providing an authentically situated learning environment (Dias et al., 1999). However, promoting collaborative writing (Freedman & Adam, 2000; Lunsford & Ede, 1990) and internships (Schneider & Andre, 2005; Gaitens, 2000) holds much promise for introducing students to the complexities of real life workplace communication. More can be done in the use and design of textbook materials. Current EAP textbooks have been severely criticised for simplifying and thus distorting workplace communication by using prescribed formulas and models of expert writing (Harwood, 2005; Swales, 2002). In response to this, I suggest the use of authentic materials and corpora so as to expose students to the actual multivariate styles of writing in different workplaces. This can help them develop their observational skills much more efficiently than using prescribed models of writing genres. Along the same line, the use of material from research conducted in workplace environments holds much promise and points to the importance of cooperation between researchers, material developers and instructors (Harwood, 2005). More importantly, classroom activities should aid students to observe, analyse, and understand variation in workplace writing with the aim of adjusting their writing to different interpersonal and organisational contexts. The CofPs framework can arguably be utilised to this effect (Angouri, 2010b). In line with the pedagogical implications of studies employing a CofPs framework (e.g., Angouri, 2010b; Poncini, 2002), suggestions include drawing attention to the different linguistic repertoire of CofPs that overlap and interact and to the way employees who belong to different CofPs as work-teams, departments or large organisations, adjust their language according to the sociolinguistic and socio-pragmatic norms of the communities of their readers. More importantly, we should refrain from using one-size-fits-all book formulas and expert models for the teaching of workplace writing. “A range of expert and student corpora which feature various spoken and written genres and various disciplines should be used for awareness raising, with the aim of the corpus data being to enhance students’ receptive and/or productive use” (Harwood, 2005, p. 158).

Equally promising is the initiation of students into the practise of transferring their writing skills to new contexts (Teich, 1987). In particular, general skills such as analysing, synthesising and summarising have been reported to be more easily transferable than skills specific to disciplines (Schneider & Andre, 2005). Instead of being asked to imitate models of workplace genres, students would benefit from receiving more practice in transfer of skills much like a chess player draws on both general chess playing skills and those needed to win the new game of chess (Casanave, 2002; Perkins and Salomon, 1989). Along these lines, learning how to engage in critical self-reflection and ‘learning how to learn’ (Freedman and Adam, 2000) is a step in the same direction. In these ways students will not only have a smoother transition into the workplace but will be able to meet the ensuing demands for continuous adjustment to the changes caused to the workplaces by new socioeconomic environments.

The pedagogical implications for the teaching of workplace writing indeed present a challenge for all – EAP instructors, students, researchers, and material developers alike - but one that we should take up if we are to meet the real demands of workplace communication.

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Appendix A

Figure A1. Information Sheet for Participant Companies



Communication in the workplace Questionnaire

About the questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a project aiming to explore successful written and spoken communication in multinational corporations. In particular it aims to look into the types of documents employees produce and the speaking situations they encounter, potential challenges they might encounter, and how companies can be supported to improve communication skills.

We wish to distribute the questionnaire to a sample of employees in different posts, which will take about ten minutes to fill in. On the basis of the results, short follow up interviews may be conducted. The researcher will analyze the data and will then produce a summary of the results and/or any sort of feedback that may be useful to you. The collection of the data is intended to be as unobtrusive as possible.

What will the data be used for?

The data will be used for research purposes only. They will be securely stored at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed to all participants involved. Participation in the project is on a volunteering basis following the participants' consent.

The aim of our study is to enhance workplace communication skills and suggest ways of dealing with any challenges people working in corporate companies may face.

Thank you for your cooperation

For more information please contact: Ifigenia Mahili, ifima@otenet.gr, 6932914314

Appendix B

Figure B1. Questionnaire on Writing Practices



Communication in the workplace

Personal information

01. My first/primary language is the following:
.....

02. I speak at least one foreign language.
Tick one of the following.

Yes No

If yes, go to No 2.1 If no, go to no 3.

02.1 I speak the following foreign or second language/s:
Complete as appropriate.

.....

03. My highest degree earned is ...
Tick one of the following.

BA MA/MS PhD

04. I have been working for this company for the following number of years.
Tick one of the following.

0-2 3-5 6-8 9-11
 12-15 more than 16

05. I am working in the following department:

06. The title of my current job is the following:
Please avoid abbreviations.

.....

