MABLE CHAN

ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Routledge Applied English Language Introductions

ROUTLEDGE

English for Business Communication

This textbook provides a comprehensive introduction for students and professionals who are studying English for business or workplace communication and covers both spoken and written English.

Based on up-to-date research in business communication and incorporating an international range of real-world authentic texts, this book deals with the realities of communication in business today. Key features of this book include:

- use of English in social media that reflects recent trends in business communication;
- coverage of the concept of communicative competence;
- analysis of email communication;
- introduction to informal English and English for socialisation as well as goodwill messages, such as thank you or appreciation messages, which are a part of everyday interaction in the workplace;
- examination of persuasive messages and ways to understand such messages;
- an e-resources website that includes authentic examples of different workplace genres and a reference section covering relevant research studies and weblinks for readers to better understand the topics covered in each chapter.

This book goes beyond the traditional coverage of business English to provide a broad and practical textbook for those studying English in a workplace setting.

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For my family:
– My parents, who brought me into this wonderful world.
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Contents

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Chapter 1

Written and spoken communication in the workplace

Questions for reflection

1 What are the spoken and written communication means available in the workplace?
2 Which profession are you in? Is spoken or written communication more dominant in your workplace? Why?
3 What are the difficulties and challenges you face in spoken and written communication?

Needs analysis

Check the following boxes and determine if you have the following workplace communicative needs, and your familiarity with such topics:

Are you familiar with:

1 the most frequently used communication genres in your workplace or in other professions? ☐
2 what makes effective business communication? ☐
3 what plain English is all about? ☐
4 the features of business English? ☐
5 different features of spoken and written discourse? ☐
6 the letter format and layouts? ☐
7 pertinent research findings regarding email (e.g. the text features of email, embedded email)? ☐
8 conventions and tips of writing email messages? ☐
9 the needs of writing negative messages in the workplace? ☐
10 the two different approaches in conveying negative messages? ☐
11 the four considerations for bad news bearers? ☐
12 different goodwill messages available? ☐
13 the content, structure and use of tone of goodwill messages? ☐
14 conveying persuasive messages as in preparing enquiry messages, invitation messages, job application letters and sales correspondence? ☐
15 writing business reports and proposals? ☐
16 ways to make winning presentations? ☐
17 recent findings about small talk in the workplace (e.g. gender, participants involved, topic, functions, situations)? ☐

18 the functions and roles of small talk? ☐
19 how to be an effective leader/participant in meetings? ☐
20 what negotiation is and how to negotiate well? ☐
21 what makes effective interviews? ☐
22 how to be a successful interviewer? ☐

Introduction

Most business English textbooks are organised around traditional business genres of written and spoken communication in the workplace. With the fast development of social media tools and technology, there are so many emerging communication tools that have inevitably changed workplace communication culture. This chapter gives some background information about the latest developments of written and spoken communication in the workplace and highlights the features of each chapter in this book. There are also post-reading activities at the end of the chapter.

For written communication, email has been the primary communication means in the workplace for decades (Dabbish & Kraut, 2006; Fisher, Brush, Gleave, & Smith, 2006; Soucek & Moser, 2010; AlAfnan, 2015; Darics, 2015). Unlike letters and faxes, email allows messages to be sent any time and to anywhere, and it is technically easy to use. While email is still an essential communication means in organisations, there is an emerging trend of alternatives available for communication. These alternatives include instant messaging, wikis, social networking, blogging, micro-blogging, and desktop videoconferencing (Ajjan, Hartshorne, Cao, & Rodriguez, 2014; Kim & Martin, 2013; Johri, 2015; Karis, Wildman, & Mané, 2016; Van der Merwe, 2016; Vuori & Jussila, 2016; Engler & Alpar, 2017). The advantages of using such synchronous means are that they allow knowledge sharing, coordination and collaboration more effectively. The exponential growth in use of social networking in business seems to have also affected the use of spoken communication (Amare & Brammer, 2005; Wang, Pauleen, & Zhang, 2016). Bellman (2000), for example, reported that organisations he examined had reduced their phone usage by 81% by introducing instant messaging software for use by employees.

A number of studies have been conducted to examine the language competency and needs of working professionals from different professions (Evans & Green, 2003; Chew, 2005; Qian, 2005; Evans, 2010; Kassim & Ali, 2010; Spence & Liu, 2013; Chan, 2014; Itani, Järlström, & Piekkari, 2015; Lum, Dowedoff, Bradley, Kerekes, & Valeo, 2015; Gold Veerkamp, Abke, & Diethelm, 2016; Hull, 2016; Knoch, May, Macqueen, Pill, & Storch, 2016; Lin, 2016). The use of spoken communication is found to be particularly important in certain professions such as engineering, banking and nursing. The engineering practice, for example, takes place in an intensely oral culture, and formal presentations are instrumental to practicing engineers. In Kassim and Ali (2010) examining the communication skills required by engineers, engineers rated teleconferencing, social networking and oral presentations as the most important communicative events. Compared to written communication skill, oral communication skill is more important and fluency of the English language is one of the key determinants to succeed in career development. Another study examining the language needs of engineers in Taiwan (Spence & Liu, 2013) found that writing and reading emails, reports and memos as well as meetings, teleconferences and presentations are of high frequency (over 60%) in workplace communication. Findings also showed that engineers' frequency of using English increased with their rank, and oral English skills are particularly important for customer visits and relationship building. Interviewees who were banking employees in Chew's (2005) study expressed interest in language training courses with particular interests in spoken English in the areas of presentation skills and English for social interaction and daily use. In line with Chew's (2005) finding on banking employees' interests in improving spoken English for daily communicative events, partcipants in Chan's (2014) study involving 215 Chinese professionals in Hong Kong also expressed their difficulties with casual conversation and social interaction in English due to a lack of training and practice in this aspect. Another profession in which oral communication has become increasingly essential is health care. As revealed by Lum et al. (2015), while the doctors and nursing staff need to discuss effectively with jargon and technical terms with medical teams, an increasingly diverse patient population nowadays also requires them to communicate engagingly with plain language in order to convince the patients to follow through the medication or treatment process.

