



BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

MAESTRIA EN ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

**ANALYZING THE EMAIL COMMUNICATION OF A MULTINATIONAL
COMPANY USING ENGLISH AS THE LINGUA FRANCA: A GENRE STUDY**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages

for the Degree of

MAESTRIA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

Presented by

LNI. Karlabett Yesioui Viveros Huerta

Thesis director

Dra. Leticia Araceli Salas Serrano

Puebla, Pue.

November, 2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor for her support throughout the last months as she was a great guide in the development of my thesis. Her continuous feedback allowed me to combine my personal research interests with the purposes of my master. This union of goals for me was a great achievement considering that, contributing in the same research to two different areas of study which were English Teaching and International Business, was a challenge. I really appreciate the patience and openness that Dr. Salas had with me bearing in mind that my academic and professional background is foremost focused on International Business and International Trade. Similarly, I would like to thank my readers for their time invested in reading my thesis and understanding my study. My readers' observations and suggestions were determinant to polish my writing and in general terms, upgrade my study.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, because through her passion and care she inherited my love for languages and teaching. She was also my first teacher not only academically but in life and was the one who encouraged me to study this master's degree in the first place. Similarly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my brother because he has always prioritized my well-being and considered my purposes as his. Likewise, his love, support, and loyalty have always motivated me to continue improving myself and giving the best of me on everything I do. Furthermore, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father because his example, resilience, determination, and mercy have forged me as a strong, capable, but grateful and conscious woman. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins because their presence in my life and that of my brother have filled my heart with joy, companionship, and coziness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	.....	10
1.1 Overview	.....	10
1.2 Problem of the study	.....	11
1.3 Purpose of the study	.....	13
1.4 Research questions	.....	14
1.5 Significance of the study	.....	14
2.0 Literature review	.....	17
2.1 Introduction	.....	17
2.2 Applied linguistics	.....	17
2.2.1 Critical applied linguistics	.....	19
2.2.2 Discourse analysis	.....	22
2.2.2.1 Genre analysis	.....	24
2.2.2.2 Moves	.....	25
2.3 International Business	.....	26
2.3.1 Communication in International Business	.....	27
2.3.2 Emails benefits in business	.....	28
2.3.3 Emails issues in business	.....	28
2.3.4 Email literacy	.....	29
2.3.4.1 Digital proficiency in business	.....	30
2.3.4.2 Digital awareness in business	.....	30
2.4 Conclusions	.....	31
3.0 Methodology	.....	33

3.1 Introduction	33
3.2 Research Design	33
3.3 Justification for your choice of methodology	34
3.4 Description of the context	34
3.5. Description of the corpus of the email chains	35
3.5.1. Description of the authors of the email chains	35
3.5.1.2 Description of the instrument of the email chains	37
3.6 Interview	37
3.6.1 Description of the participant of the interview	37
3.6.1.2 Description of the instrument to analyze the interview	38
3.7 Description of data collection	38
3.7.1 Ethics of data collection	38
3.8 Description of the data analysis	39
3.9 Conclusion	41
4.0 Results	42
4.1 Summary of the study	42
4.2 Email chain results	44
4.2.1 Defining recipient	44
4.2.2 Defining the requested action	45
4.2.3 Contextualizing the requests	46
4.2.4 Including complete data	47
4.2.5 Duplicating the email chains	48
4.2.6 Indicating due dates	49

4.2.7 Identifying misunderstandings	50
4.2.8 Including attachments	51
4.2.9 Including pictures in the email body	52
4.3 Interview results	53
4.3.1 Introductory results of the interview	53
4.3.2 Contextual results of the interview	54
4.3.3 Advantages in the email communication	55
4.3.4 Disadvantages in the email communication	55
4.4 Summarizing key findings	56
4.5 Discussion of results	58
4.6 Conclusions	60
5.0 Conclusions	62
5.1 Introduction	62
5.2 Summary of the study	62
5.3 Answering the Research questions	63
5.3.1- Research question 1	63
5.3.1.1 Misunderstandings	63
5.3.1.2 Lack of response	65
5.3.1.3 Not completing the requests on time	66
5.3.1.4 Email overload	66
5.3.2 Research questions 2	67
5.3.2.1 Not defining recipient in the email body	67
5.3.2.2 Not including complete data	68

5.3.2.3 Duplicating the email chains	.....	68
5.3.2.4 Not indicating due dates	.....	69
5.2.3 Research question 3	.....	70
5.4 Summary of key findings	.....	71
5.5 Limitations of the study	.....	73
5.6 Directions for further research	.....	74
5.7 Conclusions	.....	75

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Factors originating the email communication problems	39
---	----

TABLE OF IMAGES

Image 1: Sample of lack of recipients in the email body	44
Image 2: Sample of defined actions	46
Image 3: Sample of contextualizing the requests	46
Image 4: Sample of lack of provided data.	48
Image 5: Sample of duplicating the email chains	48
Image 6: Sample of indicating due dates	49
Image 7: Sample of identifying misunderstandings	50
Image 8: Sample of including attachments	51
Image 9: Sample of including pictures in the email body	52

TABLE OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1: Summarizing key findings	56
---	----

TABLE OF APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Interview questions	83
Appendix 2: Excel database	88

ANALYZING THE EMAIL COMMUNICATION OF A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY USING ENGLISH AS THE LINGUA FRANCA: A GENRE ANALYSIS STUDY

ABSTRACT

Today, the lag in global communication is one of the most important problems that large-scale companies have not yet solved. Mainly due to the great diversity of nationalities of their stakeholders, to the means of communication used in the field, but above all to the fact that communication problems are not addressed and studied by the right people. Therefore, this thesis aims to identify which are the problems in the email communication of a multinational company. To classify and explain the main factors that may have generated the email communication problems. To provide suggestions to the multinational company to counteract the factors identified as causing email communication problems. As well as to show the importance of the study being elaborated by experts in the English language, as the global language par excellence. This study is conducted through the genre analysis of 12 complete email chains that include a total of 163 individual emails. As well as through an interview applied to the North America Senior Free Trade Agreements Specialist of the analyzed multinational company. The authors of the email chains include 69 business stakeholders from the United States, Mexico, Korea, Colombia, India, Canada, Australia, and Germany, who are at least bilingual.

Keywords: Teaching English writing, English as lingua franca, email communication, genre analysis, International Business.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The globalized economy in which we live today has forced companies to seek greater participation in international markets (Brannen, & Mughan, 2016). However, there are many challenges that multinational companies must face in their management to successfully achieve their international business transactions. Considering not only the law of each of the countries involved but the profit margin that must be respected for the business to be a business. One of the most important troubles they face is the deficient global communication among their international business stakeholders. These last can be understood as the people involved in the existence of the company and the purpose of its international business. Usually, when we think of communication, we usually think about the ability of a person or group of people to exchange information. However, people do not usually think about the degree of difficulty in communicating with X number of people in Y conditions.

For instance, the difficulty of communicating with one person is not the same as that of communicating with 2 or 3 people. Much less with that of communicating with a group of 10, 30, 50, or 100 people. Despite of the number of people involved in the emails, the circumstances in which the communication is given also have an impact in its results. For instance, what happens when the language in which we communicate is not the native language of most participants? What arises when communication is not accompanied by body language or intonation? What occurs when the way of communicating and the rules to be followed are not standardized in the means of

communication used and in the specific context? What happens when those involved do not even consider the significance of achieving an efficient and effective global communication?

1.2 Problem of the study

The problem of the study is the deficient communication of the analyzed multinational company reflected in its distinct email communication problems. Nowadays, a deficient communication in large-scale companies is one of the most important problems that companies are still dealing with. This thesis alludes the still existence of this problem to the great diversity of nationalities of the stakeholders of the companies, to email as the means of communication used, but above all to the fact that communication problems are not addressed nor studied by the right people.

The social practice of International Business is a context that has very specific conditions that might impact the feasibility of an accurate and efficient global communication. First, there is the fact that business stakeholders belong to different nationalities around the world so the native language of all involved differs. As a result, English has been implemented as the lingua franca of the business world since it is the most spoken and studied language universally. However, regardless of whether stakeholders speak English, it should be noted that the language proficiency is not the same for all stakeholders. In addition, due to the cultural and personal context of each stakeholder, the way of communicating varies.

Another condition to consider is the means of communication used in the international business world. Nowadays, email has become the most important means of communication in International Business (Hewitt, 2006). Since email allows instant and affordable communication between people from different geographic zones (Hewitt, 2006). According to Plantronics (2010), email is no longer considered as a professional activity but the main medium for business

communication. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that despite having several benefits for both national and multinational companies. It also has several disadvantages in everyday use that in the medium and long term are detrimental to business users and to companies.

One of the most important issues of email communication is the fact that it is a written communication that does not allow that messages either emitted or received are accompanied by intonations or body language. This situation opens a wide possibility that there may be difficulties in the decoding and interpretation of the message. Secondly, there is the pressure and stress caused by the email overload. The fact that the emails are written allows for no limit on the number of mails that arrive per day and therefore on the amount of work to be done. But is the communication clear enough so that in the same email you can really know what is required and who should be doing it? If not, how many requests really contain the necessary data to complete each one of the requests?

Finally, there is the fact that referential studies about communication problems in companies are usually written by business or administrative people, instead of by linguists or language experts. Principally, because either businesspeople or language experts, have not detected the necessity of studying the communication in companies by language scholars. Nevertheless, this study pretends to raise awareness about these partial studies that does not reflect an integral analysis from both, the language, and the context of the field of study. While this study is also set to academically recognize the email communication writing needs in multinational companies as an institutionalized genre.

All the previous aspects make global communication even much more difficult to achieve since all the features of the International Business context are much more complex and diverse.

So, it is indispensable to consider as many linguistic patterns as detected so that the study can be as suitable and useless as possible. Having said that, we can conclude that even using English as the lingua franca and email as the medium of communication, there are still many limitations that global communication might face in their daily operation. These still existing limitations delay and hinder the communication of the different business processes. In addition to increase the operative costs of the distinct departments required to run the global business.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This thesis seeks to recognize the email communication problems of the analyzed multinational company. To find and expound the factors that mostly generate the email communication problems detected. To provide a list of suggestions that the multinational company can feasibly incorporate to its operation as part of its communication strategy. As well as to show the importance of the study being elaborated by experts in the English language, as the global language per excellence.

For the previous purposes, this study carried out both a genre analysis and an interview. The genre analysis was made to 12 email chains (containing in total 163 individual emails) from the multinational company. The genre analysis was selected by being the discourse analysis method that deepens on the language use in professional contexts (Bhatia et al., 2008). Not only by considering linguistic descriptions but the findings encountered at several samples of the communicative events (Bhatia et al., 2008). The interview was used as endorsement to better understand the context of the multinational company. As well as to identify the factors that can be altered to counteract the factors that cause the email communication problems.

It must be highlighted that problems in global communication are not a new issue in International Business. However, for the most part, the problem has been approached by business

managers rather than by linguists. Thus, the great differentiator of this thesis is that it addresses the communication obstacles from a linguistic perspective.

1.4 Research questions

The research questions for this thesis are:

- 1) Which were the problems identified in the email communication of the analyzed multinational company?
- 2) Based on the linguistic patterns of the genre analysis, what factors originated the email communication of the multinational company?
- 3) What suggestions might be provided to this multinational company to counteract the factors originating the identified email communication problems?

1.5 Significance of the study

The importance of this study lies in proposing the inclusion of email communication and its appropriate and inappropriate practices as part of the topics to be addressed in teaching English writing. It should be noted that English teaching is not only taught in scholar environments but can also be studied as part of the trainings provided in the labor field. Therefore, the subject of email communication and its appropriate and inappropriate practices can be addressed in the teaching or training curricula of both International Business and Foreign Languages. That said, the significance of this study contributes to both fields, Foreign Languages, and International Business.

Additionally, the importance of the study lies in establishing communication strategies to ameliorate email communication problems. Mainly by standardizing the rules to be followed in the global email communication of International Business. It must be noted that these standardized rules must be feasible so that companies can implement them to improve their communication. Either internally, within the companies, or externally with any entity related to their business operations such as customers, suppliers, customs brokers, to mention some. That said, the significance of the study might also be traduced in the efficiency of the required processes to operate the company. In such a way that this efficiency is reflected in terms of both, execution times and operative costs. These strategies can also be adapted or supplemented depending on the specific needs of the work context in question.

This multiple case study also represents an innovative proposal of expertise and labor for Foreign Language professionals, especially for English language professionals. It must be mentioned that, in most cases, language professionals are employed as language teachers in either public or private schools. However, one of the dilemmas of greatest concern in teaching is the limited salary offered by most of the institutions. Similarly, another labor possibility for language professionals is translation, however these jobs are usually open by project in a limited time-period. These restrictions means that translation is not a stable and constant income that language professionals can rely on, in Mexico.

