An Analysis of Intercultural Business Email Communication between Thai and Japanese Writers

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze the rhetorical structures of intercultural business email communication between non-native writers; Thai and Japanese. 305 pairs of business inquiry and reply emails collected from three Thailand-based companies which engaged in an email interaction with Japanese partners. They were analyzed using intercultural rhetoric analysis based on the framework of move analysis. The results revealed that there was a distinctive difference between both groups of writers in composing emails. In an inquiry email, it was found that Move 1, Move 2, Move 4, Move 5, and Move 7 constitute the main email structure of Thai writers, while the moves such as Move 1, Move 4, and Move 7 are considered the core components for Japanese writers. For reply emails, all six moves are considered essential moves for Thais; however, three moves such as Move 1, Move 3, and Move 6 are the core components of Japanese email writers. The results also indicated that both Thai and Japanese writers composed diverse patterns of business emails; however, the majority of Thai writers composed business inquiry and reply emails using six move patterns whereas the four move patterns were used by the majority of Japanese writers. In addition, it was found that the use of different generic structures are not problems in business email communication between Thai and Japanese writers.

Keywords: intercultural business email communication; rhetoric structures; move analysis; non-native English writers

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Introduction

Doing business and connecting people across the world requires an effective way of written business communication (Nutpoung, 2013). Moreover, there should be an effective and quick way of written communication. Email is fast and it is one of the most important communication tools used for both internal and external communication (Saiethong, 2014).

In business communication, English is established as the business lingua franca (BELF) or a common language of business communication among business people who have different mother tongues. Therefore, it is essential for business correspondents to have proficiency in using English for business communication purposes. However, it was found that language and culture are the intercultural problems of a business email because the writers who use English may have different cultural backgrounds, work experiences, and writing abilities and these might cause negative effects on communication (Payne, 2008). In addition, the lack of cultural knowledge can create a barrier to business success. Hence, cultural differences could drive to communication barriers when their different approaches are misunderstood, misinterpreted, or not accepted (Penn, 2019).

Many studies such as Siripraparat (2011), Nutpoung (2013), and Sirijorn (2013) revealed that non-native English writers had difficulties in intercultural business email writing. Problems such as grammatical errors, lack of cultural knowledge, and ability in English business email writing, could affect the quality of writing. Some non-native writers who have to use business English email on a daily basis lack the knowledge and ability to write business English emails. Similarly, in Pastor and Calderon's (2015) work, the writers who used English as a foreign language (EFL) had more problems in business email writing than a group of writers who used English as a second language (ESL). This may be caused by cultural and sociolinguistic influences; for instance, complex noun phrases, compound sentences, creating new words through imitation of their L1, discourse variation, poor linguistic production, and direct and imperative writing styles, etc. Furthermore, Patterson (2015) states that most non-native writers are more likely to write emails in their own style in order to help readers comprehend what they are saying. Likewise, Wannadilok (2018) found that organizing the ideas into a proper structure of content was one of the critical problems in the email writing of bank employees. These problems could cause miscommunication between sender and receiver and may damage its organization.

It can be concluded that non-native English email writers experience difficulties with intercultural business email writing with regard to grammatical competence, unclear messages, cultural awareness, writing style and etc. The previous research focused on emails written by ESL writers, but few studies have been done with Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF).

Intercultural Rhetoric

Intercultural rhetoric is the study of the discourse between and among individuals who have different cultural backgrounds (Connor, 2011). It includes the study of interactions in spoken

and written forms, which are parts of text production. The basis of intercultural rhetoric is how language is used to organize the ideas to produce the text. In addition, intercultural rhetoric enlightens successful strategies for business communication where the languages and cultures interact to conduct commerce because it helps identify the differences in style and approach that may promote and obstruct successful communication. In Thailand, there were a few research studies on intercultural rhetoric. Most research dealt with academic writing and some business studies were conducted in the area of native English and non-native English writers, which emphasized the compositions of email such as subject, salutation, purpose, closing, and ending. In the present study, the business inquiry and reply emails are analyzed by adopting the notion of intercultural rhetoric using move analysis. Move analysis is a tool for identifying how information is organized in a particular genre (Swales, 1990). The benefit of move analysis is that it reveals the type of information included in a text, as well as how it is arranged (Kanoksilapatham, 2007).