Outline of the different chapters

The following outlines the different chapters of this book and highlights features of each chapter:

1. Written and spoken communication in the workplace
2. Features of business communication
3. Email and emerging social media for different communicative purposes
4. Conveying negative and goodwill messages
5. Persuasive messages: Sales correspondence and job applications
6. Persuasive messages: Enquiry and invitation messages
7. Formal business reports/proposals
8. Making oral presentations
9. Socialisation
10. Business meetings and negotiations
11. Employment and appraisal interviews

- In Chapter 2, readers are introduced to the features of workplace English, the development and importance of plain English worldwide, and other features such as use of active voice, avoiding nominalisation, conciseness and simplicity that are significant for effective communication. The concept of communicative competence introduced by Hymes (1966) covering different components making communication effective is also introduced and explained. This includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.
- Research findings are needed when introducing email communication in terms of its structural features (e.g. whether there are openings, subject lines, closing), language features and formality. Embedded email messages evolved to meet the new demands of international communication but ignored in existing business English textbooks are also covered. Emerging social media used for different communicative purposes are also introduced in Chapter 3.
- Chapter 4 covers goodwill messages including thank you or appreciation messages; congratulations messages; and sympathy/condolence messages. They are common workplace texts nowadays but rarely covered in existing textbooks. Negative messages

are as common and were found to be difficult to deal with (e.g. Chan, 2014; Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Michel, Bowen, & Johnston, 2009; Bennett, Martin, Bies, & Brockner, 1995; Brockner, 1988; Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, 2000). Again, research findings are required to help readers well-informed. For example, though existing business English textbooks suggest the use of an indirect approach starting a negative message with a buffer, there are research studies which show that readers are concerned mainly if there are alternatives given instead if their request cannot be addressed, and the buffer does not seem to be very effective or important to them.

- How to write persuasively is an essential skill professionals need to master in order to communicate effectively in the workplace. Chapters 5 and 6 cover different persuasive genres: Sales correspondence and job application messages in Chapter 5; enquiry and invitation messages in Chapter 6. Sales correspondence and job application messages have many features in common and they are put together. Unsolicited enquiry messages are also persuasive in nature; they are not as straightforward and easy as what most business English textbooks depict. Invitation messages are not limited to invitations to parties or exhibitions, and there are persuasive ones which should also be covered.
- Formal business reports and proposals are introduced in Chapter 7. Research findings are incorporated to explain their structural and language features.
- Chapter 8 illustrates what makes a winning presentation through the use of authentic examples and research findings demonstrating how effective presentation skill is essential to business success. There are also tips and advice for teaching and learning of ways to be a charismatic speaker.
- Informal English and English for socialisation (Chapter 9) are seldom covered in business communication courses or textbooks. What is particularly important for second language learners of English for business communication are some practical and effective ways to conduct small talk in the workplace with colleagues informed by relevant research findings.
- There has been much research work conducted on business meetings and negotiations but they are not effectively used to help inform teaching. With the help of updated research findings, Chapter 10 explains what is required to be an effective participant and leader/chair. Practical tips are also offered to help readers negotiate well in different contexts.
- Chapter 11 is again a good mix of theory and practice in discussing how to conduct effective employment and appraisal interviews. The skill acquired in this chapter can definitely be applied in a variety of contexts where we need to elicit views and opinions from others as an interviewer. Information is as useful to one as an interviewee.

Post-reading activities

I. Differences between spoken and written communication
Read the spoken text and develop the written version of the text.

Spoken

So you're thinking of investing in Hong Kong? It's a good time to invest as worldwide corporate taxes are being lowered. . . . Um there is a drawback though . . . lower corporate taxes mean that governments may want to cover costs by increasing revenues and introducing changes in companies' compliance, and accounting standards seem to be on the cards. We've done an interesting survey looking at the relationship between tax authorities and business. We believe you'll find the findings useful. . . .

II. Change the following texts into natural spoken language and then deliver a presentation. You can make up the context of the presentation (i.e. your role, audience, setting). Present the findings and then add some suggestions at the end.

Text 1

The impact of the time of day on staff performance

The topic concerns the impact of the time of day on the performance of office staff. A study was conducted examining staff performance over a complete working day from 9:00am to 5:30pm using CCTV. The results of this study are presented in three time periods: Morning from 8:00am to 11:00am, middle of the day from 11:00am to 2:00pm and afternoon from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. This is followed by some conclusions and recommendations.

Morning (8:00am–11:00am)

This was found to be the most productive part of the day for 60% of the staff; for 30% there was no discernible difference between this time and the afternoons; and for the remaining 10% there was a markedly poorer performance for the first part of the day. Attention span in particular seemed to be longer, and the majority of the staff was less likely to seek distractions.

Text 2

Customer type

This study examines a broad range of customer types in the retail sector. One of the objectives is to determine the consumption behaviour of major customer groups in order to develop corresponding marketing strategies. This report outlines the major customer types, their consumption habits and available marketing tools.

Major types

A detailed analysis of customers buying our products was conducted. The following three types are identified. The first is aged between 45 and 60, normally women who shop during the week and have relatively low consumption power. The second is mainly women aged between 30 and 45; this group was found to shop during lunch hours and during weekends. They were principally interested in product availability; price was less important. The final group is made up of young people in the age range of 15 and 20, who have low consumption power but are extremely fashion conscious.

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Chapter 2

Features of business communication

Questions for reflection

1 On the basis of the first chapter, has your understanding of business English increased?
2 What challenges have you faced in workplace communication?
3 How much do you understand about the features of business English?
4 What is communicative competence? What is required to communicate effectively in the workplace?