Finally, the significance of this study also resides in rising awareness of the under-addressed demand that multinational companies have regarding their global email communication problems. Hence, companies can consider discourse and genre analysis as part of the linguistic studies that must analyze their communication problems. While language experts and institutions

can contemplate the private sector (national and large-scale companies) as a promising labor market for language professionals.

1.6 Conclusions

This first chapter exposed the introduction to this thesis topic and the perspective with which this study will be carried out. This chapter also exhibited the problem of the study that reflected the areas of improvement that this study will be covering. Similarly, the purpose of the study is covered which presented the general and detailed goals of this research. Likewise, this chapter showed the three research questions that will be answered in the 5th chapter of this thesis. Lastly, this section developed the significance of the study which detailed the contributions that this study will have to English Teaching and International Business.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This second chapter provides an overview of the existing theoretical knowledge considered to construct this thesis. All topics presented here helped to have a better understanding on why and how topics are relevant and interrelated. Similarly, this chapter provides the necessary background to justify and support the research questions addressed as well as the selected methodology. Also, the literature review assists to better comprehend the context, variables, and conditions of this study. In such a way that the data analysis can be better determined and thus better fed back in the discussion of the results and in the general conclusions and reflections.

The organization of this chapter is divided in both the Linguistics and International Business literature review. The first part addresses applied linguistics, critical applied linguistics, discourse analysis, genre analysis, and moves. On the other hand, the International Business section covers the communication in international business, the benefits, and disadvantages of emails in business, email literacy, and the differences between digital proficiency and digital awareness in business.

2.2 Applied linguistics.

Applied Linguistics was mostly developed during the 20th century in North America (Angelis, 2001), Australia (Davies & Elder, 2004), United Kingdom (Judit, et al. 2006), and Europe (Kaplan, 2010). In its beginnings it was mainly focused on solving general social issues related to language use. However, over 1950, it shifted to a more interdisciplinary perspective addressing issues from

an educational, pedagogical, psychological, sociological, and anthropological outlook (Kaplan, 2010). Nevertheless, since World War II, when we talk about applied linguistics, we also talk about language teaching. Mainly since language teaching has continuously evolved thanks to the constant innovations applied linguistics have provided. This evolution was given since the times of Leonard Bloomfield and Charles C. Fries as some of the most important linguists specialized in language teaching in its beginnings (Howatt, 2004).

More recently, applied linguistics has also incorporated psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and computer assisted linguistics perspectives, into the discipline (Judit, et al. 2006). Nevertheless, the study field is still focused on improving linguistic problems emerging in real-world language use mostly related to education matters (Kaplan, 2010). This progression in the discipline can be reflected in the most common purposes applied linguistics seeks to find out.

According to Davies & Elder (2008) some purposes of applied linguistics are:

- Better methods to analyze written and/or oral discourses.
- Better mechanisms to contribute to literacy.
- Better strategies to improve communication issues.
- Better manners to train translators and/or interpreters.
- Better processes to carry out a valid and reliable language evaluation.
- Better strategies to evaluate bilingual programs, and better educational advice to provide to the different governments worldwide.

Similarly, some examples of applied linguistics concerns, according to Pennycook (2021) are:

- Discourse analysis
- Genres
- Text analysis
- Conversations
- Critical pedagogy
- Second language acquisition
- English as a foreign language
- Different types of literacies

Bearing in mind both, the common purposes of applied linguistics, as well as its areas of concern, we can conclude that applied linguistics oversees linguistics topics or subjects in which language and education are involved and have direct impact, one with the other. However, these linguistic topics must be centered on enhancing real-world linguistic problems that society usually face and must deal with.

2.2.1 Critical applied linguistics

Critical applied linguistics by its acronym (CAL) is an applied linguistics approach that, according to Pennycook (2021) can be understood as the intersection between applied linguistics and critical domains of work. Equally, to better understand CAL, it is essential to first understand the

interrelation between topics of domination in the society and applied linguistics concerns. Some examples of topics of domination are:

- Differences in ideologies
- Differences in cultures
- Reform policies
- Gender inequality
- Racism
- Power abuses
- Communication issues
- Regulations

That said, critical applied linguistics in contrast to applied linguistics, has the purpose to innovate and improve on fields and/or topics of domination beyond educational purposes. This enhancement has been achieved through research, pedagogy, and activism that encompass linguistic theory, application work, contextual knowledge, and practices (Pennycook, 2021). As a domain of applied work, critical applied linguistics represents the implementation of changes in the way things are usually done. That is why it is essential to consider methodologies and data analysis adaptations that allow the incorporation of specific variables and conditions depending on the context to be studied.

According to Iyer (et al. 2014) the relevance of critical applied linguistics lies mainly in the contribution for the better on complicated and unresolved matters that have negative aftermath in certain or many social groups. Some of the still needed critical works in critical applied linguistics for Iyer (et al. 2014) are:

- Poverty
- Marginalization
- Cultural diversification in communities
- The expansion of multinational corporations
- Exploitative forms of capital
- The proliferation of new media messages and ideologies

As we can notice above, many of the problems critical applied linguistics have studied emerged from common historical massive events such as colonization, wars, and its consequences (Iyer, et al. 2014). Considering the constant evolution the societies face worldwide, critical applied linguistics is a discipline that must remain at the forefront on emerging issues. These issues can be social, cultural, economic, and/or political in which language is somehow involved. Some of the most interesting emerging conditions per Iyer (et al. 2014) are the international rise of languages different from English such as Mandarin and Spanish. The shift in the critical mass of English speakers away from the UK and the USA. Finally, the affiliated hybridization of English. Clearly, the number of critical issues a society has are overmuch and can be studied to approach very

diverse areas of the same general problem. That is why most of the times the progress on certain solutions for critical issues, is slow and fluctuating.

2.2.2 Discourse analysis

The study of language is a field that has undergone several changes from its beginnings to the present day, as it has had to adapt to the role it plays in human society (Bhatia et al., 2008). Previously, language analysis was a study based mainly on formal linguistics that held that a sentence unit was the ultimate representative element of the language (Bhatia et al., 2008). However, between 1960 and 1970 related language disciplines such as discourse analysis, semiotics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, emerged. The purpose of these studies was to evolve the conception of language to incorporate contextual features of the discourse communities that could contribute to the various communication needs around the world (Felices & Fernández, 2012).

Initially, discourse analysis was a study that was automatically related to linguistics, however, along the way, several authors have clarified the interdisciplinary nature of the study. This clarification has been done through identifying discourse analysis as the study of linguistic behavior that is focused on encoding and decoding messages according to the different contexts in human society (Bhatia et al., 2008). In addition, discourse analysis is referred to as a key factor within critical applied linguistics since it is highly useful to understand the communicative events in social sciences (Felices & Fernández, 2012). The purpose is that the communicative events can be not only analyzed but improved. In recent years, semiotic modes have also been incorporated to the discourse analysis by reaching out the usage of additional forms of communication such as pictures, tables, the use of different formats in the font, among others (Bhatia et al., 2008).

That said, discourse analysis can be understood as the study of use and function of the written, oral, and sign language in real-life contexts (Gee, 2010). Discourse analysis is done through the analysis not only of the phoneme and morpheme but also of the text within specific social rules (Bhatia et al., 2008). According to Johnstone (2017), discourse analysis frequently starts with the breaking down of the discourse by predetermined criteria based on the analysis purposes. These criteria might include possibilities, limitations, field of study, context, relationships among participants, to mention some. Similarly, each discourse division must be implemented to respond to a variety of questions that contribute to what is analyzed, these questions are also known as discourse analysis tools (Johnstone, 2017). It should be highlighted that both, the discourse division, and the questions these are answering are expected to differ since they must be adapted according to the demands of the study in question.

For instance, linguistics is often focused on analyzing grammatical structures, language change, language meaning, language acquisition, among others. On the other hand, social sciences for example, can be more interested in social relationships, power, inequality, communication, identity, between others (Johnstone, 2017). Nevertheless, discourse analysis usually has the purpose of the following:

- Identifying patterns.
- Reproducing discourse.
- Exploring the language functionality in several genres.
- Teaching how to reproduce a specific discourse.
- Teaching how to be linguistically and culturally competent considering a social group.

It should be noted that all previous can be done through different methods depending on the kind of communicative event to be analyzed. Some of the most common discourse analysis methods are genre analysis, conversational analysis, narrative analysis, systemic functional linguistics, and multimodal analysis. But considering that this paper analyzes complete business email chains, the selected method is genre analysis.

2.2.2.1 Genre analysis

According to Swales (1981), genre analysis was initially focused on contributing to English for Academic Purposes through studying the various and sophisticated uses English language had in academic contexts. Mainly, since the English language was at that time the most important language worldwide in terms of research and therefore, in composition (Swales, 1990). However, genre analysis started incorporating English for Specific Purposes as part of the genre analysis scope, by differentiating the English language use in disciplines other than education (Swales, 1990). Concluding that genre analysis helps to have a better comprehension on how language works but within different discourse communities in applied linguistics (Swales, 1990).

More recently, according to Bhatia et al., (2008) genre analysis deepens on language use in academic and professional contexts not only considering linguistic descriptions, but the findings encountered at several samples of the communicative events. It must be noted that the samples must be within the genres that can somehow impact communication. Clearly, it is not possible to know how all genres work, that is why genre analysis seeks to look in depth in various discourse practices of the same genre and thus learn from each one. There are several ways in which genres can be analyzed such as through their format, content, structure, organization, to mention some (Bhatia et al., 2008). Nevertheless, the main purposes of genre analysis are to determine the

composition and organization of a text, detail its social context(s), and explain the impact that social factors have on its structural and linguistic features (Bhatia et al., 2008).

There are seven standards of textuality proposed by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) that must be satisfied so that a text can be considered communicative. These standards are coherence, cohesion, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality. Cohesion is about the connection of words within a sequence. Coherence studies the semantics of the text. Intentionality consists of what the issuer intends to communicate and what is expected to be successfully accepted by the receiver. Acceptability evaluates the acceptance of the receiver towards the text. Informativity concerns the intention of the issuer to provide the required information through the text. Situationality analyzes the consistency of the text with the conditions of time and place. Intertextuality encompasses the link between the text and the existent knowledge that the audience has about the inserted text.

That said, genre analysis is an integral analysis that must be conformed from both, the analysis of textual and contextual elements of the discursive practices (Bhatia et al., 2008). The main objective of this integration is that the messages can be pragmatically sent and received (Bhatia et al., 2008). This pragmatism means that messages can be elaborated considering the contextual elements, as well as decoded in the same way. In summary, genre analysis is a very useful analysis, recommended to be applied when the analyzed context of the genre to be studied has specific regulations and conditions that are barely explored and documented.

2.2.2.2 Moves

According to Swales (2004: 229) “A move in genre analysis is a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse”. Also, the move

must belong to the same discourse event and therefore, to the same discourse community. It is worth emphasizing that a move is considered as such based on the communicative function of the discursual unit (Swales, 2004). Thus, we can understand that the communicative objective of each move varies from move to move and is not necessarily linked to a grammatical unit. However, Swales (2004) points out that in certain cases, depending on the discursual event, grammatical units may establish the type or nature of a move. This restriction means that a move can be determined by a coherent and cohesive single utterance or by a group of them, depending on what is required to achieve the communicative purpose.

Similarly, moves are considered as genre stages that have minor communicative purposes or sub-purposes necessary to fulfill the general communicative purpose of the communication itself (Santos, 1996). Meanwhile, genre stages are contemplated as minor moves or sub-moves considering that they are divisions or categories of the moves (Dudley-Evans, 1986). The Swale's (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model clearly exemplifies the nature of moves and sub-moves through the Research Article Introduction (RAI) analysis. This model used to consist of a three-move analysis 1) establishing a territory, 2) establishing a niche, 3) occupying the niche that further can be divided into minor steps.

2.3 International Business

International Business is defined as the field of study that investigates any private and/or public business operation outside the domestic market (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014). According to Ajami & Goddard (2014) International Business consists of 4 types of business operations: Foreign Trade, trade in services, portfolio investments, and direct investments. In the first instance, Foreign Trade studies the physical exports and imports of goods and commodities from one country to

another (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014). Therefore, Foreign Trade is considered as the major and greatest business operation in almost all countries (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014). Secondly, trade in services refers to the producer selling an intangible good such as banking, insurance, consulting, transportation, hotels, among others, to a consumer (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014). In the third place, portfolio investments allude to the investment of any financial asset such as a bond or stock with the prospect of generating an investment return over time (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014). Lastly, direct investment refers to the placement of physical long-term investment such as companies of production or services (Ajami, & Goddard, 2014).