Previous studies in move analysis studied the rhetoric structure of business email (Kameda, 2009; Giménez-Moreno & Skorczynska, 2013; Mehrpour & Mehrzad, 2013; and Du-Babcock & Feng, 2018). These studies investigated the impact of writers' culture on the move structure and the move patterns between native and non-native English writers. However, the studies in comparative rhetoric analysis in intercultural business email writing were limited, especially among non-native English writers. Therefore, the analysis of business emails in this study would help the researcher differentiate how a group of non-native English writers compose emails to communicate interculturally. Thailand and Japan are both non-native English-speaking countries. They have been trading partners since the 1980s (Ichikawa, Cusurmano & Polenske, 1990; Suehiro & Wailerdsak, 2014). Both languages are structurally, interpersonally, and psychologically far away from English. They are Asian societies with non-Western frames of reference and approaches to interaction. Thus, English is used as a medium of communication between these two countries particularly in a business context. Furthermore, email is also used as a communication tool between these two countries. Both cultures have different sets of values, business rules, communication styles, and different mother tongues; thus, the email of these two cultures have their own discourse style in terms of the purpose, structure, and writing process (Crystal, 2002). To avoid misunderstanding and miscommunication caused by cultural differences and linguistic knowledge, the underlying factors of different writing styles in emails of both Thai and Japanese cultures are worth studying. The main objective of the present study is to analyze the rhetorical structures of intercultural business email between Thai and Japanese writers and the research question is what are the rhetorical structures of business email of Thai and Japanese writers used in intercultural communication.

Research Methodology

1. Data and data collection

The data used in the present study consisted of 305 pairs of business inquiry and reply emails collected from three Thailand-based companies which engaged in an email interaction with Japanese partners. A letter of consent was sent to the Managing Director and General Manager of three Thai firms in order to ask for permission in collecting the data from May to July 2020. The criterion for selecting the participant is the participant's role. The participants who have to contact the overseas partner, especially Japanese, were selected to be the participants in this study. Therefore, there were 91 email writers in this study, 50 Thai writers who worked in three firms in Thailand, and 41 Japanese writers who were the business partners of those three companies.

2. Instruments

2.1 Intercultural Rhetoric Analysis

A research instrument that was used in this study was the intercultural rhetoric analysis. The intercultural rhetoric analysis used in this study is based on Connor and Traversa's (2014) elaboration of Bhatia's (1993) genre analysis. There are two coding schemes for analyzing the business email genre in this study: coding scheme for inquiry email and coding scheme for reply email. Each coding scheme comprised a hierarchical schematic structure of moves and their subunits of steps, which are adopted from Chih (2015). The scheme for inquiry email consists of seven moves and the scheme for reply email consists of six moves as shown in table 1.

Table 1 Coding Schemes for Inquiry and Reply Email adopted from Chih (2015)

Coding Scheme for Inquiry Email	Coding Scheme for Reply Email
Move 1: Salutation	Move 1: Salutation
Move 2: Establishing a link	Move 2: Acknowledging the Inquiry
Step1: Intent of the inquiry	Step1: Gratitude about the inquiry
Step2: Source of reference	Step2: Willingness to help customers with
Move 3: Establishing a	their inquiry
credential	Step3: Apology
Move 4: Making the initial	Move 3: Directly responding to the requested
inquiry	information/materials
Step1: Asking for sample/catalogue	Step1: Providing requested information
Step2: Asking for product detail	Step2: Stating special detail/condition
Step3: Asking for transaction detail	Step3: Offering alternatives
Step4: Asking for action	Move 4: Justifying the direct response
Move 5: Justifying of the inquiry	Move 5: Providing additional information
Move 6: Making other related inquiries	Step1: Stating condition/term
Step1: Stating condition/term	Step2: Stating incentive
Step2: Making special requirement	Step3: Applying pressure tactics
Move 7: Ending politely	Move 6: Ending politely
Step1: Anticipating of Replies	Step1: Anticipating further contact
Step2: Expressing Appreciation	Step2: Expressing Appreciation
Step3: Signing-off	Step3: Signing-off