General workplace communication

07. The working language/s of my company is/are the following:
.....

08. When I communicate for work related purposes, I use English and/or Greek in the following contexts.

Tick the box or boxes that apply.

	English	Greek
A. When speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. When writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

09. I use English in the following cases.

Tick only the boxes that apply.

	Yes	No
A. In my official duties of my post	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Out of the official duties of my post to help my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Out of the official duties of my post in social events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. At work I write and/or speak for work related purposes with people who are...

Tick as many boxes are appropriate.

	I speak in English	I speak in Greek	I write in English	I write in Greek
A. In the same post as mine in the company I work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. In higher posts than mine in the company I work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. In lower posts than mine in the company I work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. In other companies in Greece	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. In companies located outside Greece	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Workplace written communication

11. I approximately spend the following proportion of my time writing in English and/or Greek as part of my official duties and job description.

Tick the box or boxes that apply.

	Never	1-10 times a year	1-4 times a month	1-4 times a week	Every day
A. English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Greek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. I have received training in workplace writing in/as part of the following lessons/seminars in English and/or other FLs in the last 10 years.

Tick only the boxes that apply.

	In English	In other FLs
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A. General writing as part of a language course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Workplace writing in the current company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Workplace communication in private language schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. FL for the specific subject area in my university studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. I think that my ability to write well in English and Greek is important for the reasons below.

Please write the corresponding number for degree of importance.

Not important: 0 A little important: 1
Quite important: 2 Critically important: 3

	In English	In Greek
E.g.: For my promotion to a better job	2	2
A. For my retention in the same post in the company I am employed		
B. For my promotion to a higher post in the company I am employed		
C. For my future career development		

14. I produce the following types of documents in Greek and/or English for work related purposes in the corresponding frequency.

Please write the most closely corresponding number for frequency in the appropriate column.

Never: 0 1-10 times a year: 1 1-4 times a month: 2
1-4 times a week: 3 Everyday: 4

	English	Greek
Example: Letters	2	2
A. Letters		
B. Emails		
C. SMS messages		
D. Faxes		
E. Internal memos		
F. Progress reports		
G. Financial reports		
H. Employee performance reports		
I. Minutes		

J. Safety documents		
K. Brochures/advertisements		
L. Business/ in house journals		
M. Scripts for business presentations		
N. Audits		
O. Agendas of meetings		

15. In English, I find the application of templates to be ...

Tick the box that applies to the degree of difficulty as you perceive it.

Very easy Easy Difficult Very difficult

16. When producing the written documents in English I am engaged in the following stages in the writing process.

Tick only the box or boxes that apply to you.

	Never	Sometimes	Always
A. Thinking & organizing ideas for my own drafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Writing my own drafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Revising & editing my own drafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Being involved in one/ more of the above in other people's drafts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17. I consider the types of documents below, whether written in English or Greek, to be important for the efficient performance of my company.

Tick one box for each document according to degree of importance, as you perceive it.

	Not important	A little important	Quite important	Critically important
A. Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. SMS messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Faxes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Internal memos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Progress reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Financial reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

H. Employee performance reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Safety documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Brochures / advertisements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L. Business/ in house journals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
M. Business presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N. Audits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
O. Agendas of meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. I have encountered the following problems with producing the written documents.

Tick the boxes that apply.

	<i>When I started working at this company</i>	<i>Now</i>
A. Using clear language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Using succinct language with no redundancies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Using correct grammar and syntax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Using appropriate technical <u>terms</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Using specific writing skills for particular types of documents (i.e. what to include in an audit, how to organize minutes, what style/ tone to use in a memo or a proposal)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Using templates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Adjusting the style and tone of my writing according to the person I am writing to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. Adjusting the content of what I write according to the person I am writing to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Collaborating with others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Writing on my own without help from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Fitting in the workplace community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. The following factors have significantly helped me to overcome problems in writing in this company.

Tick the ones that apply to you.

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
A. Experience acquired in the current company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Lessons/Seminars in workplace writing in English I have attended in the current company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Lessons/Seminars in workplace communication in English I have attended in private language schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. EFL courses for the specific subject area in my university studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Prospects for retention and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Writing with other colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. General English language courses in private language schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. I feel I need to strengthen my written communication skills in English and Greek more.

Indicate whether you agree.

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
A. In English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. In Greek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. When I communicate in writing in English, I ...