2.3.1 Communication in International Business

The fact that International Business involves cross-border trade makes its communication quite challenging. The main factor affecting the communication is the difference in mother tongues of business stakeholders, originated by the difference in nationalities of all the people involved in the processes of a large-scale company. This diversity of mother tongues of the business stakeholders has been addressed globally by implementing English as the lingua franca of the business world. Which basically means using English as a common means of communication among business stakeholders with different native languages. However, this does not cover the whole problem, we also must consider the fact that the communication must be remote considering everybody is in different geographic zones.

In the last decade email has become the most popular and significant means of communication in International Business (Hewitt, 2006). Mainly because it allows the communication of people around the world immediately at a very affordable cost. According to a study by The Radicati Group, Inc. (2019) the number of business emails sent and received per day

were more than 293 billion in 2019 and is expected to increase to over 347 billion in 2023. However, it is worth noting that despite having several benefits for both national and large-scale companies. It also has several disadvantages that in the medium and long term are detrimental to users and therefore to companies.

2.3.2 Emails benefits in business

The benefits of e-mail as a means of global communication are diverse, however, the following stand out according to Taylor (2017). Firstly, there is the cost since it allows communicating with different people around the world at a very affordable cost for international business stakeholders. Secondly, there is the time factor, since even though business stakeholders are communicating with people from other continents, messages are sent and received in a matter of minutes. Thirdly, there is the type of written communication since it not only allows users to analyze messages more carefully and to modify them if necessary. Nevertheless, to review the information the next day even if users are in different time zones, and to save messages as reminders or evidence in case of misunderstandings. On the other hand, there is the flexibility, since the emails allow you to add all those involved or forward relevant information, as well as attach files for deeper analyzes and to prioritize messages according to their antiquity or urgency matter.

2.3.3 Emails issues in business

As part of the most important disadvantages are the misinterpretations and misunderstandings of the messages, mainly because it is very difficult to convey the right tone in a written request due to the omission of intonation and body language. Therefore, it is very common for users involved to experience negative emotions due to the disconnection and lack of email personalization. Secondly, there is the constant interruption of emails since it is difficult to concentrate on a subject

without the pressure of new emails overload. Also, there is the late response to simple requests to be resolved by telephone, for example, since they are sent as part of the email overload, the response time may be longer than necessary. On the other hand, there is the lack of relationships since, when requesting all the information by mail, there is no socialization that allows human relationships, which in the long term affects the effectiveness of communication. Finally, there is the pressure and stress caused by the emails overload, since the very ease and impersonality of the messages cause stakeholders to be added to unnecessary chains, or, failing that, to be pressured for an immediate response (Taylor, 2017).

2.3.4 Email literacy

According to the UNESCO (2013), European Commission (2016), Microsoft Corporation (2014), DQ Institute (2017), and Certiport (2020) digital literacy is necessary so that companies can manage the digital right, digital access, digital communication, digital safety, media and information literacy, digital etiquette, digital health, digital commerce, and digital law in the international market. Nawaz & Kundi (2010) explain that digital literacy is understood as the acquired ability to use digital devices as well as their offered services. However, Grefen (2021) distinguishes between two concepts of digital literacy, digital proficiency, and digital awareness.

In the first place, digital proficiency refers to the skill digital users use to take advantage of digital means to optimize certain processes in human life (Grefen, 2021). On the other hand, digital awareness is described as the capacity to perceive, comprehend, and accept the role that digital users have in determined digital ecosystems (Grefen, 2021). Therefore, this thesis considers email literacy as the incorporation of digital proficiency and digital awareness. Email literacy can also be understood as the competence of business stakeholders to leverage emails to make business

processes more efficient and effective, while taking responsibility for their role and therefore their actions in the business domain.

2.3.4.1 Digital proficiency in business

Digital proficiency for business goals can be understood as the ability business stakeholders have to perform business tasks as automated as possible to achieve specific business objectives through digital means of communication (Grefen, 2021). Some examples in which digital proficiency for business goals can be seen are in the ability to perform accountability tasks in an automated way through excel, the ability to write a letter in word copying and pasting a format, the ability to take a meeting via videoconferencing with people in different locations, to mention some. The economic globalization of the last decades and the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years have substantially increased the use of digital means of communication for business activities. This adaptation has generated specific requirements according to the levels of digital competence, taking in mind not only the achievement of business objectives, but also the protection of health in business interaction (Grefen, 2021).

2.3.4.2 Digital awareness in business

According to Grefen (2021) digital awareness is understood as the extent to which users are conscious about the consequences of interacting digitally through different services. Therefore, digital awareness in business can be understood as the critical thinking of digital proficiency through digital means of communication. Taking into consideration information and data literacy, digital communication and collaboration, digital content creation, digital safety, and digital problem solving, as the 5 competencies of the Digital Competence Framework 2.0 (European Commission, 2018). Initially, digital awareness can be achieved solely, however when specific

goals are pursued in the business environment, it is crucial that digital proficiency is included as well. According to Grefen (2021), it is necessary for business stakeholders to be digitally aware when engaging in business interactions, including not only the digital society at large, but participants in the digital business community.

2.4 Conclusions

This second chapter stresses the isolated relevance and evolution on, on one hand, Linguistics, through applied linguistics, critical applied linguistics, discourse analysis, genre analysis, and moves. And, on the other hand, International Business, communication in international business, email benefits and disadvantages, email literacy, and digital proficiency and awareness. The purpose was to converge with common intersection points of all the previous disciplines and concepts. That helps the study to determine why even using English as the lingua franca and email as the medium of communication, there are still many limitations that international business communication might face.

The linguistics literature review helped firstly to justify the relationship between English language and the problem of this study. In here, applied linguistics and critical applied linguistics detonate as the protagonists of the study by considering the use of language in social environments. Similarly, the linguistics theoretical framework determined how to address this study, by providing genre analysis as the discourse analysis method selected to carry out the data analysis. Basically, because it contemplates the patterns of analyzing the breaking down of various examples of the discourse. That, according to the critical applied linguistics aims, are aligned to improve a problem of critical impact, that in this case is the deficiencies in the communication of large-scale companies.

The international business literature review provided the parameters of this study, mainly on what to address and what not to. The international business previously developed provides the starting point to the study since email and English language are fixed features for international business. That although they cannot be easily replaced, can be improved. This theoretical framework section also served as a basis to consider already investigated factors that cause communication problems when using email in English. At the same time, it gave the guideline of the research topic and its landed goals, considering aspects and perspectives not previously analyzed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly presents the methodology used to collect, select, and analyze the data of this study. This section also explains how the data was collected, considering the process to provide the information about the making of the study and the reliability and validity criteria required to collect, select, and analyze the data.

The organization of this third chapter starts with the research design which specifies what type of research was adopted and why. Then, it is followed by the justification of the selected methodology, which explains the kind of methodology used as well as the type of analysis implemented to study the corpus. Afterwards, the description of the context of the studied multinational company is presented. Followed by, the description of the corpus and interview, considering the corresponding authors and/or participant, as well as their instruments. Lastly, the data collection and data analysis are established as well as the criteria determined to select them.

3.2 Research Design

The research type selected for this thesis is qualitative, however it presents certain quantitative data to support the data analysis selected as well as the interpretation of the results. According to Gelling (2015) qualitative research is focused on exploring human activities in social contexts, and thus gaining greater understanding of the factors affecting them either positively or negatively. This study is contemplated as qualitative in the light of both, the text analysis of the email communication of the multinational company, and the classification and explanation of the main factors that may have generated an effective or deficient communication. Similarly, it is qualitative research because it takes into consideration the participants of the study, either through their direct

comments or opinions, or through their attitudes, behaviors, interactions, and responses to situations about the topic of the study or related to it (Pathak, et al. 2013).

3.3 Justification for your choice of methodology

This study opted for a multiple case study methodology mainly because it permits the contrast analysis of the email communication problems in more than one case (Baxter & Jack, 2008), not only within an email chain (conversation) but across them (Yin, 2003). This integrated analysis provides a better understanding of the email communication problems as the phenomena and confirms the validity and reliability of the factors found as possible causes of them (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Similarly, the multiple-case study allows for a qualitative research type that considers the context involved in the genre and allows for new solution proposals (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Also, this multiple case study methodology influences the evolution of the existing literature on the subject (Vannoni, 2015).

Additionally, it should be noted that the corpus was analyzed through genre analysis as the discourse analysis method selected to carry out the data analysis. Mainly because genre analysis is the discipline that studies how language is employed in different environments either professionally or academically (Bhatia et al., 2008). These environments also take into consideration the results found to be affecting either positively or negatively the email chains as well as their linguistic features (Bhatia et al., 2008). It must be highlighted that genre analysis mainly seeks to determine the composition and organization of a text, to explain its social context, and more importantly for this study, to deepen on how the social context of the genre affects the structural and linguistic features of the communication (Bhatia et al., 2008).

3.4 Description of the context

This study focuses on analyzing the email communication of a multinational company located in Ireland but with offices and operations across the six continents. Thus, their business stakeholders belong to different nationalities around the world and the native languages of all of them differ, which clearly affects the company's communication. As a result of this challenge, English has been implemented as the lingua franca of this multinational company, however not all the business stakeholders have the same English language proficiency. Another important factor to consider is the means of communication used, which in this case is email. Mainly because of the email scope, affordability, and execution time. Despite these benefits, the issue arises taking in mind that business stakeholders do not receive any kind of training on how email communication should be in their context.

3.5. Description of the corpus of the email chains

The corpus of email chains was requested to the North American Free Trade Agreement Manager of the studied multinational company in August 2022. However, it was not provided until November 2022 for its analysis. The characteristics requested to be covered by the corpus were emails reflecting common day-to-day requests including more than 3 interactions with more than 3 people. The corpus consisted of 12 different email chains (complete conversations) containing in total 163 individual emails. All of them were written in English as the Lingua Franca used in this multinational company. Each email chain included the complete email conversation from beginning to end regarding different matters related to International Business. Mainly to be able to detect the linguistic factors affecting the email communication of the multinational company.

3.5.1. Description of the authors of the email chains

The authors of the email chains included 69 business stakeholders from the United States, Mexico, Korea, Colombia, India, Canada, Australia, and Germany from which 36 are native speakers and 32 communicate in English as their lingua franca. They were chosen based on their educational and professional background, they all graduated from college, are at least bilingual, and are currently business stakeholders. The internal 32 participants belong to a multinational company headquartered in Ireland. Covering the working positions of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Compliance Manager, Supply Chain Manager, International Trade Specialist, Trade Compliance Specialist, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Sr. Specialist, ANZ Operations & Customer Service Supervisor, Supply Planner, Customer Service MBC, Customer Service Agent and Logistics Analyst.

On the other hand, the remaining 37 authors of the email chains belong to 14 different companies that work with the multinational company as suppliers and customs brokers. These 37 external participants cover the positions of Vice-President and COO, Canada Trade Compliance Director, Sales & Marketing Manager, Sales Support Manager, Operations Manager, Sales and Engineering Senior Manager, Customer Accounts & Distribution Manager, Trade and Customs Manager, Sales Support Coordinator, Customer Service Supervisor, Senior Demand Planner, Trade and Customs Senior Associate, Tariff Classification Specialist, Tax Processor, Trade & Customs Specialist, LRD EM & Aerospace Sector, Customs Entry Processing Team Lead, Customs Operations Team Lead, WVEF FDA/POA processor, Customs Brokerage Representative, Customer Service Representative, Customs Operations Account Analyst, Product Engineer, Shipping and Receiving Analyst, U.S. Trade and Customs Analyst, Customer Service Jr, Team Trainer. It should be noted that the previous information was obtained from the analysis of the email chains.

3.5.1.2 Description of the instrument to analyze the email chains.

The instrument employed to analyze the email chains was an excel document created with the different categories of patterns found in the text of the email chains. It is worth noting that all these categories were changing according to the content found in every individual email of all the email chains. It also should be highlighted that the breaking down of these categories are detailed in the section of data analysis of this third chapter.

3.6 Interview

To complement the analysis of the email chains an interview was made to the North American Free Trade Agreement coordinator of the studied multinational company. The purpose of this interview was to deepen the context of the email communication in International Business. In such a way that the study could better understand the factors that are part of the genre by using this means of communication. And thus, come up with useful and realistic suggestions so that this company can improve its communication. Similarly, the interview had the purpose to recognize the advantages and disadvantages perceived by the North American Free Trade Agreement coordinator of the studied multinational company in her years of experience in a department related to International Business.

3.6.1 Description of the participant of the interview

The participant in the interview was the North American Free Trade Agreement Senior Specialist of the company. Her nationality is Mexican, so her native language is Spanish, however she communicates in English as the lingua franca of her position. Her name and experience must remain confidential considering the permission obtained from the Free Trade Agreement manager of the company. That said, for ethical reasons, the pseudonym used to refer to the North American

Free Trade Agreement Senior Specialist was Megan. It also is important to highlight that Megan was part of the indirect participants that interacted in the analyzed email chains, and she authorized sharing her responses for the purposes of this study.