3. Data Collection

The data was drawn from business emails from three types of business companies engaged in international marketing, merchandising, and commercial. These three companies were selected on the basis that they were based in Thailand employing non-native English speakers who communicated globally with other non-natives. To ensure validity and comparability, email exchange pairs were selected according to the following criteria: (i) the business email was completed following the first inquiry and reply exchange, (ii) the inquiry email was initiated by Thai or Japanese writers, and (iii) the reply email was from Thai or Japanese writers. A total of 345 pairs of emails were initially collected from three companies, 40 of these emails were excluded from the analysis because they were too short in analyzing. Thus, the email analyzed in the study consisted of 305 pairs of inquiry and reply emails collected from 91 participants during three months. This selected number is from Yamane's sample size formula (Yamane, 1973) with a 95% confidence level. There were 167 business inquiry emails written by Thai writers and 138 business inquiry emails written by Japanese writers. These emails were collected only for the purposes of this research. As email messages are confidential and sensitive; thus, the confidential messages were deleted at every stage of the research.

4. Data Analysis

The data from the intercultural rhetoric analysis were used to address the research question. Email messages were labeled according to the type of moves: M1 (Move1), M2 (Move2), M3 (Move3), M4 (Move4), M5 (Move5), M6 (Move6), and M7 (Move7). Two raters were invited to validate the accuracy of the examined data before computing. Then, the collected move step structures and the number of occurrences of the 305 pairs of business emails were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23 and presented as frequencies and percentages. After the completion of the classification, the frequency of each move was counted to determine its status as being obligatory, conventional, or optional. Based on Kanoksilapatham (2005, 2015), a move was considered obligatory, conventional, or optional if located in 100%, between 60% and 99%, and lower than 60% of the data, respectively. The results of two groups of writers were then compared to see the differences in terms of their move necessities and move patterns.

5. Inter-rater Reliability

In this study, two raters were invited to participate to ensure the reliability of the analysis. These two raters hold master's degrees in English language and business administration. They were trained to analyze business emails using intercultural rhetoric analysis. The analyzed data from two raters and the researcher were computed for inter-rater reliability using Fleiss's Kappa (1971), the reliability of agreement, yielding results of 0.66 to 0.72 for business inquiry and 0.70 to 0.77 for business reply emails. These Kappa values indicated that the analyzed data were in the range of good agreement to excellent agreement.

Results

1. Necessity of Move

1.1 Inquiry email

From table 2, it shows the move distribution of the seven moves, which indicated the necessity of moves found in the business inquiry emails written by Thai and Japanese writers. As can be seen in table 2, all seven moves were used by both groups of writers. According to Kanoksilapatham's (2005, 2015), necessity of moves, obligatory (100%), conventional (60% to 99%), and optional (less than 60%), there were five key moves that were highly used by Thai writers: Salutation (M1), Establishing a link (M2), Making the initial inquiry (M4), Justifying the inquiry (M5), and Ending politely (M7). Thus, the observed rhetorical move structure of the inquiry email written by Thai writers can be formulated into the sequence: M1+M2+(or M3)+M4+M5+(or M6)+M7. In contrast, there were three obligatory key move found in emails written by Japanese writers such as Salutation (M1), Making the initial inquiry (M4), and Ending politely (M7). The rest of move structures such as Establishing a link (M2), Establishing a credential (M3), Justifying of the inquiry (M5), and Making other related inquiries (M6) were the optional moves. Therefore, the rhetorical move structure of the inquiry email written by Japanese writers can be formulated into the sequence: M1+(or M2)+(or M3)+M4+(or M5)+(or M6)+M7. However, the most noticeable difference was the use of Establishing a link (M2) and Justifying the inquiry (M5). They were considered a conventional move and were used by Thai writers, but they were an optional move for Japanese writers.

Table 2 Move distribution in business inquiry written by Thai and Japanese writers

Move(s)	Thai (n=167)			Japanese (n=138)		
	f	%	Necessity	*f*	%	Necessity
Move 1: Salutation	167	100	***	138	100	***
Move 2: Establishing a link	144	86.2	**	48	34.8	*
S1: Intent of the inquiry	144	86.2	**	33	23.9	*
S2: Source of reference	28	16.8	*	47	34.1	*
Move 3: Establishing a credential	39	23.4	*	46	33.3	*
Move 4: Making the initial inquiry	167	100	***	138	100	***
S1: Asking for sample/catalogue	77	46.1	*	116	84.1	**
S2: Asking for product/service detail	101	60.5	*	129	93.5	**
S3: Asking for transaction detail	98	58.7	*	21	15.2	*
S4: Asking for action	34	20.4	*	8	5.8	*
Move 5: Justifying of the inquiry	149	89.2	**	54	39.1	*
Move 6: Making other related inquiries	98	58.7	*	78	56.5	*
S1: Stating condition/term	76	45.5	*	9	6.5	*
S2: Making special requirement	68	40.7	*	70	50.7	*