Introduction

According to Donna (2000, p. 6), "Business English is to fulfill students' immediate needs for English[. . .]. It relates to students' occupational or professional needs." Through studying business English, one can learn to communicate with people from all over the globe:

> Improving the communication skills necessary for dealing with common business activities, including presentations, participating in meetings and negotiations, telephoning, writing letters and writing reports. A further 'skill' given much attention in business English is socialising (greetings and introductions in the context of business meetings; having small talk and entertaining clients).
>
> (Umera-Okeke, 2008, p. 45)

In addition to writing letters and reports as suggested here, there are many other spoken and written needs for professional communication in the workplace in the 21st century. Studies show that the common spoken needs cover phone conversations, presentations, meetings (including virtual ones), negotiations, interviews, socialising, and written ones cover business correspondence for internal and external communication using instant messaging, email and letters, business plans, business proposals and persuasive communication, and the emerging use of social networking sites (Baltatzis, Ormrod, & Grainger, 2008; Bennett, Owers, Pitt, & Tucker, 2010; Cameron & Webster, 2005; Chan, 2014; Evans, 2010, 2013; Evans & Green, 2003; Keyton et al., 2013; Kupritz & Cowell, 2011; Turner, Qvarfordt, Biehl, Golovchinsky, & Back, 2010; Zhang & Venkatesh, 2013).

Few skills are more powerful and influential in the professional workplace than one's communicative competence which refers to a language user's knowledge of not only if something is formally possible in a language but also the knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate, or done in a particular speech community (Hymes, 1972). In other words, in order to communicate effectively in the workplace for doing business, making decisions, and other purposes, we need to be equipped with (a) linguistic competence; (b) sociolinguistic competence; (c) discourse competence; and (d) strategic competence. *Linguistic competence* is always the focus in schools concerning the knowledge of the language covering the sound system of the language (i.e. phonetics and phonology), the formation of words by means of for example inflection and derivation (i.e. morphology), the rules that govern the combination of words and phrases to structure sentences (i.e. syntax), and the way that meaning is conveyed through language (i.e. semantics). To communicate effectively, it is not just language accuracy that is required but one's understanding of appropriateness, i.e. knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately depending on the context/setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Being appropriate also means knowing what the taboos of the other culture are, what politeness indices are used in each case, what the politically correct term would be for something, and how a specific attitude (authority, friendliness, courtesy, irony) is expressed. To communicate using different spoken and written means, we need *discourse competence* which helps us produce and comprehend oral or written texts. It is the ability to know how to combine language structures into a cohesive and coherent oral or written text of different types. When communication is problematic, we also need to find ways to get the message across or find out what somebody means through for example rephrasing, circumlocution, gestures, requests for repetitions and asking for clarification.

To make effective use of our communicative competence, we need to first understand the purpose and nature of business English: "At its heart, business English is no different to standard English. The purpose of both is the same: clear and efficient communication. Business English, however, has some distinct differences to the English used at home or in general conversations at work" (Watson, 2012, p. 1).

This chapter covers these distinct differences and features of business English to familiarise working professionals and students learning business English with the appropriate style for workplace communication:

1 Don't use a long word where a short word will do.
2 Use familiar and common words.
3 Don't use the passive voice where you could use the active voice.
4 If you can cut a word out, cut it out.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand the principles governing workplace communication and their importance;
- apply these principles for successful communication in the workplace.

Why should business English be concise and simple? Why the above features?

Being able to communicate effectively in the workplace makes you valued and helps you advance in your career. Having a high English language proficiency level does not necessarily make you an effective communicator in the workplace. There are rules and principles governing workplace communication that should be observed. In 1998, President Bill Clinton sent a memorandum to federal agencies requiring them to use plain language which means the use of "common, everyday words, except for necessary technical terms; *you* and other pronouns; the active voice; and short sentences" (Clinton, 1998, p. 1010). Why is this important? According to Clinton, "By using plain language we send a clear message about what the Government is doing, what it requires and what services it offers. Plain language saves the Government and the private sector time, effort and money" (Clinton, 1998, p. 1010). This is known as the plain English campaign, which is popular worldwide in different countries, sectors (government and private) and professions (even in the legal profession). As a result of the plain English initiatives, there are plain English handbooks, guidelines and websites developed for people to follow; there are also workshops organised teaching people how to write focusing on the readers (i.e. reader-centred). Websites, leaflets and documents are rewritten to offer clarity and readability.

The following *before* and *after* versions of a common sentence found in prospectuses demonstrate the essence of plain English:

> **Before**
>
> No person has been authorised to give any information or make any representation other than those contained or incorporated by reference in this joint proxy statement**/ prospectus. And, if given or made, such information or representation must not be relied upon as having been authorised.

Proxy statement: a statement required of a United States firm when soliciting shareholder votes. It is a document containing information that a company is required by the SEC to provide to shareholders so that they can make informed decisions about matters that will be brought up at an annual stockholder meeting.

> **After**
>
> You should rely on the information contained in this document or that we have referred you to. We have not authorised anyone to provide you with information that is different.
>
> (Office of Investor Education & Assistance, 1998, p. 18)

The *before* version of this sentence is difficult to understand. Why? This is mainly because it is not written with the readers in mind. The use of the passive voice, negative *no*, long sentences and complex sentence structures makes it difficult for the readers to understand what they are expected to do. With the use of *you*, shorter sentences and simpler sentence structures in the *after* version, however, the readers know what they should do without difficulty.

Be simple

Be cautious in using specialised technical terms in business communication. If you can use a specialised technical term to convey meaning in a precise way, please do. If not, use common and simple words readers are familiar with: "Precision is not sacrificed when the drafter uses technical words where necessary and avoids jargon that serves no substantive purpose" (Garner, 2011, p. 679). Although you cannot be sure exactly what words are more/less familiar to the receiver, avoid long or difficult words that have simpler synonyms. In workplace communication, use short and simple words. The purpose is to facilitate understanding and communication but not sound too "sophisticated." See Table 2.1.