Tick the box or boxes that apply.

	<i>Individually</i>	<i>In collaboration with others</i>
A. I write	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. I prefer to write	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. Overall, I find that written communication in English and in Greek in this organization is ...

Tick the box that applies to each language respectively.

	<i>Very easy</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very difficult</i>
A. In English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. In Greek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Workplace oral communication

23. I approximately spend the following proportion of my time speaking in English and/or Greek as part of my official duties and job description.

Tick the box or boxes that apply.

	Never	1-10 times a year	1-4 times a month	1-4 times a week	Every day
A. In English	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. In Greek	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. I communicate orally for work related purposes on the following occasions in English or Greek.

Tick the box or boxes that apply.

	In English	In Greek
A. On the phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Face to face with other colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. In group meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Electronically on the web	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. On my business trips abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. In foreign counterparts' business visits to Greece	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Social talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. I consider the following speaking occasions (regardless of language) to be important for the efficient performance of my company.

Tick one box for each occasion according to degree of importance, as you perceive it.

	Not important	A little important	Quite important	Critically important
A. On the phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Face to face with other colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Group meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Electronically on the web	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Business trips abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Foreign counterparts' business visits to Greece	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

G. Social talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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26. I have received training in workplace oral communication in/as part of the following lessons/seminars in English and/or other FLs in the last 10 years.

Tick only the boxes that apply.

	In English	In other FLs
A. General speaking as part of a language course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Speaking for the workplace setting in the present company	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Workplace communication in private language schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. EFL for the specific subject area in my university studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

27. I think my ability to speak well in English and in Greek for work related purposes is important for the reasons indicated below.

Please write the corresponding number for degree of importance.

Not important: 0 A little important: 1
Quite important: 2 Critically important: 3

	In English	In Greek
Example: For my promotion to a better job	2	2
A. For my retention in the same post in the company I am employed		
B. For my promotion to higher post in the company I am employed		
C. For my future career advancement		

Thank you very much for your time. If you would like to help further with this research and have five minutes of your time for a short talk, please note your name below. Rest assured that your name will be kept confidential and will be erased at the end of the talk.

Appendix C

Table C1. *Company profiles*

Size	Type	Area	Expansion	Activities in & outside Greece
1 Small-family business- sole trader	Trading	Food production	Greece only	Imports raw material & sells products abroad & in Greece
2 Small –part of a group of companies	Construction	Construction & design	Branches and affiliates in Greece & abroad	Imports raw material & is active in Greece & abroad
3 Small- part of a group of companies	Trading pharmaceutical	Medicine	Greece only	Imports diagnostic equipment & sells in Greek market
4 Large - with subsidiaries	Provider of mobile networks	Telecommunications	Greece with mother company abroad	Provides mobile products, services & networks in Greece
5 Large family business	Trading	Food production	Greece only	Imports raw material & sells products abroad & in Greece
6 Large - with subsidiaries	Trading & service	Copy machines, scanners, printers	Greece with mother company abroad	Imports copying equipment & sells in Greek market
7 Large - with subsidiaries	Trading pharmaceutical	Medicine	Greece with mother company abroad	Imports drugs & sells in Greek market
8 Large - with subsidiaries	Employment site	Human resources	Branch in Greece, mother company abroad	Provides employment opportunities all over the world

Appendix D

Table D1. *Frequency of Documents Produced in English and Greek.*

	ENGLISH					GREEK				
	never	yearly	monthly	weekly	daily	never	yearly	monthly	weekly	daily
Letters	48.7	11.8	7.9	25	6.6	62	9.3	6.3	20	2.4
Emails	11.5	9	12.8	26.9	39.7	10.6	8.3	12.7	19.2	49.2
SMS	89.7	6.4	3.8	0	0	70.3	5.1	6.5	5.2	12.9
Faxes	53.8	11.5	21.8	10.3	2.6	26	3.8	27.3	29.9	13
Memos	68.4	3.9	17.1	7.9	2.6	18.2	3.9	26	37.7	14.2
Progress reports	48.1	9.1	33.8	5.2	3.9	63.2	7.4	24.1	3.3	2
Financial reports	58.4	10.4	26	3.9	1.3	70.4	8.8	20.8	0	0
EPR	65.8	6.6	25	1.3	1.3	78.2	5.3	15.2	1.3	0
Minutes	88	5.3	6.7	0	0	74.7	5.3	9.3	9.3	1.3
Safety docs	90.5	5.4	1.4	2.7	0	91.1	5.4	1.4	2.1	0
Ads	83.1	7.8	3.9	3.9	1.3	72.7	10.4	6.5	9.1	1.3
Journals	83.1	11.7	2.6	2.6	0	84.5	10.7	2.2	2.6	0
OP scripts	46.8	9.1	29.9	10.4	3.9	46.8	14.3	33.8	5.2	0
Audits	92.2	3.9	1.3	0	2.6	93.2	2.9	1.3	0	2.6
Agendas	82.1	3.8	9	1.3	3.8	71.4	6.5	14.3	5.2	2.6