*** = Obligatory 100 %, ** = Conventional 60 % - 99 %, * = Optional Less than 60 %

Table 2 (Continued)

Move(s)	Thai (n=167)			Japanese (n=138)		
	f	%	Necessity	*f*	%	Necessity
Move 7: Ending politely	167	100	***	138	100	***
S1: Anticipating of Replies	79	47.3	*	138	100	***
S2: Expressing Appreciation	143	85.6	**	138	100	***
S3: Signing-off	152	91.0	***	138	100	***

*** = Obligatory 100 %, ** = Conventional 60 % - 99 %, * = Optional Less than 60 %

1.2 Reply email

Table 3 shows move distribution of the six moves, which indicated the necessity of moves found in the business reply emails written by Thai and Japanese writers. As shown in table 3, six moves were also used by both groups of writers. There were six key moves that were highly used by Thai writers and they were the obligatory step and conventional step in replying such as Salutation (M1), Acknowledging the inquiry (M2), Directly responding to the requested information (M3), Justifying the direct response (M4), Providing additional information (M5), and Ending politely (M6). The observed rhetorical move structure of the reply email written by Thai writers can be formulated into the sequence: M1+M2+M3+M4+M5+M6. In contrast, there were three key moves that were highly used, and they were obligatory step and conventional step in replying in a group of Japanese writers: Salutation (M1), Directly responding to the requested information (M3), and Ending politely (M6). Thus, the rhetorical move structure of the overall reply email written by Japanese writers can be patterned into the sequence: M1+(or M2)+M3+(or M4)+(or M5)+M6. The difference between these two groups of writers was in the use of Acknowledging the inquiry (M2), Directly responding to the requested information (M3), Justifying the direct response (M4), and Providing additional information (M5). They seem to be obligatory moves and conventional moves used by Thai writers, but they are optional moves among Japanese writers except for M3, which is a conventional move used by Thai writers, but they are optional moves among Japanese writers except for M3, which is a conventional move.

Table 3 Move distribution in business reply written by Thai and Japanese writers

Move(s)	Thai (n=138)			Japanese (n=167)		
	f	%	Necessity	*f*	%	Necessity
Move 1: Salutation	138	100	***	167	100	***
Move 2: Acknowledging the Inquiry	138	100	***	98	58.7	*
S1: Gratitude about the inquiry	86	62.3	*	63	37.7	*
S2: Willingness to help customers with their inquiry	133	96.4	**	53	31.7	*
S3: Apology	5	3.6	*	20	12.0	*
Move 3: Directly responding to the requested information/material	138	100	***	160	95.8	**
S1: Providing requested information/material	115	83.3	**	98	58.7	*
S2: Stating special details/conditions	107	77.5	**	152	91.0	**
S3: Offering alternatives	31	22.5	*	37	22.2	*
Move 4: Justifying the direct response	96	69.6	**	37	22.2	*
Move 5: Providing additional information	115	83.3	**	61	36.5	*
S1: Stating condition/term	83	60.1	*	51	30.5	*
S2: Stating incentives	71	51.4	*	10	6.0	*
S3: Applying pressure tactics	1	.7	*	5	3.0	*
Move 6: Ending politely	138	100	***	167	100	***
S1: Anticipating further contact	55	39.9	*	163	97.6	**
S2: Expressing Appreciation	138	100	***	167	100	***
S3: Signing-off	131	94.9	**	167	100	***

*** = Obligatory 100 %, ** = Conventional 60 % - 99 %, * = Optional Less than 60 %

2. Move Pattern

2.1 Move patterns in business inquiry written by Thai and Japanese writers

Table 4 shows the generic combinations of move in inquiry emails constructed by Thai and Japanese writers. The results showed that there are 5 move patterns found in emails constructed by Thai namely, 7 move, 6 move, 5 move, 4 move, and 3 move patterns. The most frequently used pattern was the 6-move pattern (34.1%). In this pattern, Thai writers employed almost all moves except move 3, which include Salutation, Establishing a link, Making the initial inquiry, Justify of the inquiry, Making other related inquiries, and Ending. In contrast, the inquiry move patterns used by Japanese writers can be classified into 4 move patterns namely, 6 move, 5 move, 4 move, and 3-move patterns as indicated in table 4. The most frequently used pattern was 4-move pattern (27.5%). In composing business inquiry emails, Japanese writers employed some moves except move 2, move 3, and move 5. The 4 move patterns include Salutation, Making the initial inquiry, Making other related inquiries, and Ending.