Being simple also means avoiding business jargon that is old-fashioned and clumsy. Table 2.2 shows a list of business jargon that should be avoided; the jargon is highlighted in bold type and the corresponding counterparts italicised. More examples are also shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.1 Comparison of less/more familiar words

Less familiar words	*Simpler synonyms*
ascertain	learn/find out
abundant	enough/plenty
acquaint with	find out/read
aggregate	total
alleviate	reduce
anticipate	expect
attributable to	due to/because of
belated	late
breach	break
bestow	give/award
cease	finish/stop
circumvent	avoid
concur	agree
contemplate	think about
cognizant of	be aware of
deem	regard
depict	show
dispatch	send
discharge	carry out
disclose	tell
discrete	separate
disseminate	spread
elucidate	explain
encompass	include
endeavour	try
enumerate	list
evince	show/prove
erroneous	wrong
expeditiously	as soon as possible/quickly
fabricate	make/make up
forthwith	now/at once
furnish	give
henceforth	from now on
hereinafter	after this
hereunder	below
hitherto	until now
in lieu of	instead of
jeopardise	risk/threaten
leverage	take advantage of
magnitude	size
mislay	lose
negligible	very small
notwithstanding	even if/despite
optimum	best/ideal
per annum	yearly/per year
peruse	read carefully
prescribe	set
prior to	before
procure	obtain/arrange
profusion of	plenty, too many
promptly	quick/at once

Less familiar words	*Simpler synonyms*
pursuant to	under/in line with
remuneration	wages/salary
render	give/send
scrutinise	read carefully/check
solely	only
statutory	legal
stipulate	require
substantial	large/a lot of
thereafter	then/afterwards
thereby	because of that
utilise	use
undernoted	the following
undersigned	I/we
virtually	almost
whatsoever	whatever
whereas	but

Table 2.2 Using normal English to present business jargon

Business jargon	*Normal English*
a) **Enclosed herewith** please find the remittance **with respect to the said** contract.	i) *I enclose* our payment *relating to* this contract.
b) **Due to the fact** that your agreement has lapsed, we **are unable to** entertain your request.	ii) *As* your agreement has lapsed, *we cannot* entertain your request/act as you wish.
c) **It has come to our attention that** Mr. Hui is not acting **in accordance with** our human resources policies.	iii) *Please note that* Mr Hui is not acting *according to* our human resources policies.
d) **We should be obliged** if you could reply to Mr. Hui for the complaint concerning a staff member in your department.	iv) *Please* contact Mr. Hui for the complaint concerning/about a staff member in your department.
e) **Kindly advise** me **at your earliest convenience** as to the openings available in your department.	v) *Please let me know as soon as possible* if there are openings available in your department.
f) We are **in receipt of** your letter, and **as per** your instructions, we **shall** forward the **requisite** information **at an early date.**	vi) *We have received* your letter/*Thank you for* your letter, and we will *send* you the *necessary* information as required *soon*.
g) **Assuring you of our best attention at all times, and awaiting the favour of your early response . . .**	vii) *We look forward to hearing from you soon*.
h) We **beg to** inform you that we are **herewith** placing our order of the latest model of the TV set (K1826).	viii) *We are writing to* place our order of the latest model of the TV set (K1826).

Table 2.3 More examples of old-fashioned business jargon

Examples of business jargon	*Suggested version*
acknowledge receipt of	Thank you for . . .
affix your signature	sign
are in agreement	agree
as soon as	when
at all times	often
at this writing	now
by means of	by
during the period of	when
for the purpose of	for/to
in order that	to
in the event of	if
Please be advised	Please note that
prior to	before
under separate cover	separately
with respect to	about/on/with
with regards to	about

Be concise

In the popular book *The Elements of Style*, Strunk (2018, p. 21) suggested that "vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words . . . for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts." Conciseness does not necessarily mean short. It means using the least number of words to convey the same meaning. Read the examples in Table 2.4, and also examples of tautology in Table 2.5. Tautology refers to a phrase or expression in which the same thing is said twice in different words. The right column of the table shows the words that should be kept.

Use the active voice with strong verbs

Strong verbs liven up and tighten sentences. If you highlight all the verbs in your writing, you may be shocked by the number of weak verbs you use (e.g. forms of *to be* or *to have* that you will find). Weak verbs are always associated with two more grammatical undesirables (passive voice and hidden verbs), making sentences unnecessarily long and their meaning unclear.

Verbs provide the momentum of writing and proper verb choice is very important in making your writing clear. A sentence is in the active voice when the subject does the acting instead of being the recipient of the acting. We use direct action verbs, and there is a clearly defined actor and action. In using the passive voice, we use *to be* verb forms, emphasising what was found, not who did the finding. It can be ineffective and wordy in the hands of amateurs.

Table 2.4 Why use two words when one will do?

Before	*After*
1. We **arrived at the conclusion** that . . .	We **concluded** that
2. We will contact you at **a later date.**	We will contact you **later**
3. We are very busy **at the present time**.	We are very busy **now**
4. I hope you **avail yourself of** our service.	I hope you will **use/employ** our service
5. I am **of the opinion that** . . .	I **think** . . .
6. I am writing to you **in the matter of** . . .	I am writing to you **about/ concerning** . . .
7. We are **in a position to** offer you . . .	We **can** offer you . . .
8. **In the course of** the meeting . . .	**During** the meeting . . .
9. In order to **inform you of the reason**	In order to **explain** . . .
10. We will **send an answer** . . .	We will **reply** . . .
11. **With the exception of** Dr Chan,	**Except** Dr Chan,
12. **owing/due to the fact** that . . .	**because** . . .
13. **in spite of the fact that**	**though/although**
14. **call your attention to the fact that** . . .	**remind you/notify** you
15. **the fact that** he had not won . . .	**His failure** . . .
16. I was **unaware of the fact that** . . .	I was **unaware that** . . . /I did not . . .
17. **under circumstances in which** . . .	**when/if** . . .
18. **there is a necessity for** . . .	**need/must/have to**
19. **The job was unattractive in terms of the working environment.**	**The working environment made the job unattractive**

Table 2.5 Examples of tautology

Tautology	*Be concise*
1. Let's **cooperate together** on this.	cooperate
2. The **end result** of the forum was . . .	result
3. The dress is **white in colour.**	white
4. **Past experience** tells us that . . .	Experience
5. Please **sign your name** here.	sign
6. Here is a **free gift** for you.	gift
7. Please **refer back** to the leaflet provided.	refer
8. How about **meeting together** this Sunday?	meeting
9. The companies will **merge together.**	merge
10. Please don't **repeat** the question **again**.	repeat
11. The lion is **large in size.**	large
12. This book is **more preferable.**	preferable
13. **Past history** demonstrates that . . .	History
14. I have been thinking about my **future plans.**	plans
15. I have no idea of how to deal with this **difficult problem**.	problem
16. No **advance warning** will be given.	warning
17. These are the **true facts** we need instead.	facts
18. **Mutual cooperation** is required.	Cooperation
19. Please accept my **sincere thanks** to you.	thanks

Read the following example:

The house was destroyed by fire.