3.6.1.2 Description of the instrument to analyze the interview.

The organization of the interview was done considering 4th sections of questions that were introductory questions to know more about the means of communication used in the genre, questions related to the context of email communication, and questions about the advantages and disadvantages of the email communication. All of them considered from the perspective and experience of Megan. It is worth noting that the questions asked during the interview are described in the data analysis section of this third chapter.

3.7 Description of data collection

The data used for this study were complete email chains mainly because they reflected the whole conversation involved in the different business matters so that the study could better identify the gaps in the conversation. However, all the individual emails in each email chain (conversation) were analyzed to determine if they were applicable for this study and to analyze them. The corpus of email chains was provided by the North American Free Trade Agreement Manager in November 2022 for their analysis. It should be highlighted that from the whole corpus, only 12 email chains (containing a total of 163 individual emails) were selected to be used for this study. The emails to be analyzed were chosen considering more than 3 interactions between 3 or more business stakeholders per conversation using English as the lingua franca.

3.7.1 Ethics of data collection

The permission to collect and study the data from both, the emails and the interview was obtained from the North American Free Trade Agreement Compliance Manager of the analyzed multinational company. However, the name of the studied multinational company, its stakeholders, the emails authors, and the third companies involved in the business processes must remain confidential. On the other hand, the participant of the interview gave her consent to save and analyze her interview responses. Nevertheless, her identity must remain confidential as well as the companies in which she has labored.

3.8 Description of the data analysis

The data analysis of this research consisted of two parts, the genre analysis of the email chains which were the corpus of this study, and the analysis of an interview. The genre analysis of the email chains showed the linguistic patterns found in the 12 email chains including in total 163 of individual emails. The genre analysis allowed this study to identify the different categories required to produce as complete emails as possible through linguistic patterns. These patterns recognized the words and phrases used in the context as well as their objectives in the text. Table 1 below shows the categories found as presenting the most important patterns in the emails.

Table 1: Factors originating the email communication problems.

Category	Explanation
Defining recipient	Measures if in the email body the requests were addressed to specific recipients, considering requests are made by adding more than one email recipient.

Defining the requested action	Shows if the actions requested to be done were defined and clear.
Contextualizing the requests	Refers to the detailed explanation on the request on why they need what they are asking for, which allows the recipient to better comprehend what they need even though the technical name of the process is not correctly requested.
Including complete data	Measures whether the requestors include the necessary data so that the recipients can proceed with their requests.
Duplicating the email chains	Exposes the duplicity of email chains by not "responding all" or by not answering to the last response in the original email chain.
Indicating due dates	Measures if the emails indicated the due date for each request as part of the instruction.
Identifying misinterpretations	Exhibits if the email chains had misinterpretations or confusions according to what the people added responded and/or asked for so that the senders' actions could be carried out.
Including attachments	Exposes the utility of attachments to contextualize the requests.
Including pictures in the email body	Manifest the utility of images in the body of the emails to contextualize the requests

Table 1, previously stated, is composed by two columns, the first one states the factors originating the email communication problems. The second column of the table explains the meaning of each factor. It must be highlighted that all the factors are based on linguistics patterns found in all the 163 individual emails.

On the other hand, the analysis of the interview exhibited the unbreakable features of the email communication that must remain the same considering them as part of the genre. As well as those that were more flexible and therefore could be adapted. The principal purpose of the interview was to support the email chains analysis and thus, allowed for better and more focused linguistic suggestions (See Appendix 1).

3.9 Conclusion

This third chapter mainly presented the methodology used in this research to provide the study with validity and reliability. It starts explaining the research design, the justification of the methodology, the description of the context, description of the corpus, process of data collection, and data analysis as well as the criteria considered for each of these processes. The data analysis was made in two sections, the first one was the analysis of the email chains which were the corpus of this study, and the second one was an interview done to one of the authors of the email chains. The analysis of the email chains was made through genre analysis to identify the linguistic patterns found to be affecting the email communication of the multinational company either positively or negatively. The analysis of the interview was mainly done to support the results of the analysis of the email chains analysis and thus, present more contextualized results in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.0 Introduction

This fourth chapter provides the findings obtained from the genre analysis made to the email chains as well as from the interview applied to the Senior Free Trade Agreement Specialist from the analyzed multinational company. The chapter starts with the summary of the study to provide the reader with the framework of this research. Afterwards, it addresses the results of the genre analysis made to the email chains considering every linguistic pattern found as well as its explanation, linguistic evidence, and examples. Later, the chapter presents the most relevant contextual contributions of the interview applied to the Senior Free Trade Agreement Specialist of the analyzed multinational company. Then, this 4th chapter shows the discussion of the findings obtained from both, the genre analysis of the email chains, and the interview. In such a way that all the results are integrated and supported by theory previously given by other researchers.

4.1 Summary of the study

Even though communication in International Business using English as the lingua franca has been studied along the time, there are still many communication problems that multinational companies face daily. This study alludes to the recurrence of these problems to three foremost causes. First, to the great diversity of the discourse community originated by having stakeholders around the world and therefore from different nationalities and languages. Then, to the written email communication as the means of communication used in the genre considering its scope, cost, and

execution time. Lastly, to the fact that the communication problems are not analyzed by Language professionals.

Thus, the purposes of this study are 1) to settle the most common email communication problems of the analyzed multinational company. 2) To find the factors that might have generated the email communication problems through a genre analysis based on linguistic patterns. 3) To propose suggestions to literate the email communication of the multinational company. Hence, English teaching writing, taught either in academic sessions and/or in business training courses, can be improved and focused on real and practical professional environments. Therefore, the research questions for this study are: 1) Which were the problems in the email communication of the analyzed multinational company? 2) Based on the linguistic patterns, what factors originated the problems in the analyzed email communication? 3) What suggestions might be provided to the multinational company to improve its email communication?

To achieve the previous purposes and answer the research questions established, the analysis of the data was made in two parts. On one hand, the genre analysis of 12 complete email chains containing in total 163 individual emails provided by the Free Trade Agreement Manager of the analyzed multinational company. The purpose of this genre analysis was to identify the factors originating the email communication problems through identifying the linguistic patterns of the communication. On the other hand, an interview applied to the Free Trade Agreement Senior Specialist of the analyzed multinational company. The aim of the interview was to contextualize the email communication in International Business. To provide feasible and useless suggestions to the company so that it can efficiently improve its communication.

4.2 Email chain results

According to the genre analysis made, nine linguistic patterns were identified to be affecting the email communication of the analyzed multinational company. The results of the analysis of each factor are presented as follows.

4.2.1 Defining recipient.

Since there are many email addresses as recipients of the analyzed emails, this linguistic pattern measured whether the senders specified the recipient of the emails in the email body who were to perform the requested actions. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the original requests in all the 12 email chains. The results indicated that from the analyzed 12 email chains, 83% did not define the recipient who should have performed the original requested action(s). The image 1 below presents the evidence of the lack of recipients in the email body, considering there were 11 email addresses included in that specific email chain.

Image 1: Sample of lack of recipients in the email body

Subject: SHIPMENT
INSTRUCTIONS/USMCA REQUEST
Importance: High

TARIFF CLASSIFICATION/CLEARANCE

Good Morning, [REDACTED]

Please find attached Commercial Invoice and USMCA form (sent by the shipper) for the above shipment.

Can you please provide Clearance Instructions/Tariff Classification for the items listed below on this shipment?

Part #

Also, listed on page 2 of the paperwork is the USMCA form sent by the shipper. Can you please advise if you wish to claim USMCA for this shipment?

In the body of that form is a statement concerning a Broker... snippet included below. Please advise if we need to Broker walk this ground shipment, if so please provide a completed Alternate Broker Form with the information on it.

6a. Item No.:	6b. Detailed Description of Goods	7. HS Code (6-digits only)	8. Origin Criterion (A, B, C, or D)	9. Origin Country (CA, US or MX)
1				

I have attached all documents we have for this shipment. Please do not hesitate to reach out if any additional information is needed.

4.2.2 Defining the requested action.

This linguistic pattern measured whether the senders clearly defined the actions to be performed.

This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the original requests made in the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 100% of the senders of the original email chains clearly defined the actions required. The image 2 below shows the linguistic evidence that demonstrated the defined actions requested by the senders.

Image 2: Sample of defined actions

Hi Team,

We need additional information to provide classification for this request. Please advise on the following questions:

Part Number	Description	InfoReq1Question
	SKIRT 14"OD 3/16" PL X 3-1/2" X 43-7/16	1. Please provide the spec sheet 2. What is this part exactly (Is it a screw/Bolt/Cover), function and end use (Is it used for HVAC) 3. What is the material of this part
	CE IMPORTER LABEL (NOBO 2820)	1. What is the material of the label(ex; Plastic, paper, etc.) 2. Is it adhesive?(Y/N) 3. Is it in rolls?(Y/N) 4. Kindly mention the length and width of the labels? 5. Is it having a light-reflecting surface produced in whole or in part by glass grains (ballotini)? 6. Kindly provide a drawing/datasheet/weblink if any.

If there are additional f..... contacts we should be adding to this request for information, please provide their contact details.

Please respond to all questions and requests for information within 5 business days of this email. If no further information has been received within 5 days, KPMG will issue a classification at the highest confidence level possible. If any of the information is considered sensitive or proprietary, please send directly to KPMG without others on copy.

Thank you, L

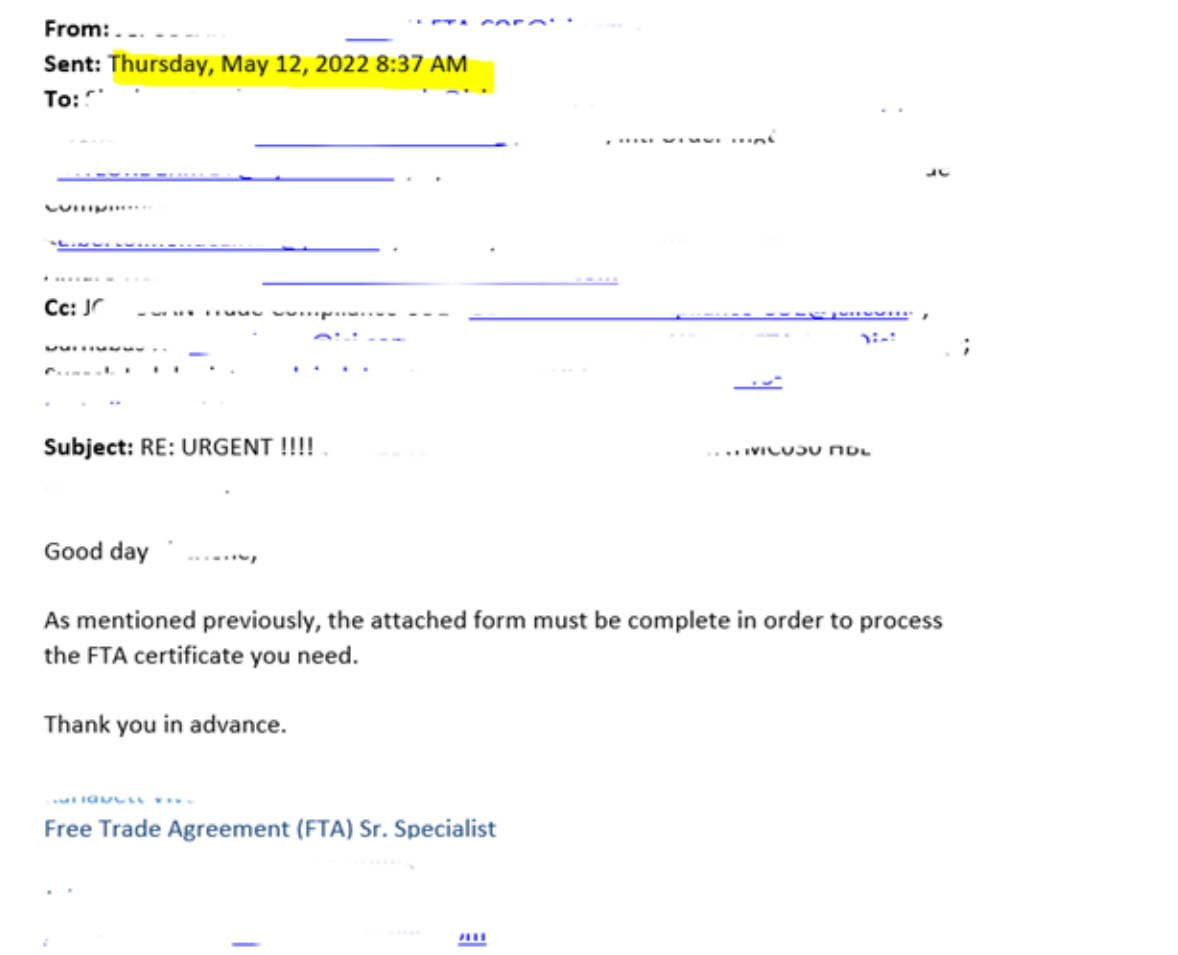
U.S. Trade and Customs

4.2.3 Contextualizing the requests.

This linguistic pattern measured whether the senders contextualized their requests, which entailed an explanation of why they needed what they were asking for. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 100% of the senders of the original requests contextualized their requests detailing the purposes of the requested actions. The image 3 below exhibits the linguistic evidence of contextualizing the requests.