Table 4 Inquiry move patterns constructed by Thai and Japanese writers

	Inquiry Move Pattern written by Thai	Frequency	Percentage
7 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M5+M6+M7	32	19.16
6 Move	• M1+M2+M4+M5+M6+M7	57	34.13
	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M5+M7	7	4.19
5 Move	• M1+M2+M4+M5+M7	48	28.74
4 Move	• M1+M4+M5+M7	5	2.99
	• M1+M4+M6+M7	9	5.39
3 Move	• M1+M4+M7	9	5.39
	Inquiry Move Pattern written by Japanese	Frequency	Percentages
6 Move	• M1+M3+M4+M5+M6+M7	22	15.94
	• M1+M2+M4+M5+M6+M7	1	0.72
5 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M7	15	10.87
	• M1+M2+M4+M5+M7	23	16.67
	• M1+M4+M5+M6+M7	8	5.8
	• M1+M3+M4+M6+M7	9	6.52
4 Move	• M1+M2+M4+M7	9	6.52
	• M1+M4+M6+M7	38	27.54
3 Move	• M1+M4+M7	13	9.42

Table 5 is a sample of an inquiry email constructed by Thai writers. It shows how Thai writers compose emails with 6 move patterns. Thai writers typically begin business inquiry emails with Move 1, a salutation to greet the recipient. After that Move 2 is used to state the intent of the inquiry followed by Move 4, which is employed for seeking information. Move 5 is used to justify the inquiry. Then Move 6, is used to state the special requirement, and Move 7 is used to close the email.

Table 5 The example of an inquiry email constructed by Thai

Move	Email message
M1	*Dear Sir,* *My name is AK, a sales support from [confidential message].*
M2	*I am writing to ask about your product information.*
M4	*Could you please give me specific information about [confidential message].*
M5	*So, I am writing to inquire about height, length, weight of [confidential message] in order to calculate the exact number of containers.*
M6	*Could you please send me a file of your product info?*
M7	*Thank you,* *AK*

In contrast, Japanese writers employ a few moves to write emails as shown in table 6. Sample emails show how Japanese writers make use of 4 move patterns. The example reveals

that Move 1 is used to salute the others. The main point is communicated directly using Move 4, followed by the addition of a special requirement using Move 6. Lastly, they used Move 7 to end the email communication.

Table 6 The example of inquiry email constructed by Japanese

Move	Email message
M1	*Hello*
M4	*I would appreciate if you could send me the current catalog about the [confidential message] model, especially the [confidential message] and [confidential message] models. I'd like to have an idea about the different features of these two models including prices, colors, and availability.*
M6	*Please get back to me with all required information. Thank you very much.*
M7	*Best Regards,* *ST*

2.2 Move patterns in business reply written by Thai and Japanese writers

Table 7 shows the generic combinations of move in reply emails. There are three major types of patterns that were constructed by Thai writers namely, 6 move, 5 move, and 4 move patterns. 6-move pattern was the most frequently used pattern (60.1%) among a group of Thai writers. Thai writers employed all moves in composing emails. On the contrary, there are four different types of move patterns constructed by Japanese writers namely, 6 move, 5 move, 4 move, and 3-move patterns. 4-move pattern was the most frequently used pattern (34.1%). The writers employed some moves in replying to emails, except Move 4 and Move 5. The 4-move pattern include Salutation, Acknowledging the inquiry, Directly responding to the requested information, and Ending.