1 Pick a different verb – one that can make the subject (house) do something:

"The house *went* up in smoke." Or "The house *burned* to the ground."
Authentic headline in newspaper: "House where XXX was killed burned down."

2 Pick a different subject *and* verb.

"*Fire* destroyed the house."

Try to use *is* sparingly. Only use *is* if a sentence defines or equates (e.g. Mable's teacher is a Christian; Business English is . . ./Standard deviation is . . .). Use a strong verb in sentences that do not present a definition or equality. Read the following example:

<u>Original</u>: "Generally, a frequency *is used* not only *to* examine detailed information on nominal (category), but *also to* describe the results." (20 words)
<u>Rewritten</u>: "Generally, a frequency *examines* detailed information on nominal (category), and *describes* the results." (13 words, more direct and clearer)

The advantages of the active voice are as follows:

- More forceful
- Greater clarity (The reader knows immediately who is doing what.)
- Sharper imagery

Use the passive voice when

- the actor is unknown or unimportant.

  e.g. The knife was found beside the body.

- you want to focus on the receiver of the action more than on the actor.

  e.g. Thirty participants were required to fill in the questionnaire. Focus group discussions were used. . . .

- you want to do so for sentence variety.

Good writers use both voices. Use the active voice whenever possible. You need to know when to use one voice or the other, and when to use them together.

Avoid nominalisation

Nominalisation is "a noun phrase that has a systematic correspondence with a clausal predication which includes a head noun morphologically related to a corresponding verb" (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 2010, p. 1288). As a type of abstract noun, it refers to a process, technique or emotion acting like a passive verb without a subject. See the following examples:

Verb	**Nominalisation**
complete	completion
introduce	introduction
provide	provision
fail	failure
arrange	arrangement
investigate	investigation

While nominalisation is commonly used in scientific writing in indicating easily the relationship between nouns, it is not recommended in workplace communication as it makes it difficult for people to process and understand sentences as a result of so many nouns being put together. Table 2.6 shows examples of nominalisation and ways to turn the nouns into verbs to facilitate understanding.

Table 2.6 Removing nominalisation

	Nominalisation	*Noun → main verb*
1	We made an application.	We applied.
2	We made a determination.	We determined.
3	We will make a distribution.	We will distribute . . .
4	We will provide appropriate information to shareholders concerning . . .	We will inform shareholders . . .
5	We will have no stock ownership of the company.	We will not own the stock of the company.
6	There is the possibility of prior government approval of these applications.	The government may approve these applications in advance.
7	The refusal of . . .	If you refuse . . .
8	The failure to . . .	If you fail to . . .
9	Prior to the completion of . . .	Before you complete . . .
10	Consideration of this matter should include . . .	We need to include . . . when considering . . .
11	An application may be submitted by email . . .	Please submit your application by email . . .
12	Arthur was in violation of the law.	Arthur violated . . .
13	The booklet provides an illustration of the district.	The booklet illustrates . . .
14	A & B have undertaken the representation of the defendant.	have represented . . .
15	A will furnish an indemnification to B.	will indemnify . . .
16	. . . make accommodation for	accommodate for . . .
17	. . . take into consideration	consider . . .
18	. . . provide a description of	describe . . .
19	. . . conduct an examination of	examines . . .
20	. . . make provision for	provides for . . .
21	. . . submit an application	applies . . .

Be positive

Positive sentences are easier to understand than negative sentences. Read the following examples:

1 Persons other than children may not use these facilities.

   Only children can use these facilities.

2 Don't do any more than is necessary.

   Do only what is necessary.

3 The course will not be available unless approved by our department head.

   This course will be available when approved by our department head.

4 If you don't settle the payment, we won't be able to proceed with the sale of your property.

   Please send your payment so that we can proceed with the sale of your property.

5 We will not arrange a refund unless you provide the official receipt.

   We will arrange a refund if you provide the official receipt.

Table 2.7 shows more examples.

In business writing, the tone is very important. Try to be as polite as possible and the tone should be positive (instead of neutral or negative). The following are the types of sentences we need to avoid in business writing. The corresponding sentences written in a positive tone are also provided.

1 We are sorry to inform you that you are not qualified because of your unsatisfactory IELTS overall score. We could not offer you a place in this programme at this moment.

   We are sorry that we could not offer you a place because your IELTS score does not meet our minimum requirement. Thank you for your interest in our programme.

2 We regret that we cannot approve your application at the present time because: THIS CARD PROGRAM IS NOT DESIGNED FOR YOUR PARTICULAR STATUS.

   We cannot approve your application because (give a specific reason).

3 It is none of our business if you do not register for the 3-year guarantee online.

   Customers are expected to register for the 3-year guarantee online.

4 We do not have time to arrange installation in person. Our staff are busy with larger accounts.

   We are happy to arrange installation for you. Please let us know your availability.

5 You did not tell us in advance that the model is not made in Japan.

   If we had known in advance that the model is made in . . . , we would have . . .

Table 2.7 Writing in the positive

Negative compound phrase	*Be positive*
Not accept	decline; refuse
Not unlike	alike
Does not have	lacks
Not many	few
Not often	rarely
Not the same	different
Not . . . unless	when
Not . . . except	if
Not . . . until	only if

Other ways to keep effective short and simple sentences

One reason why sentences are difficult to understand is that the subject, verb and object are not put together. To keep sentences effective, we need to keep the subject, verb, and object close together.

e.g. (1)

Before

Holders of the Class A and Class B-I certificates *will be entitled to receive* on each payment date, to the extent monies are available (but not more than the Class A Certificate Balance or Class B-I Certificate Balance then outstanding), *a distribution*.