Note. Numbers above indicate percentages

Appendix E

Table E1. *Participants Who Ascribed Critical Importance to the Documents Produced in their Organisations.*

Types of documents	Old-timers	Newcomers
Letters	40	33.9
Emails	41	40
SMSs	3.7	0
Faxes	30.8	4
Internal memos	39.6	8
Progress reports	60	16
Financial reports	71	20
EPRs	54.7	28
Minutes	22.6	16
Safety docs	35.8	8
Brochures/ads	39.6	32
Journals	20.7	4
OP scripts	32.7	16
Contracts	62	16
Audits	52.8	28
Agendas	26.4	0

Note. Numbers above indicate percentages

Appendix F

Table F1. *Types of Formal Instruction Received and their Perceived Benefits*

Formal instruction received	Factors contributing to overcoming problems in writing	
Instruction in writing in the company employed	1/80	Experience acquired in the company employed 68/80
ESP courses in private language schools	4/80	Instruction in writing in the company employed 0/80
ESP courses in tertiary education	2/80	ESP courses in private language schools 1/80
EFL courses in private language schools	8/80	ESP courses in tertiary education 2/80
		EFL courses in private language schools 3/80
		Prospects for retention and promotion 43/80
		Writing together with other colleagues 65/80

Appendix G

Table G1. *Distribution of Specific Functions According to Company*

		PharmaMed	Rysy	Infoquest!
Directives	Orders	10 (12)	0 (0)	3.2 (3)
	Requests	12.5 (15)	19.8 (17)	12.8 (12)
	Suggestion	2.5 (3)	0 (0)	1.1 (1)
Info giving	Factual info	47. (57)	37.2 (32)	21.3 (20)
	Reports	1.7 (2)	2.3 (2)	19.1 (18)
	Opinion	5.8 (7)	7 (6)	8.5 (8)
Info seeking	Factual info	6.7 (8)	24.4 (21)	20.2 (19)
	Opinion	3.3 (4)	1.2 (1)	3.2 (3)
	Approval	1.7 (2)	0 (0)	1.1 (1)
Expressives	Complaints	5 (6)	1.2 (1)	1.1 (1)
	Apologies	1.7 (2)	0 (0)	1.1 (1)
	Contentment/ Thanks	1.7 (2)	1.2 (1)	2.1 (2)
Commissives	Future intention	0 (0)	5.8 (5)	5.3 (5)
	Offers	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Note. Numbers on the left are in percentages and numbers on the right in brackets are the actual numbers.

Table G2. *Distribution of Specific Functions According to Status.*

		Upward	Downward	Equals	Mixed
Directives	Orders	0 (0)	34.2 (13)	0 (0)	2.6 (2)
	Requests	4.2 (2)	13.2 (5)	22.8 (31)	7.7 (6)
	Suggestion	0 (0)	2.6 (1)	0.7 (1)	2.6 (2)
Info giving	Factual info	33.3 (16)	18.4 (7)	31.6 (43)	55.1 (43)
	Reports	14.6 (7)	2.6 (1)	4.4 (6)	10.3 (8)
	Opinion	10.4 (5)	5.3 (2)	7.4 (10)	5.1 (4)
Info seeking	Factual info	16.7 (8)	10.5 (4)	22.1 (30)	7.7 (6)
	Opinion	4.2 (2)	2.6 (1)	3.7 (5)	0 (0)
	Approval	4.2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.3 (1)
Expressives	Complaints	6.3 (3)	5.3 (1)	0 (0)	3.8 (2)
	Apologies	0 (0)	0 (0)	.7 (1)	2.6 (2)
	Contentment /Thanks	2.1 (1)	2.6 (1)	1.5 (2)	1.3 (1)
Commissives	Future intention	4.2 (2)	2.6 (1)	5.1 (7)	0 (0)
	Offers	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Note. Numbers on the left are in percentages and numbers on the right are the actual numbers.