Table 7 Inquiry move patterns constructed by Thai and Japanese writers

Reply Move Pattern written by Thai		Frequency	Percentage
6 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M5+M6	83	60.14
5 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M5+M6	32	23.19
	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M6	13	9.42
4 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M6	10	7.25
Reply Move Pattern written by Japanese		Frequency	Percentage
6 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M5+M6	1	0.6
5 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M5+M6	31	18.56
	• M1+M2+M3+M4+M6	2	1.2
	• M1+M3+M4+M5+M6	11	6.59
4 Move	• M1+M2+M3+M6	57	34.13
	• M1+M2+M5+M6	4	2.4
	• M1+M3+M5+M6	14	8.38

Table 7 (Continued)

Reply Move Pattern written by Japanese		Frequency	Percentage
4 Move	• M1+M3+M4+M6	23	13.77
3 Move	• M1+M2+M6	3	1.8
	• M1+M3+M6	21	12.57

6-move pattern was often used by Thai writers when composing business reply emails. Table 8 shows a sample of a reply email written by Thai writers. It reveals that Thai writers had included all moves. They started greeting others using Move 1. Move 2 was used to acknowledge the inquiry before responding to the requested information using Move 3. Next, they justified the direct response and stated more information using Move 4 and Move 5. Lastly, Move 6 was used to close the email.

Table 8 The example of reply email constructed by Thai

Move	Email message
M1	*Hello Khun MS*
M2	*It pleasure to receive your inquiry about the service of our company.*
M3	*I've attached [confidential message] as you requested.*
M4	*And I want to tell some detail more about the [confidential message].*
M5	*And I pleased to tell you that our company is offering [confidential message] and [confidential message] within May 16, 2020.*
M6	*If you want some more detail, let me know* *Thank you kha,* *KK*

Next, table 9 shows how Japanese writers reply to business emails with 4 move patterns. The example reveals that Move 1 is used to greet the others, followed by expressing gratitude about the inquiry using Move 2. After that Move 3 is employed to respond to the requested information directly. Then, they end the email communication using Move 6.

Table 9 The example of reply email constructed by Japanese

Move	Email message
M1	*Dear Ms. PT,*
M2	*Thank you for your recent request for more information concerning our products.*
M3	*We'd like to inform you that [confidential message].*
M6	*If you require any further information, please let me know.* *Best regards,* *HM*

Discussion

This part aims to discuss the study's findings in relation to a research question. The scope of the discussion covers the topic of rhetoric structures of intercultural business email communication.

1. The differences in rhetoric structures of intercultural business email communication

Regarding the research objective, the business inquiry and reply emails constructed by Thai and Japanese writers reveal the difference in email writing between two cultures. Thai writers use more moves when composing emails while Japanese writers employ a few moves. The use of more moves reflects the indirect approach employed by Thai writers.

In terms of the rhetoric structure, Thailand and Japan are Asian countries. They are close in geography and have been influenced by each other culturally for a long time. So, they have their distinctive rhetoric conventions. However, they are both classified to be oriental language groups. Oriental languages are represented as a spiral, which reflects in the paragraph development. Kaplan (1966) stated that the organization of oriental writing is "indirection". A topic is not explained in a straightforward as westerners and it frequently revolves around the main point. Moreover, both Thai and Japanese belong to high-context communication cultures, where communication style is influenced by relationships, social hierarchy, and strong behavioral norms. Communication is often indirect and implicit; therefore, written emails tend to be non-explicit and descriptive (Hall, 1976). However, the findings of this study revealed that the email rhetoric structure of Thai writers is consistent with the study of the cultural patterns of Kaplan (1966) and Hall (1976). In this study, Thai email writers seem to use an indirect approach to convey the message, as evidenced by the use of more moves than a direct approach message. Although some moves are classified as optional based on Kanoksilapatham's (2005, 2015) necessity of moves, Thai writers applied almost all the moves in business inquiry and reply emails. On the other hand, the results of Japanese writers oppose the study of Kaplan (1966) and Hall (1976). In this study, Japanese paragraph development is direct and linear as written by native writers of English. Japanese writers in this study tend to compose messages succinctly. They directly addressed the point of emailing, as observed by using a few moves in emails. Japanese writers applied the key moves, which are classified as obligatory moves.