After

Class A and Class B-I certificate holders will receive a distribution on each payment date if cash is available on those dates for their class.

e.g. (2)

Before

The following description of the particular terms of the Notes offered hereby (referred to in the accompanying Prospectus as the "Debt Securities") *supplements, and* to the extent inconsistent therewith *replaces, the description* of the general terms and provisions of the Debt Securities set forth *in the Prospectus*, to which description reference is hereby made.

After

> This document describes the terms of these notes in greater detail than our prospectus, and may provide information that differs from our prospectus. If the information does differ from our prospectus, please rely on the information in this document.
>
> (Office of Investor Education & Assistance, 1998, p. 32)

Another way to make communication effective is to use parallelism. According to the Harbrace College Handbook (Hodges, Horner, Webb, & Miller, 1994, p. 253), “parallelism reinforces grammatically equal elements, contributes to ease in reading, and provides clarity and rhythm.” This concerns using elements in sentences that are grammatically similar or identical in structure, sound or meaning to facilitate understanding. Read the following examples:

1 Our company is recruiting people with decision-making capabilities who can think logically, and they should also have the ability to analyse situations quickly.

Parallelism: Our company is recruiting people who can think logically, analyse situations quickly and make decisions.

In this version, the attributes required are presented using verb phrases (*can think/can analyse/can make*) and it is much easier for the readers to identify what the people can do.

2 One must read this textbook if you want to learn English writing.

Parallelism: You must read this textbook if you want to learn English writing.

In this version, *you* is used in both parts to facilitate understanding.

3 The features that favour this model include more durability, better noise reduction, and there are more functions.

Parallelism: The features that favour this model include more durability, better noise reduction and more functions.

In this version, noun phrases are consistently used (*more durability/better noise reduction/more functions*) for readers to understand clearly the advantages of this model.

Post-reading activities

I. Read the following sentences and remove unnecessary words.

1. The two centres will merge together next month.

___

2. Please refer back to my investigation report on the incident.

___

3. The management would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our marketing team on the HKMA award.

___

4. I am writing to tell you that your account shows a balance of $5888.50.

___

5. The Board came to the decision to approve the proposal by a majority of 9 to 3.

___

II. Read the following sentences and rewrite them to make them more concise and the meaning clearer.

1. Let me repeat again, at this moment in time, it is the customary practice of this company to place an emphasis on team spirit.

2. I am afraid I am not in a position to grant your request unless you inform me of the reason why you need the information.

3. If there is anything you require explanation or further particulars, we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone.

4. It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the University by way of the envelope provided.

III. Use parallelism to rewrite the following sentences.

1. The new online system has improved response time, the number of mistakes has been reduced and there seem to be fewer complaints as a result.

2. The benefits of the new procedures are:
   - they will save time by removing unnecessary administration;
   - participants will get a faster response to their enquiries;
   - more effective records of communication with clients;
   - ensuring greater transparency in transactions.

IV. Rewrite the following two email messages to demonstrate your understanding of the features of business/workplace communication.

(a)

To : All Full-Time Staff
From : Senior Manager (CS)
Date : 21 May 2017

2017/2018 Campus Carparking Permit for Full-time Staff

I would like to inform you that the validity of 2016/2017 campus carparking permits **(Class A Permit)** is going to expire at the end of August 2017 and renewal of new carparking permit will be open for application from 9:00am on **Tuesday, 5 June 2017.**

Please note that, as in previous years, application by full-time staff members including those of College of Lifelong Education Ltd. (CLE) is required to be made on-line via accessing the website https://www50.happyu.edu.hk/parking/. Application through submission of hard copy of the application form will normally not be accepted, unless there is strong justification for doing so.

For verification purposes, **<u>new applicant</u>** is requested to <u>scan</u> the following documents and upload the soft copies by logging <u>into his/her account</u> via this online application system:

a. Copy of the Hong Kong Vehicle Registration Document (both sides) and marriage certificate if the vehicle is registered with the Government Transport Department in spouse's name;
b. Copy of the Insurance Policy for the vehicle;
c. Copy of the applicant's driving licence; and
d. Copy of staff ID card.

Your full cooperation is much appreciated as failure to submit all these documents on time may cause delay in processing your application.

For **<u>renewal application</u>**, please update any previously provided information and then provide us of the relevant supporting documents by similarly scanning and uploading it via the online application system for verification at your earliest convenience.

Please note that application for Class A Permit, as in previous years, will be processed primarily on a **<u>first-come, first-served basis</u>** until the quota is full and that it is your responsibility to ensure all the information provided is true and correct as you have declared in your online application. I suggest you also take a look of the Campus Traffic and Parking Regulations which is available on our website prior to making the application.

Please also note that an amount of $2,000 per annum or $1,000 for half a year will be deducted from the salary payment of successful applicant in August 2017 Payroll.

However, this auto-deduction facility is not available at the moment for staff members of CLE and, therefore, they are requested to pay by sending cheques payable to "The Happy University" to Campus Facilities Office, or sign an Authorisation Form for Deduction of Salary for CarParking Permit and send it to Campus Facilities Office after making their application on-line.

The form CFO CS20 can be downloaded from our website at www.happyu.edu.hk/forms.htm or can be obtained from Campus Facilities Office (room AB001) or Campus Security Control Centre (room B112).

Special Permit for access via the second vehicular entrance at Happy Road during specified period is also available for application by using the same payment method at the same time. Associated charge is $500 per annum or $250 for half a year. Details are given in Campus Traffic and Parking Regulations.

Please call XXX or XXX of our Office at telephone no. XXX and XXX, respectively, if you have any queries.

XXX
Senior Manager
Campus Facilities Office

Adapted from an email message sent to staff members of a local university in Hong Kong

(b)

From: Staff Welfare Office
To: All HappyU Staff

Dear Colleagues,

I write to inform you that on 23 May 2016 (Wednesday), staff of The Community Recycling Coop will come to HappyU Campus to collect your used items including clothing, shoes, bags, electrical appliances, housewares, bedding, decoration, stationery, books (except textbooks), non-pirated VCD, DVD, CD, etc. The used items collected will then be sold to low-income families in Sham Shui Po at very low prices.

Please support this very meaningful activity. Apart from helping the needy, your participation will also help protecting the environment. For more information about The Community Recycling Coop, please visit their website www.crc.org.hk.