Appendix H

Transcription conventions

[.] indicates a pause

[..] indicates a long pause

(laughs) additional information

eh/hm fillers

Underlined words indicate emphasis

Appendix I

Table I1. *Examples of Linguistic Features of formality*

Form: Linguistic features		
Types of ling features	Aspects of linguistic features	
	Formality	Informality
Reference	<p>Corporate ‘we’ (in external communication) «We would like to complain about ...»</p> <p>Collective & impersonal reference (pronouns & nouns) «the team», «Mexico», «anyone»,</p> <p>Impersonal & passive structures «It is thought that ...», «Having been informed ...», «the budget is being managed», «there was no foul play intended»</p>	<p>Individualised ‘I’ & ‘you’ (in external communication) «I would like you to know ...»</p> <p>Individualised reference (personal pronouns & names) «Bill and I», «he»</p> <p>Personal structures & active voice «I think ...», «I was very clear on what my opinion was»</p>
Fullness of linguistic items	<p>Full forms «It is thought ...», «I am the senior manager»</p>	<p>Contractions, abbreviations, word omission «It’s thought», «I’m the Sr manager», «stats», «ad»</p>
(In)tolerance of grammatical errors	<p>Attention to grammatical correctness</p>	<p>Tolerance of grammatical errors «i am planning ...», «after test the machine»</p>
Lexical register	<p>Technical scientific diction “Twin Screw Extruders”, “new conjugated mAbs”, “released markers”</p> <p>Standardised phrases «Per our conversation», «Please let us have your offer», «I’m contacting you today to enquire», «I am pleased to inform you»</p> <p>Unemotional, detached diction «I was very clear on what my opinion was and wanted to find a solution»</p>	<p>Everyday conversational diction «Here you go», «well», «great», «I was unable to make the call as I was tied up with ..», «I’m sorry if your team got upset»</p> <p>Innovative, creative language (symbols, faces) !!!,, FYI, pls, w/him, «Dear Maria, Dear Andrew», MX for Mexico</p> <p>Powerful, emotionally charged diction «Fantastic show», «resulting buzz», «This is highly unacceptable and untrue», «ambushed and berated»</p>

<p>Organisational clarity & complexity</p>	<p>Clear & linear paragraphing</p> <p>Tightly structured long & complex sentences “I am contacting you today to discuss the possibility of having one of our seasoned speakers present/speak at the ORC Expo Spring and Fall 2010 on behalf of Infoquest!GetHired.”</p> <p>“If there are any such openings, please let me know when the best time would be to discuss next steps.”</p>	<p>Loose, circular, absent paragraphing</p> <p>Short & simple sentences/phrases «Sure, Here you go.», «This exactly what I did.»,</p> <p>Loosely connected sentences we would like information about the artificial rice machinery such as its tech details (for example if it possible to mix it with liquid substances) finally we would like to have an idea of how much it costs (in general) and its capacity.</p>
<p>Degree of succinctness</p>	<p>Succinct language Here are last month’s figures</p>	<p>Redundancies, additional individualised comments & wishes I hope everything is well at work and with your family. Below you will find the figures for last month. Have a look and let me know if there is anything else you need.</p>
<p>Degree of explicitness</p>	<p>Explicit language This email is to remind Maria, Gregory, Jim and John you that the deadline for submission of budgets is today”</p>	<p>Implicit language (contextual info is clear to all) «reminder budget today»</p>
<p>Degree of directness</p>	<p>Fronting/Backgrounding “Please let us have your offer”, “please let me know if you can provide” «when would be a good time to chat?»</p> <p>Indirectness in speech acts «Unfortunately I was unable to make the call»</p>	<p>Directness «Send us your offer», «You will prepare the budget» «when is a good time to chat»</p> <p>Directness in speech acts «I apologize for missing the call»</p>
<p>Greetings</p>	<p>Impersonal Intro: Dear sir/madam, Dear Mr. First+ last name, Dear+first name Concl: Best regards + first+ last name+ signature, Best regards+first name</p>	<p>Personal Absence of greetings, omission of signature Intro: Hi+first name Concl: Best, first name, thanks+first name</p>