Image 3: Sample of contextualizing the requests.

Image 4: Sample of lack of provided data.



4.2.5 Duplicating the email chains.

This linguistic pattern measured whether the email chains were duplicated either by adding more people to the email chains or by not responding to the last email received. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 163 individual emails contained in the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 50% of the email chains were duplicated. The image 5 below exhibits the linguistic evidence of duplicating the email chains.

Image 5: Sample of duplicating the email chains.

From:
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2022 9:05 AM
To:

Subject: RE: PRE ALERT

Hi Jose,

The instruction was sent on Friday, please do not claim for both of them.

PN	Criteria	HTS	COO	JCI HTS	Comment
					Waiting HTS confirmation, please do not claim
					HTS discrepancy, please do not claim

Also, please your support to respond on the last response of the original request, mainly to avoid creating duplicated email chains of the same topic.

Do you have any update? You mentioned that P. was not in any of the parts spreadsheets, but it is already processed to assign the HTS, right? The team should be requesting item information to assign the HTS. Please confirm as soon as possible.

Thank you.

4.2.6 Indicating due dates.

This linguistic pattern measured whether the requests indicate the due date for each request as part of the original email instruction. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 92% of the senders did not indicate the deadlines for the requested actions in the original email chains. The image 6 below presents the linguistic evidence of indicating due dates.

Image 6: Sample of indicating due dates.

Hi Team,

We need additional information to provide classification for this request. Please advise on the following questions:

Part Number	Description	InfoReq1Question
	SKIRT 14"OD 3/16" PL X 3-1/2" X 43-7/16	1. Please provide the spec sheet 2. What is this part exactly (Is it a screw/Bolt/Cover), function and end use (Is it used for HVAC) 3. What is the material of this part
	CE IMPORTER LABEL (NOBO 2820)	1. What is the material of the label(ex; Plastic, paper, etc.) 2. Is it adhesive?(Y/N) 3. Is it in rolls?(Y/N) 4. Kindly mention the length and width of the labels? 5. Is it having a light-reflecting surface produced in whole or in part by glass grains (ballotini)? 6. Kindly provide a drawing/datasheet/weblink if any.

If there are additional f..... contacts we should be adding to this request for information, please provide their contact details.

Please respond to all questions and requests for information within 5 business days of this email. If no further information has been received within 5 days, KPMG will issue a classification at the highest confidence level possible. If any of the information is considered sensitive or proprietary, please send directly to KPMG without others on copy.

Thank you, L

U.S. Trade and Customs

4.2.7 Identifying misunderstandings.

This linguistic pattern measured whether the people involved in the email chains at some point misunderstood or confused what was required. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 163 individual emails of the email chains. The results indicated that 100% confused certain emails, which involved additional requests from what was originally requested by the first sender. The image 7 below presents the linguistic evidence of misunderstandings.

Image 7: Sample of identifying misunderstandings.

Hello [redacted]

I want to help, I really do, but maybe I'm not the correct individual for this issue.

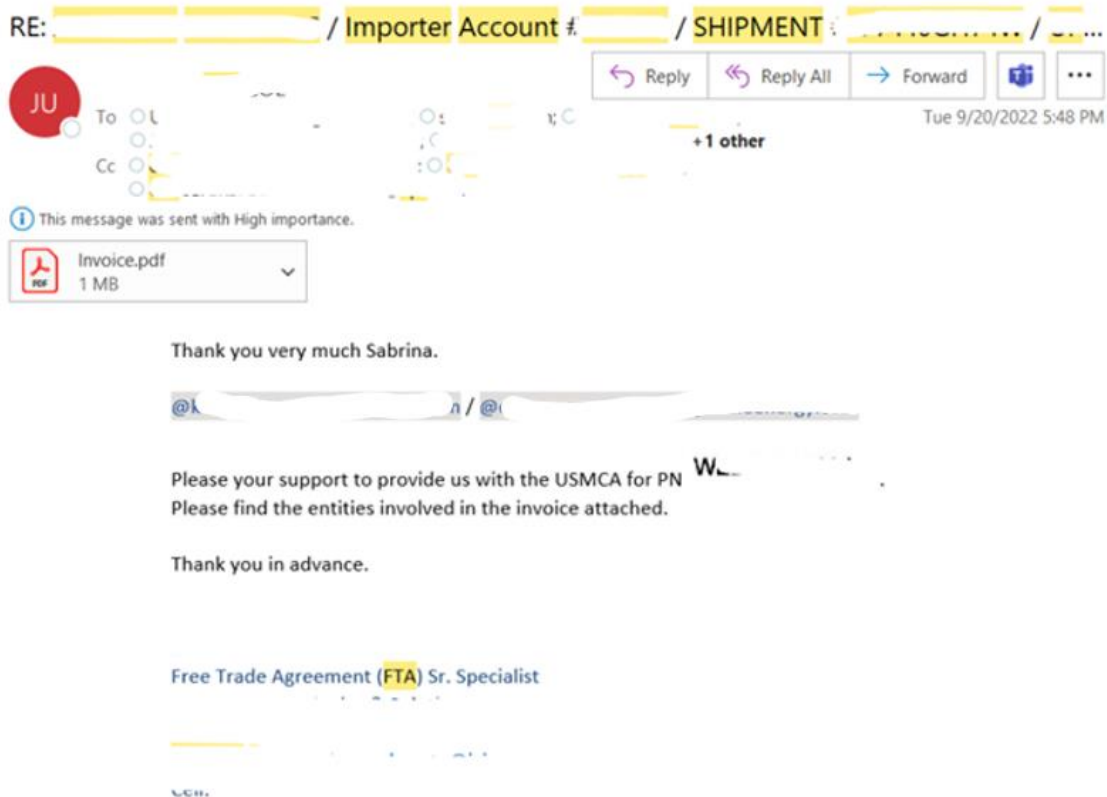
We've been sending engineering samples to [redacted] for years now, and this is the first time I've been challenged to provide any additional documentation. Why is this suddenly an issue, why is a different process required?

As I advised, [redacted] can generate Certs of Origin on individual shipments of production-built, officially-released product, but we do not issue those certificates on Engineering-built, non-released R&D samples. Attached is an example of the document - again, it does not apply to this current shipment, but to a recent official production build, I'm sending the document as reference. The engineering samples are new component designs that are still under development. Once the [redacted] component and the [redacted] system-level designs are finalized, across the course of this and next year, THEN the [redacted] component will be finalized and will be included within [redacted] finalized finished product.

4.2.8 Including attachments.

This linguistic pattern measured whether senders and recipients used attachments as analysis tools or as reference for more detailed requests. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 163 individual emails contained in the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 92% of the issuers used attachments as support tools or as reference for more detailed requests. The image 8 below shows the linguistic evidence of including attachments.

Image 8: Sample of including attachments.



4.2.9 Including pictures in the email body.

This linguistic pattern measured whether senders and recipients used pictures as analysis tools or as reference for more detailed requests. This measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence of all the 163 individual emails contained in the 12 email chains. The results indicated that 50% of the senders and recipients used pictures in the email body as reference to request more specific actions. The image 9 below indicates the linguistic evidence of including pictures in the email body.

Image 9: Sample of including pictures in the email body.

Importance: High

Good day team,

@

Please your support to confirm if PNs below qualify for ILFTA, if so, please your support to sign the declarations in the invoices as indicated below.

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that unless otherwise indicated, the goods covered by this document fully comply with the rules of origin and the other provisions of the agreement on the Establishment of free Trade Area between the Government of Israel and Government of United State of America.

Exporter. Signature

Company Registration No.

We hereby certify that goods are of first quality. Goods are of Israeli origin.

TYCO PN	Supplier PN	TYCO HTS
-	-	848190
		848190

Thank you in advance.

4.3 Interview results

The questions made in the interview to the North American Free Trade Agreement Senior Specialist of the analyzed multinational company were divided in 4 sections: introductory questions, contextual questions, questions reflecting the advantages of the email communication, and questions about the disadvantages of the email communication. That said, the results yielded by the interview are presented as follows. (See Appendix 1)

4.3.1 Introductory results of the interview

According to the responses from the interviewee, the most used means of communication in multinational companies are email, Microsoft teams, and phone. However, the most used one is

email since it allows immediate and cost-effective communication not only with international people inside the company but outside it. In second place is Microsoft teams, it is also a very useful workspace for multinational companies since it allows videoconferencing with whomever who has an email either internally or externally. However, the chatting in the shared workspace is only allowed within a specific community, which lags the communication with international stakeholders. In third place is the phone, however it is mostly used for urgent matters with external stakeholders. It is worth noting that what is said through the phone is normally reinforced through email to leave a record of what was said.

4.3.2 Contextual results of the interview

The contextual questions showed that email is not only the most important means of communication for multinational companies, but it is also the most used one. According to the interviewee it is used daily throughout the whole day since it is the only authorized means of communication for formal matters. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that, regardless of the importance of email, the members of the company do not receive email training at any time. This lack of instruction means that there is no standardized protocol to be followed when composing an email nor standardized factors to be included to consider it well-written for the discourse community.

The contextual results of the email communication also demonstrated that there are fixed features of the email communication of multinational companies that cannot be modified as they are part of the genre. Among these are the high number of email addresses as recipients in the emails, the visibility of the organization chart of the members of the company, the fact that the communication is written so it does not include intonations nor body language, and the fact that

stakeholders belong to different nationalities worldwide, so the communication is given in English as the lingua franca in the business world. On the other hand, the flexible factors of the email communication of multinational companies, according to the interviewee are. The organization, the response time, the body content, the subjects used, the use of documents or images as visual aid, and the formal or informal language selected to communicate.

4.3.3 Advantages in the email communication of multinational companies

Regarding the email benefits, the interviewee mentioned that there are many but the most important one is its global scope. Followed by the fact that the use of email does not represent an additional cost to companies since Wi-Fi connection, computers, and electronic power, are already part of the fixed costs of multinational companies. The third advantage was the email execution time since emails are sent and received in a matter of seconds. The fourth advantage was the capacity to share documents in the workspace. The last one was the capacity of adding more people to the email chains and forwarding complete conversations to other recipients.