The venue to collect such used items is the podium level outside the Convenience Shop & the HSBC Bank. Please bring your used items between 12:00–18:00.

Thank you very much.
Happy University Staff Association

Adapted from an email message from the Staff Association of a local university to staff members

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Chapter 3

Email and emerging social media for different communicative purposes

Questions for reflection

1 Do you communicate via letters in your daily life or in the workplace? What communicative purposes do you intend to achieve by using letters? How often do you use letters?
2 How about email communication? What do you use email for?
3 What are the different communicative purposes email messages serve in your workplace?
4 Are you familiar with the features and format of email?
5 Think about your use of email in the workplace. Do you include subject lines? Do you start with openings? How about closings? Do you use standard English? Is there any difference between email messages compiled in the workplace and those for personal use?
6 What are the emerging social media adopted in your workplace? How are they compared with email?

Introduction

For close to 30 years, email has replaced letters and become the most dominant written means of communication. A recent study (Mathew Greenwald & Associates, 2014) was conducted to examine the generational communication differences around the globe. The two age groups involved were 20–26 and 50–59. Overall, both have a similar high usage level (64% and 68%, respectively) of email. Even with a number of emerging communication means in this Social Age, email remains the most popular choice of communication channel.

Email has attained its present position in the business world obviously because of a number of reasons; it is by far the most economical way of sending messages. Unlike telephone conversations or other face-to-face communication means depending on both parties' availability to communicate, there is no such need for email communication to take place (Beer, 2004; Anderson, 2009; Turner, Qvarfordt, Biehl, Golovchinsky, & Back, 2010; Dürscheid & Frehner, 2013; Beer, 2017). We can also check email and reply to it at our own discretion. Compared with letters which are more formal, email communication seems to foster creativity, and the use of embedded email (Gimenez, 2005, 2006; Giltrow, 2013; Gruber, 2013) has also made communication with different number of people around the globe possible, making idea exchange in organisations more effective and efficient (Munter, 2014; Cockburn, 2006; Derks & Bakker, 2010).

Though email is still predominantly used for different business (e.g. general communication [81%]; sharing information [72%]; customer service [36%]) and social use (e.g. keeping in touch [91%]; sharing information [58%]; personal business [39%]) (Tassabehji & Vakola, 2005), other richer means of communication (e.g. face-to-face at Whiteboard; face-to-face conversations; video conversations; phone conversations) involving facial expressions and gestures seem to be more welcome (Cockburn, 2006).

Randstad U.S., a global human resources service company, produced a survey that investigated the preferences of 1,000 members of Generation Z, aged 16 to 20, and Generation Y, aged 21 to 32, on their expectations of their future employers from 10 different countries including the United States, Brazil, Canada and the United Kingdom. The survey revealed that 51% of respondents from Generation Z claimed that they would prefer in-person communication, with 16% preferring email, and only 11% preferring instant messaging (Schawbel, 2014).

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- be aware of the latest findings concerning the features and format of email messages;
- identify the use of email and emerging social media for different communicative purposes;
- produce effective email messages.

Writing effective email messages

The purpose of business correspondence varies. As reported in Evans (2014), we communicate in the workplace for a variety of reasons, of which informing, reporting and requesting are the dominant communicative purposes. No matter what the purpose is, clear communication with the readers is of top priority. To ensure readability, there are a number of principles to follow.

Ensure readability

We need to write with readers in mind, which is particularly important when communicating via email for effective and efficient communication. To be reader-centred, the following are some principles to be observed:

1. Use a descriptive subject line

Like letter writing, a subject line indicating the key message to be delivered is essential. In letter writing, the subject line is put after the salutation (e.g. *Dear Dr Chan*); in email messages, we just need to enter the subject line in the box provided (i.e. after the recipient field and before the main message). Early studies examining both commercial and academic email messages compiled by native English speakers (e.g. Gains, 1999) reported that the subject lines in commercial emails are mainly used to seek attention or make a personal statement while those in academic emails tend to be more creative. Please see the following examples:

Commercial email

Subject: LBIS USEFUL INFO? (inform, initiate)
SS13: Subject: Young Disabled on Holiday (request, initiate)
SS27: Subject: Below Min Premium (request, respond)
SS44: Subject: Men's Toilet on 2nd Floor (direct, initiate)

Academic email

GJ1: Subject: COFFEEEEEEEEEEEEEE! (inform, initiate)
GJ10: Subject: bloody brilliant (inform, respond)
GF2: Subject: poor excuses (request, respond)

While using a subject line indicating clearly the subject and purpose of the email is important, there are also studies conducted suggesting that leaving the subject line blank may induce a sense of curiosity in recipients that might improve email response and willingness to say *yes* in invitation/request messages according to the information gap theory (Sappleton & Lourenço, 2016). In conveying bad news or negative messages when we want to hold the bad news until after clear explanation is given, the purpose of the subject line may not be subject-related and it is used to establish goodwill instead. After all, we need to be both decisive and flexible in workplace communication considering what is best in achieving our communicative purposes.

2. Be concise

Conciseness is important in business communication though there is no consensus on the length of an email and the number of paragraphs it should have. According to Evans (2014) examining the communicative needs in the Hong Kong workplace, interviewees expressed what they think are the main features of email:

> "Nowadays people like to communicate in short messages. They check the messages and reply immediately. You have to keep your message short, ideally in one line."
>
> (Elizabeth, corporate communications manager; p. 113)

> "The most important thing is to be simple. They want it in point form, nothing more."
>
> (Victor, business consultant; p. 113)

> "We use very simple and short sentences."
>
> (Chris, hotel manager; p. 112)

> "We get to the point. We don't use fancy words."
>
> (Clara, quality analyst; p. 112)

3. Use embedded email wisely

Since the early 2000s, with more proficient users of email and to meet the increasing demands in international business communication, there has been a growing tendency to use embedded email messages (Gimenez, 2005, 2006; Giltrow, 2013; Gruber, 2013; Warren, 2016). According to Gimenez (2005, pp. 235–236), they are messages which are "made up of an initial message which starts the communication event, a series of internal, subordinated messages which depend on the first message to make sense, and a final message which brings the communication event to an end." As shown in Figure 3.1, the first message seen is the last one written – called a chain terminator. The last message seen is the first one written – called a chain initiator.