The difference discovered in this study may be influenced by two important factors. First, the writing style, Hinds (1983), an American scholar of comparative linguistics specializing in Japanese vs. English defined that Japanese rhetorical components are characterized by the ki-shou-ten-ketsu or 4-unit pattern: Ki (First, begin an argument), Shou (Next, develop the argument), Ten (At the point where the development is finished, turn the idea to a sub-theme where there is a connection but not directly connected association to the overall theme), and Ketsu (Last, bring all of this together to conclude). Kameda (2009) found that English business emails (with a 4-unit

pattern) written by Japanese were signed by an approach of indirection. Nevertheless, not all English emails written by Japanese apply indirect approach. Some of them employ direct approach using 3-unit pattern (Ki-Shou-Ketsu) and 2-unit pattern (Ki-Ketsu) (Paramita & Ngadiman, 2014). It shows that Japanese writing has been influenced by western culture, which tends to use a linear pattern (Kubota, 1998). Compared with the email component in Thailand, Thai and English share a similar rhetorical pattern of email, that is, opening, body, and closing (Bennui, 2008). However, many Thai writers have a tendency to dance around the topic or write other things when writing English emails. They often produce many sentences and they are included in a paragraph. It is caused by applying their L1 writing conventions to enhance their L2 writing (Bennui, 2008). As a result, this could be one reason why Thai people indirectly addressed the message while Japanese people directly communicate either by speaking or writing.

Another factor might be the influence of culture on communication. The social hierarchy has remained as one of its distinctive traits in Thailand. Cultural norms in Thai society influence a communication that values respect for hierarchy, saving face, avoiding risks, and maintaining a sense of status. Nguyen (2015) indicates that in Thai culture, out of respect, Thai people may not feel comfortable speaking to others, asking questions, expressing their opinions, and responding to questions directly. When Thai people need to say, write and request something, they usually show respect to the older and unknown people.

Conclusion

To conclude, the difference in business email writing between Thai and Japanese writers can be reflected from the text analysis in this study. According to the analysis of business inquiry and reply emails, Thai writers composed business inquiry and reply emails using 6-move patterns. This reflects the culture in communication in Thai society, which concerns about maintaining either the hierarchy or social status while communication. On the other hand, Japanese writers used 4-move pattern in composing both types of business emails. It reflects the writing style in Japan which is shaped by the adoption of the communication mode of the western culture. Thus, communication in Japan has changed to be more direct and clear communication. However, the use of different generic structures are not problems in business email communication between Thai and Japanese writers.

Pedagogical Implications

These findings can be utilized as a guideline for people who need to write a business email in English because the present study demonstrates what information should be included through the analysis of business emails. In addition, the finding of this study can be the implications for two distinct fields to take into consideration when emailing across cultures. Thus, this first suggests to the business field to raise their awareness using a variety of patterns in

emailing across cultures. Lastly, it is recommended to the educational field that it is beneficial to include formal instruction on email writing structure along with raising awareness when communication across cultures in the curriculum. The rhetorical structure of a text in a particular genre must be explicitly taught.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix

Intercultural Rhetoric Analysis

Coding Scheme for Inquiry Email		(………….)
Move Types	Analysis	Email Message
Move 1: Salutation		
Move 2: Establishing a link		
Step1: Intent of the inquiry		
Step 2: Source of reference		
Move 3: Establishing a credentials		
Move 4: Making the initial inquiry		
Step 1: Asking for samples/catalogues		
Step 2: Asking for product/service details		
Step 3: Asking for transaction details		
Step 4: Asking for action		
Move 5: Justifying of the inquiry		
Move 6: Making other related inquiries		
Step 1: Stating conditions/terms		
Step 2: Making special requirements		
Move 7: Ending politely		
Step 1: Anticipating of Replies		
Step 2: Expressing Appreciation		
Step 3: Signing-off		

Intercultural Rhetoric Analysis (Continued)

Coding Scheme for Reply Email		
Move Types	Analysis	Email Message
Move 1: Salutation		
Move 2: Acknowledging the Inquiry		
Step1: Gratitude about the inquiry		
Step 2: Willingness to help customers with their inquiry		
Step 3: Apology		
Move 3: Directly responding to the requested information		
Step 1: Providing requested information		
Step 2: Stating special details/conditions		
Step 3: Offering alternatives		
Move 4: Justifying the direct response		
Move 5: Providing additional information		
Step 1: Stating conditions/terms		
Step 2: Stating incentives		
Step 3: Applying pressure tactics		
Move 6: Ending politely		
Step 1: Anticipating further contact		
Step 2: Expressing Appreciation		
Step 3: Signing-off		