4.3.4 Disadvantages in the email communication of multinational companies

The most relevant disadvantage of email communication, according to the interview applied, is misunderstandings. Principally because by not understanding correctly what is asked, processes are delayed, costs increase, and the number of mailings back and forth gets out of control. The second email issue is the lack of response on time since requests are usually complete out of time. In third place is email overload since the number of requests received per day cannot be controlled. In fourth place, is the lack of response at all and the lack of follow up since none of them fulfills

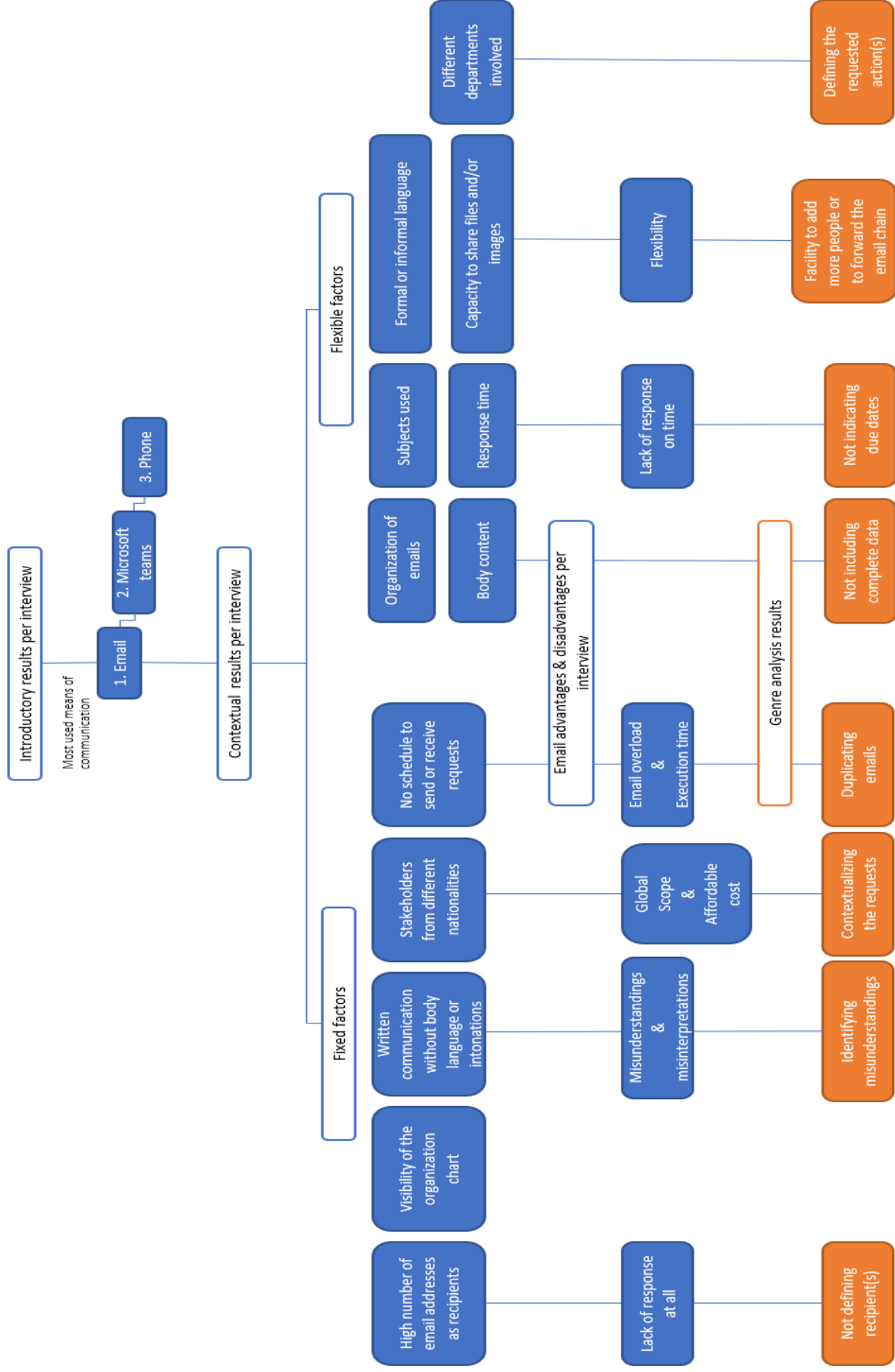
their purpose. Lastly are the misinterpretations since it is easy to get the wrong impression from a message considering it is not accompanied by intonations or body language.

4.4 Summarizing key findings.

The diagram below shows the summary of the key results of this study. The blue section shows the results according to the interview conducted with the FTA Senior Specialist of the analyzed multinational company. It is divided into the introductory results, where it is shown that email is the most used means of communication in the context of international business. Followed by the results of the use of email in the context previously mentioned, which are divided into fixed and flexible factors. This categorization reflects whether the factors or circumstances can be altered or not, considering the context. Then there are the advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the interviewee. In orange, are the results of the genre analysis, identified from the linguistic patterns that affected the email communication of the analyzed multinational company.

It must be highlighted that both results, those from the interview and from the genre analysis are correlated among themselves. This correlation considered email advantages and disadvantages in the international business context. As well as the fixed and flexible factors mentioned by the FTA Senior Specialist during the interview.

Diagram 1: Summarizing key findings.



4.5 Discussion of results

According to Halliday (1985) the way in which language writing usually matures is when society requires it to comply with new duties. However, the duties of writing language as such are often not new, as they have existed for a long time. However, they are often unknown because they have not been approached consistently and/or formally by means of referential studies. That is why Halliday (1985) mentioned that to create a recognizable genre it is necessary to institutionalize the writing needs, academically. Thus, it is demanded that new studies address the different English writing needs in multinational companies, either through researchers in study fields related to Language or English Teaching, or through the genre studies such as International Business, or Business Management, for instance.

The results found in this fourth chapter identified that the lack of email literacy, which involves the lack of digital proficiency, and the lack of digital awareness in the use of email, generate the lack of standardization of email communication rules. That said, the study showed that the lack of defining recipients, not including the complete data, duplicating email chains, and not indicating due dates, are the factors that origin the email communication problems of the analyzed multinational company. The email communication problems included 1) misunderstandings, 2) lack of response, 3) not completing the requests on time, and 4) email overload. These email communication problems could be avoided if English teaching would consider these elements in language-based sessions of teaching English writing (either in academic sessions and/or in business training courses).

One of the most common factors that originate the email communication problems identified through the genre analysis of the email chains was defining recipients in the email body.

The results indicated that from the 12 email chains, 83% did not define the recipient who should have performed the requested action(s), originally. Despite the high recurrence of this problem, many publications about emails (Taylor 2017, Shambhavi et al. 2023, Ogwu et al. 2020) do not address this matter as an email communication problem. Considering that to send an email in a traditional context, issuers must state an email address otherwise the email will be saved as a draft. However, making allowance to the context of the analyzed multinational context, the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) exposed “(...) when you receive so many emails, you focus on those which are clearly requesting something from you. Considering that we are added in many email chains just to be aware of the processes’ advances or by error.”

Kassoff et al., (2006) did talk about email recipients for automated purposes and differentiate between the recipient necessities when sending an email for personal purposes versus for corporate ones. Nevertheless, this research only covered basic business situations such as general notices, recaps at the end of a meeting, etc. In which recipients are or can be predetermined either by manually pre-establishing the list of contacts, or by sharing common preset features such as the people within a department (Kassoff et al., 2006). However, according to the interview applied to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023), when talking about the processes required to carry out the businesses purposes “there is a large number of people involved in the emails, that almost always, belong to different departments of the company”. Which means that the email addresses cannot be neither diminished nor predicted, as certain people in different departments need to be aware of the status of the processes. Besides, the fact that the business processes are never the same, and do not necessarily involve the same people (FTA Senior Specialist, 2023).

Another email communication problem identified in the genre analysis was the lack of indicating due dates. According to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) of the most important email communication problem in her experience “(...) would be the lack of response on time. It is common that certain requests are completed but after they are required.” Different publications (Besteiro et al., 2015, Lunenburg, 2011, Mitchell, et al., 2008) talk about the importance of setting deadlines in business, however none of them consider it as a communicative email problem. Harper J., (2023) mentions that setting deadlines to perform a job is essential to be able to prioritize, clarify the activities, achieve the objectives, and make the work concrete. Similarly, Sandholm & Vulkan (1999) exposed that one of the most important challenges in carrying out a process, whether in personal, academic, or professional life, is to get those involved to individually complete their assigned tasks within the established deadline(s). And making this happen when involving many workgroups, is much more complex. Hence, deadlines and/or due dates provide to the people involved with a starting and closing framework to complete the queries .

4.6 Conclusions

This chapter presented the factors affecting the email communication of the analyzed multinational company either positively or negatively, through the genre analysis of the email chains. The factors identified to be causing issues to the email communication were the lack of defining recipients, the lack of including the complete data, duplicating the email chains, identifying misunderstandings, and not indicating due dates or deadlines for the requests. These email communication problems could be avoided if teaching English writing would consider these email communication factors in genre-based English sessions. However, current agendas of English teaching do not include email writing nor its necessary elements to effectively communicate

through email in an international business context. Since the study fields involved, both in the language and business areas, have not dimensioned their practical needs in the real working world.

On the other hand, the correct practices identified were defining the requested actions, contextualizing the requests, including attachments, and including pictures in the email body. It should be noted that these practices are currently carried out by all or most of the stakeholders of the analyzed multinational company. Additionally, it revealed the contextual features of the genre from the point of view of the Senior Free Trade Agreement Specialist of the analyzed multinational company. Finally, the chapter integrated the findings from both instruments with previous studies. In the following chapter, the research questions will be answered.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This fifth chapter starts with the summary of the study and the results exposed in the fourth chapter. Afterwards, the responses to the three research questions established in the first chapter, are exhibited, but from the perspective of the author. Later, the chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, integrating both the opinions from the author and the results obtained in the fourth chapter. Furthermore, it addresses the limitations of the study from its conception to its development. Then, the directions for further research are presented in which new questions or areas for further investigation are suggested. Moreover, the general conclusions of this study are developed from an academic perspective. Finally, this chapter presents the personal reflection of the author about this study.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study analyzed the email communication of a multinational company using English as the lingua franca considering the great diversity of the discourse community. The aims of the study were to identify the email communication problems of the company, to find the factors that might have originated them, and to propose suggestions to standardize the factors required to write effective emails. For this a genre analysis of 12 complete email chains containing in total 163 individual emails were made, to identify the factors affecting the email communication based on the linguistic patterns of the text. On the other hand, an interview was applied to the Free Trade

Agreement Senior Specialist of the analyzed multinational company to hold up the results found by the genre analysis.

The genre analysis and interview yielded the misunderstandings, lack of response, not completing the requests on time, and email overload as the most common email communication problems of the multinational company. Likewise, the genre analysis found that the factors negatively affecting the email communication were 1) not defining recipients, 2) not including complete data, 3) duplicating the email chains, 4) not indicating due dates. And those affecting it positively were 1) defining the requested actions, 2) contextualizing the requests, 3) including attachments for deeper analysis, and 3) including pictures in the email body.

5.3 Answering the Research questions.

In this section the three research questions of this study are answered. It must be noted that, the responses integrated both, the genre analysis results of the email chains as well as the interview results. The purpose of integrating both results to the responses of the research questions is to have more useful and assertive responses to improve the communication of the multinational company. In addition to strengthen the necessary factors that the teaching of English writing should incorporate in its curricula. The aim of these research questions is to identify the problems and the factors originating them, explaining the origins of the factors based on the linguistic patterns observed, and suggest implementations and good practices to counteract the bad ones.

5.3.1- RQ1 1) Which were the problems in the email communication of the analyzed multinational company?

5.3.1.1 Misunderstandings

The dominant problem identified through the genre analysis of email chains were the misunderstandings, which for the most part reflect the lack of comprehension of the request(s) as a whole. The integral requests include the actions to be performed, the context of each action, the recipients who should have executed them, the due dates in which all the tasks should be completed, and the sharing of all the necessary data to carry out the requests. The results obtained from the genre analysis indicated that 100% misunderstood certain emails of the email chains. Similarly, the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) mentioned that misunderstandings are the main email communication disadvantage in her professional experience “(...) basically because by not understanding correctly what you are being asked for, processes are delayed, costs increase, and the number of mailings back and forth gets out of control.”

Misunderstandings, according to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) arise from the fact that the communication through email is given in a written format. This type of format avoids the accompaniment of the body language and intonations when communicating. Besides, written format limits the ease with which original requestors might add additional information to complement the requests in case these were not completed since the beginning. And, on the contrary, increases the misunderstanding by, for instance, sending an additional email after the original request to complement the request. The previous usually generates that recipients duplicate the email chains by responding in the original email instead of the additional one, that would be the last response.

First, it should be noted that both results, those from the genre analysis and those from the interview applied to the FTA Senior Specialist of the analyzed multinational company, yielded misunderstandings as the most relevant and common email communication problem of the

multinational company. Similarly, it should be highlighted how the fixed factor of the context, which in this case is the written format of the email communication, although being an advantage considering its flexibility (FTA Senior Specialist, 2023), also represents a problem if it is not correctly employed.

5.3.1.2 Lack of response

The lack of response from the recipients was also a recurrent problem originated by distinct factors such as not defining the recipient and email overload. According to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) the fourth most significant disadvantage of email communication in her experience is the lack of response “Mainly because when you receive so many emails, you focus on those which are clearly requesting something from you. Considering that we are added in many email chains either to be aware of the processes’ advances or by error.” As demonstrated through the genre analysis results, not defining the specific recipient or recipients who should have performed each task, is the main reason why recipients do not respond to the emails. Bearing in mind that, as part of the context of multinational companies, there is many people involved in the emails as recipients from different departments of the company (FTA Senior Specialist, 2023).

The lack of response also generates additional email communication problems such as misunderstandings by duplicating emails. When there is a lack of response from the recipients, requestors usually send reminders after the original requests. The delivery of reminders usually opens the option to either respond on the original email or in the last reminder sent. It must be noted that the duplication of the email chains can be originated by any of the people involved in the conversation. It is important to highlight how the results from the interview and the genre

analysis are linked considering the international business context and the email communication problem identified.

5.3.1.3 Not completing the requests on time.

Not completing the requests on time was also one of the most crucial problems identified by both the genre analysis and the interview results. According to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023), the second most dominant email communication problem in her professional career is the response time. She mentioned that “It is really common that certain requests are completed but after they are required.” This situation can be alluded to the fact that the response time in the email communication is a flexible factor that can or not be specified in the email body. The lack of standardization in this factor could be avoided if stakeholders were to receive genre-based English sessions, instead of language-based.

According to the results obtained from the genre analysis there are many reasons besides not indicating due dates, why the lack of response on time is considered a regular email communication problem. Such as not contextualizing the request, not including complete data, not defining the recipients in the email body and/or duplicating emails. All the previous delay the completion of the requests since doubts about these data arise among the recipients. Furthermore, the requests cannot be completed until all the required data is obtained and/or confirmed. It is also interesting how the results from both, the genre analysis and the interview complement the results of the other.

5.3.1.4 Email overload

Email overload was also determined as a significant email communication problem by the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) as she mentioned that in the genre “The fact you can't control the number of requests you receive per day is also a problem you would hardly deal with in other institutions.” Which is widely related to the fixed factor of the context in which the FTA Senior Specialist exposed that “there is no schedule for international business since the stakeholders time zones vary”. The fact that stakeholders belong to different nationalities worldwide is a relevant reason why there is email overload in this means of communication. However, the genre analysis determined some more such as not defining the recipient who should complete each request, not contextualizing the requests, duplicating emails, and/or not including the necessary data.

5.3.2 RQ2 2) What (linguistic) factors originated the problems in the analyzed email communication?

5.3.2.1 Not defining recipient in the email body.

Not defining the recipients in the email body of who should have performed the original requested action(s) originated all the identified email communication problems. These problems were the lack of response, not completing the requests on time, email overload, and therefore misunderstandings in the email communication. The results of the genre analysis indicated that from the analyzed 12 email chains, 83% did not define the recipient who should have performed the original requested action(s). Which means that the emails did not specify in the email body the person or team who should have carried out each task. In the light of, that on average, each email chain included 8.5 email addresses as recipients. It should be considered that this measurement was made through reviewing the linguistic evidence that reflected the lack of specificity or confusion of any recipient or recipients. Considering that on average each email

chain originally requested 2.6 different tasks to be completed by different recipients from the, on average, 8.5 added in each email chain.

5.3.2.2 Not including complete data.

Not including the complete data to carry out the different tasks requested in the email chain, generated email overload, misunderstandings, and not completing the requests on time. Mostly because by not including all the data in the original email chain additional emails must be sent by recipients to request the pending information. According to the genre analysis of the email chains 50% of the original senders did not provide the complete data in the original request so that the recipients could complete the tasks. Previous might not only cause email overload but misunderstandings if the readers do not revise all the emails in the conversation and just focus on the last one, considering that on average each email chain consisted of 13.5 individual emails. As well as in case of email chain duplication, making allowance for a 50% of duplicated email chains as per the genre analysis. As a result of both email overload and misunderstandings, requests might and are not completed on time.

5.3.2.3 Duplicating the email chains.

Duplicating the email chains also led to all the problems identified in this study which encompassed email overload, misunderstandings, lack of response, and thus, not completing the requests on time. By and large because when duplicating an email chain, a parallel new conversation is created as it were a different topic and avoids either one or several emails from the original email chain. This duplication of email chains clearly explains the email overload and misunderstandings by stakeholders. Otherwise, lack of response was to a large extent presented in

the light of the lack of “something” in the original request, that was usually clarified but in the duplicated version of the conversation. This situation clears up why the complementary message(s) were not seen and therefore, the original requests were not responded at all.

The principal ways this study detected in which email chains can be duplicated were by adding incorrectly new people, not replying all, or not replying in the last response. Even though these seem to be “easy” email functions that just comprise adding people or responding in the last email of the conversation, it is shocking how 50% of the email chains were duplicated by any of these reasons. This percentage can be understandable keeping in mind that according to the FTA Senior Specialist (2023) stakeholders do not receive any kind of formal email training.

5.3.2.4 Not indicating due dates.

Not indicating due dates was directly reflected in the email communication problem of not completing the requests or tasks on time. Of course, it was not the only reason, as detailed in the previous linguistic factors above. However, the results from the genre analysis yielded that 92% of the senders did not specify the due dates for any of the tasks requested in the original email chains. In view of the 10.5 days delay to be fulfilled. This study considers that the lack of deadlines framework weakens the priority given to the requested tasks. And considering the email overload that stakeholders usually face daily, it is a must to clearly indicate the due dates in which the activities must be done so that the recipients can prioritize their activities accordingly. Otherwise, the priority is left to the interpretation of the recipients depending on the numbers of pending backlogs.

It might be contradictory how the execution time might be an advantage of email over traditional mailing (FTA Senior Specialist, 2023). While at the same time, not completing the tasks on time is considered as an email communication problem. Thus, it is key to differentiate the execution time as the time it takes for an email to reach its recipient once it is sent by clicking “send”. This execution time mainly depends on the means of communication and in this case of its Wi-Fi-connectivity. Otherwise, the completion time refers to the time it takes to complete the tasks requested by the senders in the original email chains. The completion time will depend on the distinct linguistic factors addresses along this thesis which largely enclosed:

- Defining a recipient.
- Defining the actions/tasks required.
- Contextualizing the requests.
- Including the complete data so that the requests can be done.
- Not duplicating email chains to avoid lost important messages in the conversation.
- Indicating due dates for each task so that these can be prioritized as best as possible.

5.2.3 RQ3 3) What suggestions might be provided to the multinational company to improve its email communication?

This third research question was answered taking into consideration the fixed and flexible features of the email communication of the multinational company obtained from the interview of the FTA Senior Specialist. Among the fixed features are the high number of email addresses as recipients in the emails, the visibility of the organization chart of the members of the company, the fact that the communication is written so it does not include intonations nor body language, and the fact that stakeholders belong to different nationalities worldwide, so the communication is given in

English as the lingua franca in the business world. On the other hand, the flexible factors are the organization, the response time, the body content, the subjects used, the use of documents or images as visual aid, and the formal or informal language selected to communicate.

1. Factor originating the mail communication problem: not defining recipient.

- Suggestion: to divide the different requests in list format by tagging the person who should be doing each one.

2. Factor originating the mail communication problem: not including complete data.

- Suggestion: to standardize the necessary data to carry out the different and most common possible requests from the areas through a specific form. It can be sent automatically to whomever writes to the email.

3. Factor originating the mail communication problem: not indicating due dates.

- To indicate the date or range of days by which the applications must be completed.

4. Factor originating the mail communication problem: duplicating the email chains.

- To continue the conversation in the original chain attaching the duplicated mail chain and asking the business stakeholders to “reply all” every time they answer an email, on the last response made.

5. Factor originating the mail communication problem: identifying misunderstandings.

- Provide ongoing training to business stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of the proper use of the factors previously mentioned in the email communication. This training should be given by English experts.

5.4 Summary of key findings

This study initially alluded the still existence of email communication problems to the great diversity of nationalities of their stakeholders, to the means of communication used in the field, and to the fact that communication problems are not addressed and studied by the right people. However, according to the results, 92% of the senders of the original email chains had English as their native language. Even though the assortment of nationalities of the authors of all the individual emails included 51% from the United States, 24% from Mexico, 12% from Canada, 4% from Korea, 4% from India, 1% from Colombia, 1% from Australia, 1% from Germany. Which means that using English as the lingua franca is not what originates the email communication problems of this multinational company.

The second fact to which this study alluded the still existence of email communication problems was to the means of communication used. The study found that the main email communication problems of the analyzed multinational company are misunderstandings, lack of response, not completing the requests on time, and email overload. All of them originated by the bad practices of the emails' authors which include not defining recipients, not including complete data, duplicating the email chains, not indicating due dates. Among the current good practices of the authors are 1) defining the requested actions, 2) contextualizing the requests, 3) including attachments for deeper analysis, and 3) including pictures in the email body.

The results indicated that 100% of the original requests accurately defined the actions to be performed, which means that the actions themselves were clear. Similarly, 100% of the original requests contextualized on why they needed the requested actions or documents. Additionally, 92% of the email chains used attachments as analysis tools, and 50% used pictures to be more specific of what or where they needed the adjustments. The use of both, attachments and pictures mean that they are really recommended and useful tools for business stakeholders. According to the analysis, although attachments are used more frequently, business stakeholders consider them for more general analysis, however, images are the tool used to show specific or detailed requirements.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study was the choice of topic due to three different circumstances. First, there was my academic and professional field as the author of the thesis which is International Business. Whereby the topic was intended to contribute to the fields of study of both English Teaching and International Business. Then there was my intention to contribute to English Teaching but through Critical Applied Linguistics. Since I consider that it is essential to focus on English language problems affecting real-life professional situations in our current society, not only locally but internationally. Finally, there was my desire to study the topic but from the perspective of the interested party, which in this case was the multinational company. That said, selecting the topic “Analyzing the email communication of a multinational company using English as the lingua franca: a genre study” was a challenge but I think it complies with all my expectations.

Another limitation was the study approach when writing since even though I was aware about the dominant focus English Teaching had to have. While developing mainly the third chapter

I was usually oriented to support my analysis through hard-quantitative data which are commonly used for International Business studies and/or projects. Instead of a qualitative genre analysis based on linguistic factors reflecting the email communication problems. However, as the thesis moved on my supervisor realized that the approach was deviating from the original idea we had about the genre analysis. Therefore, she advised me to use the quantitative data obtained but in this fifth chapter to support the results of the research questions which can include my personal perception as the author.

5.6 Directions for further research

As part of the directions for further research it should be noted that the genre analysis applied to the analyzed multinational company was one-of-a-kind. Considering there were no previous investigations studying the real email communication problems of a multinational company through a genre analysis. That said, the value of this research lies in the usefulness of its results to improve the communication of the multinational company and to strengthen the necessary factors that teaching English writing should incorporate. The aim is to make professional email communication at companies as successful as possible. However, it is worth noting that despite the practicality of this research, the study only appeals to the analyzed genre and context.

For further research, this study would like to verify the contrast between the results of this company versus companies of distinct scopes. Similarly, the further research could be covered in areas of the company such as engineering, production, design, to mention some. Instead of administrative or corporate areas such as the ones included in this study. As were Free Trade Agreements, Logistics, Procurement, Sales, Customer Service, Brokers, Broker Management, Trade Compliance, Import/Export, among others. It also would be interesting to choose a company

of the same or a similar scope (international, transnational, global, multinational) but dedicated to a different industry. This variation in further research, might result in new factors affecting the email communication of these new companies.

Finally, it would be nice to complement this study with a second-part research in which the suggestions made to this analyzed multinational company could be tested. This deepened research focus would mean that the company would have to put into practice the actions suggested to counteract the communication problems detected in this study. Then, the second-part study will have to analyze the genre again and determine whether the same email communication problems persist. Or the percentage in which they were reduced or why not, increased. Similarly, it would be intriguing to interview again the FTA Senior Specialist to see what her perception of the suggested actions in the day-to-day email communication with the business stakeholders is.

5.7 Conclusions

While it is true that there are several studies on the use of English communication in large-scale companies. It is also true that many of these investigations approaches the subject from a language-based perspective and not from a genre-based one. Thus, these investigations do not usually consider the practical needs of the language in real professional contexts. This lack of inclusion 1) limits the English language teaching and learning by not including topics of relevance for the market sector in the English teaching agenda. 2) Restricts the ability of professionals to perform and develop in a wider labor market, such as international, transnational, multinational, global companies, among others. 3) Curtails the efficiency and effectiveness of the International Business processes required to run the companies. In turn, this lack of efficiency and effectiveness is reflected in the increase in resources and therefore in costs for the company.

This study originally alluded the email communication problems, to the diversity of nationalities in International Business, to the medium of communication used globally, and to the fact that communication problems are not addressed and studied by English language experts. However, the study found that the communication problems are mainly originated due to the lack of email literacy, digital proficiency, and digital awareness in the use of email of the analyzed multinational company. It should be noted that this lack of email literacy is traduced in the lack of standardization in the way email communication must works in the context of International Business. Besides the fact that the investigations of the email communication problems are not elaborated from the application of the language in the context, by language experts. And teaching English writing sessions are not genre-based but language-based.

That said, the study found that the main email communication problems of the analyzed multinational company are misunderstandings, lack of response, not completing the requests on time, and email overload. Caused by the bad practices of the emails' authors of not defining recipients, not including complete data, duplicating the email chains, not indicating due dates. On the other hand, the good practices of the authors included 1) defining the requested actions, 2) contextualizing the requests, 3) including attachments for deeper analysis, and 3) including pictures in the email body.

Finally, this study concludes that studies like this, considering real-professional problems should be investigated in a greater extent. In such a way that new genres can be consistently and formally approached by means of academic studies. The purpose of increasing the referential studies showing language professional needs is to recognize the genre by institutionalizing its language needs academically (Halliday, 1985).

References

- Ajami, R., & Goddard, J. G. (2014). *International business: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Alharbi, S. H. (2021). *A comparative genre-based analysis of move-step structure of RAIs in two different publication contexts*. *English Language Teaching*, 14(3), 12-24.
- Angelis, P. (2001). *The roots of applied linguistics in North America*. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 1-11.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). *Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers*. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Besteiro, E. N. C., de Souza Pinto, J., & Novaski, O. (2015). *Success factors in project management*. *Business management dynamics*, 4(9).
- Bhatia, V. K., Flowerdew, J., & Jones, R. H. (2008). *Advances in discourse studies*. Routledge
- Brannen, M. Y., & Mughan, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Language in international business: Developing a field*. Springer.
- Certiport (2020). *IC3 digital literacy*. USA: A Business of NCS Pearson, Inc.
- Davies, A., & Elder, C. (2004). *Applied linguistics: subject to discipline?* *The handbook of applied linguistics*, 1-15.

De Beaugrande, R. A., & Dressler, W. U. (1981). *Introduction to text linguistics*. London: longman.

Dudley-Evans, T. (1986). *Genre analysis: An investigation of the introduction and discussion sections of MSc dissertations*. Talking about text, 14, 128.

DQ Institute. (2017). *Digital Intelligence (DQ): A conceptual framework & methodology for teaching and measuring digital citizenship*. Nanyang, Singapore.

European Commission. (2016). *The European digital competence framework for citizens*. Luxembourg: European Union.

Felices Lago, A., & Fernández Lloret, D. (2012). *New applications of genre analysis to technical manuals: The perspective of Bhatian and Lassen Models*. Edwin Mellen Press.

Gee, J. P. (2010). *How to do discourse analysis: A Toolkit*. Routledge.

Gelling, L. (2015). *Qualitative research*. Nursing Standard (2014+), 29(30), 43.

Grefen, P. (2021). *Digital literacy and electronic business*. Encyclopedia, 1(3), 934-941.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *Spoken and written language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hewitt, P. (2006). *Electronic Mail and internal Communication: a three-factor model*. Corporate Communications: An International Journal.

Howatt, A. P. R., & Widdowson, H. G. (2004). *A history of ELT*. Oxford University Press.

Harper J. (2023, August). *22 of the Best Tips to Help You Meet Your Next Deadline*. Indeed.

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/meet-the-deadline#:~:text=A%20deadline%20is%20the%20date,the%20completed%20task%20or%20deliverable>

Iyer, R., Kettle, M., Luke, A., & Mills, K. (2014). *Critical applied linguistics*. The Routledge companion to English studies, 317-332.

Johnstone, B. (2017). *Discourse analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.

Judit, S., Tamás, F. B., Zoltán, P., & Marianna, V. (2006). *Applied Linguistics I for BA Students in English*. Bolcsész Konzorcium.

Kaplan, R. B. (2010). *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Kassoff, M., Petrie, C., Zen, L. M., & Genesereth, M. (2006). *Semantic email addressing: Sending email to people, not strings*. In AAAI 2006 Fall Symposium on Integrating Reasoning into Everyday Applications.

Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). *Goal-setting theory of motivation*. International journal of management, business, and administration, 15(1), 1-6.

Microsoft Corporation. (2014). *Microsoft Digital Literacy*. USA.

- Mitchell, T. R., Harman, W. S., Lee, T. W., & Lee, D. Y. (2008). *Self-regulation and multiple deadline goals*. In *Work Motivation* (pp. 225-259). Routledge.
- Nawaz, A., & Kundi, G. M. (2010). *Digital Literacy: An analysis of the contemporary paradigms*. International Journal of Science and Technology Education Research, 1(2), 19-29.
- Ogwu, S., Sice, P., Keogh, S., & Goodlet, C. (2020). *An exploratory study of the application of mindsight in email communication*. Heliyon, 6(7).
- Pathak, V., Jena, B., & Kalra, S. (2013). *Qualitative research. Perspectives in clinical research*, 4(3), 192.
- Pennycook, A. (2021). *Critical applied linguistics: A critical re-introduction*. Routledge
- Plantronics, Inc. (2010). APA 7th edition. How We Work: Communication Trends of Business Professionals. © Plantronics., Inc., 2010. <http://www.plantronics.com/us/howwework/>
- Sandholm, T., & Vulkan, N. (1999, July). Bargaining with deadlines. In AAAI/IAAI (pp. 44-51).
- Santos, M. B. (1996). The textual organization of research paper abstracts in applied linguistics. Text & Talk, 16(4), 481-500.

Shambhavi, R., Clinton, D., and Manish, A. (2023) Chapter 11 Email. In R. Shambhavi, D.

Clinton, A. Manish (Eds). *The Modernization of Digital Information*. University of South
Florida.

Swales, J. M., (1981) *Aspects of Article Introductions*. Aston ESP Research Report. No. 1,
Birmingham: Language Studies Unit, University of Aston.

Swales, J. M., (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge
university press.

Swales, J. M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University
Press.

Taylor, S. (2017). *Email Essentials: How to write effective emails and build great relationships*
one message at a time. Marshall Cavendish International.

The Radicati Group, Inc. (2019). APA 7th edition. Email Statistics Report. 2019-2023.

[https://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Email-Statistics-Report2019-
2023-Executive-Summary.pdf](https://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Email-Statistics-Report2019-2023-Executive-Summary.pdf).

UNESCO. (2013). *Global media and information literacy assessment framework*. Paris, France:

UNESCO.

Vannoni, M. (2015). *What are case studies good for? Nesting comparative case study research into the Lakatosian research program*. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 49(4), 331-357.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Design and methods*. *Case study research*, 3(9.2), 84.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview questions and responses

Introductory questions

1. What means of communication are used in your company to communicate both internally and externally?

Response: “I would say email, teams, and cell phone.”

2. From these, which are the most important and why?

Response: “The most important is email because it is the one, we use the most internally and externally, for many reasons. But in summary I can say that it is because it allows us to formally communicate with people all around the world instantly and cost-effectively. At the same time, it keeps a record of the whole conversation in case there is any trouble. In second place is teams since it is also a very practical application that fulfills the function of a phone call but in which you can share data, documents and even see people if needed. We normally use teams when there are very complicated issues, when there are many people or areas involved in a topic, or simply when something is very urgent. But being honest, I think we normally use it for internal matters. In third place is telephone, this is normally used for urgent issues that mainly involve external stakeholders, or to escalate an issue when we have no response by mail and/or teams.”

Context of the email communication in multinational companies

3. How often do you use email to communicate?

Response: “We use it daily, throughout the workday. Of course, we carry out processes in other systems, but all the requests are done by email.”

4. Do business stakeholders receive any kind of email communication training?

Response: “Not at all, we learn as we go along. I do not think companies think it is important for us to have email training. However, I do consider it would be very useful not only to improve communication but also to make processes more efficient.”

5. Does the previous apply by hierarchical level or does it not depend on the position or company?

Response: “It is true that the highest positions in a company are the ones that receive the most training, but these are usually focused either on leadership skills or on technical knowledge of the area they lead. So, I do not think it depends on the position. It could probably vary depending on the company, but I would not be that sure. For example, in my personal case, I have worked for 5 different companies from different industries, both national and multinational. And in none of them I have received any kind of formal email training. So, I do not think it depends on the industry or the position. I think it has more to do with the lack of awareness about the importance and the advantages that an optimal use of email can have.”

6. Do business stakeholders use formal or informal email communication?

Result: I would say that formal communication is used by a large majority, but I would not say that all stakeholders use it. For example, corporate executives have a greater tendency to use formal

language, compared to engineers who are physically located on the shop floor. So, I would say that it depends on the area we are talking about.

7. What are the fixed facts/features to be dealt with in the email communication of multinational companies?

Response: There is many people involved in the emails, that almost always, belong to different departments of the company. There is an email section in which email users can visualize the organization chart of all the company's members, which promotes easy escalation, in case of a problem. written format, diversity of nationality and language of stakeholders.

8. What are the flexible facts/features to be dealt with in the email communication of multinational companies?

Response: the organization, response time, body content, subjects used, use of documents or images as visual aid, formal or informal language.

Advantages of the email communication

9. What are the most important advantages of email communication in business from your perspective as a business stakeholder?

Response: its scope, cost, execution time, flexibility, capacity to share docs, basically.

10. From these, what would be the order of importance of each one and why?

Response: "I think the most important one is the cost. I mean, the fact that it is a "free" tool makes email the best and most attractive option. And I say free in quotation marks because it obviously

requires a Wi-Fi connection, a computer, electronic power, and so on. But all these factors are part of the fixed costs of national and multinational companies. So, in general terms, the factors that require the use of email do not represent an additional expense for the company. Then I would say there is its scope, basically because it allows us to communicate with people worldwide. The third advantage for me would be the time it takes to receive and send requests, I mean, I can send an email, and in seconds it reaches the recipient. The problem with traditional mail was precisely that, the waiting time between sending the request and the recipient receiving it. Today, with the support of the Internet, we no longer have this problem. However, this does not mean that we do not have a problem with response times, right? (...)”. The fourth one would be the capacity to share documents. Now that I think about it, the fact that we can share documents is a key point of the email's usefulness. Because even if this option did not exist, we could still communicate, but the documents allow us to carry out the processes, in addition to communicating with each other. The last one would be the capacity of adaptation or flexibility. For instance, it happens very often that you are sent a situation that is not within your scope or the scope of the area as such. However, the email allows you to simply forward the email or the complete email chain. Or you can just simply add the correct contacts to the whole conversation. Thus, the wonderful thing about that is that you do not need to re-word the information or literally re-state it, which saves you time, effort, and in some cases, even money. “

Disadvantages of the email communication

11. What are the most common email communication problems you have perceived in your years of experience?

Response: Misunderstandings, misinterpretations, lack of response on time, lack of response at all, lack of follow up, email overload, mainly.

12. From these, what are the most important email communication problems and why?

Response: "I think that all disadvantages have a high degree of importance but well, for me the first one would be the misunderstandings. Basically, because by not understanding correctly what you are being asked for, processes are delayed, costs increase, and the number of mailings back and forth gets out of control. The second one would be the lack of response on time. It is common that certain requests are completed but after they are required. For instance, in Customs the warehouses are charged by the day and size or weight of whatever you are storing, it depends on the material. So, if the required documentation to release the material is not sent on time, the storing cost increases. Another example is what happens in production, for instance when you do not meet the delivery dates with customers, there are also penalties to be paid for those delays. In third place I think there is email overload. The fact that you can't control the number of requests you receive per day is also a problem you would hardly deal with in other institutions. For example, at the bank, the executives handle one request at a time, and they don't get another one until they are finished with their client. However, for us it doesn't work the same way, in one day we can receive 10 easy requests or 40 complex ones. And the fact that the email "does not close" allows that even when we are out of working hours requests continue to fall, the point is that all these requests are going to the queue and as you are freeing up you are doing them. In fourth place I would say there is the lack of response at all and the lack of follow up. I think they are both on the same level of importance because at the end none of them fulfills their purpose. If I am asked for a certificate of origin and the email is misplaced and I never answer. It has the same impact as if, let's say, I do

respond requesting additional information, but in any case, at the end I do not provide the requestor with the certificate. The lack of response at all or lack of follow up are very common problems when using email. Mainly because when you receive so many emails, you focus on those which are clearly requesting something from you. Considering that we are added in many email chains just to be aware of the processes' advances or by error. Finally, I would say there are the misinterpretations.

13. For you, what is the difference between misunderstanding and misinterpretation?

Response: "There is a difference, one thing is to understand what they are asking you to do, and another thing is to understand the attitude in which they are asking you for it. The first one would be the mis or understanding and the second one is what I mean by interpretation. For example, I've seen that when a user is short in his/her answers, is very imperative, or scales you with your boss for not responding, many can take it personally, even have caused enmities. "

Appendix 2: Excel database.

MULTIPLE CASE STUDY USING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TOOLS				RESULTS -	RESULTS +	RESULTS -	
Email	SHIPMENT : SHIPMENT INSTRUCTIONS/TARIFF CLASSIFICATION/USMCA CLAIM? TRACKING NUMBER 1 URGENT !!!!!	TARIFF CLASSIFICATION/CLEARANCE INSTRUCTIONS/USMCA REQUEST CLEARANCE SHIPMENT # / Importer Account #: / Verify Tariff Classification / JAS - MBL S	Defined recipient	Defined action	No. requested actions		
			NO	YES	4		
			NO	YES	3		
			NO	YES	2		
			NO	YES	5		
			NO	YES	2		
			NO	YES	3		
			NO	YES	3		
			NO	YES	3		
			NO	YES	2		
			YES	YES	2		
			NO	YES	1		
			YES	YES	1		