Embedded email messages are evolved to meet the new demands of the business community. There is a move towards a higher degree of accountability and the *fw* (forward) and *cc* (carbon copy) facilities enable us to involve others easily in the decision-making process. This also enhances the storing and retrieving email as records of an organisation's communication events in a highly flexible manner, and offers a further dimension to users' creative efforts for new textual spacing (e.g. including links to webpages in the chain terminator to provide details).

Chain terminator (last message to be written)	
	From: egmable@. . . . . hk Send: 8 August 2019 08:28 To: lisa@ . . . uk Subject: RE: Book Publication Text. . . . . ---- Original Message ----
Embedded 2	
	From: lisa@. . . . . uk Send: 7 August 2019 16:20 To: egmable@. . . . . hk Cc: henry@. . . . . uk Subject: RE: Book Publication Text. . . . . ---- Original Message ----
Embedded 1	
	From: egmable@. . . . . hk Send: 6 August 2019 12:15 To: lisa@. . . . . uk Cc: henry @ . . . uk Subject: RE: Book Publication Text. . . . . ---- Original Message ----
Chain initiator (first message to be written)	
	From: lisa@. . . . . uk Send: 5 August 2019 09:30 To: egmable@. . . . . hk Cc: henry@. . . . . uk Subject: Book Publication Text. . . . .

Figure 3.1 Embeddedness in chain emails

4. Use to/cc/bcc field appropriately

Be clear about who you want to send the email to, and how to use the different fields wisely: to/cc/bcc. Send the email to the primary recipient using the *to* field. Unlike letter writing, carbon copy (*cc*) is not simply used to send the message to another recipient. In email, *cc* "not only allows users to copy messages to all participants in the communication event but also to bring other people involved in the communication event to act as witnesses" (Gimenez, 2006, p. 238), which means that all parties involved should be accountable for the decisions made.

Initially, blind carbon copy, or *bcc*, was used to send a copy of a business letter to individuals or interested parties while hiding their names from other recipients appearing on the letter. The email recipients listed in *to* or *cc* text boxes are unaware that someone else specified in the *bcc* text box is receiving the letter (Vermaat, Sebok, Freund, Campbell, & Frydenberg, 2015). Since the emergence of email, the use of *bcc* is a courtesy that keeps the email addresses of individuals who do not know each other confidential. The main purpose for using a *bcc* designation is to protect the identity or privacy of a recipient. Keefer (n.d.) suggested that it is practical to keep the privacy of recipients in several situations:

- When organisations send bulk email, for example to a fundraising mailing list.
- When other people need to know about a certain situation, but you believe that the primary recipient of the letter might not feel comfortable/be happy about you sharing the information with others.
- When sending email to someone more senior. Using *bcc* allows the key person-in-charge to understand a situation without being unsettling to the primary recipient of the message.

In the case of sending a blind copy to important persons in the organisation, Skovholt and Svennevig (2006) suggested it may also serve to make one's professional achievements visible to senior positions and thus have important relational implications. Other pragmatic functions of blind-copying in superordinate recipients can serve to back up reasoning and build up alliances in emerging conflicts. Additionally, it may be used to back up reminders and to appeal for support, feedback and acceptance.

5. Note the formality of email

The typical feature of email composition is the use of spoken discourse elements (see Lenassi, 2015) often present in salutations and closings. Based on a recent study analysing an authentic corpus of 90 emails written by business managers of different chemical companies established in 14 different countries around the world, including native and non-native speakers of English who use the language as a lingua franca for commercial and distribution purposes, it was found that email is similar to letter correspondence where openings and closings are both found (Sánchez, 2015), but the formality may vary.

Like in letters, email messages also start with a salutation but there are a variety of both formal and informal ways to do so. In 93% of the email messages collected in the study, a salutation is found, and the most common way to open an email is *Dear* + first name (49%), followed by *Hi* + first name (32%) and *Dear* + first name + last name (8%). Studies in the literature seem to argue that this is to "imply an interpersonal closeness among the writers of the present emails" (Sánchez, 2015, p. 312).

Regarding closings, a list of unconventional phrases is found, which is "clear evidence of the linguistic variation of the moves towards more relaxed or less conventional English in business emails" (Sánchez, 2015, p. 317). The most dominant ways to close are using *regards* (30%), followed by *best regards* (23%), *thanks and regards* (10%), and also no closing (9%).

Unlike letters which are more formal, the level of in/formality in email messages "depends on the situational context of the communicative process and on the function or objectives of the interaction" (Coveri, Benucci, & Diadori, 1999, pp. 146–147). The style register can be very formal in commercial email messages when dealing with external clients, but can be very informal and personal in academic email. The following examples show how writers incorporated some of the conversational features in their written email messages (Gains, 1999, pp. 93–94).

a. Dialogic devices

- I didn't write the code myself *you see*, . . .
- *Well*, is it a good time to catch you, sir?
- Stop it! I hear *you say*.
- *So*, on to more . . . *Yes*, the PhD. *Well*, if I'm going to . . .

b. Use of rhetorical questions

- What do you think? Any mileage in any of this? Has it been done to death? Would no one be interested?
- Now, where did I lose that expenses form?!

c. Use of *how are you*, which is identified as an opening sequence in telephone conversations

- Hi there, how are you?
- [at end] You're feeling very cheerful (How are you?)
- Dear [****], how are you today?

d. Linguistic features of telephone discourse and answer machine talk

- [final paragraph] Well that's all for now – I think.
- [at end] Cheerio for now.
- Hi, here's the email address for [****]. All the best. B.M.

e. Use of spoken language (e.g. informal words/slang)

- I need a little *bio-blurb* about you.
- *Ta* for the match report – what a *cock up*.
- . . . whatever you can get but not those *crappy sort* they sell in Garages. Hope this is *no hassle* . . .
- Main thing is *no sweat* man!
- Hello *chuckie* – just *dashing* for a lecture.
- Having *a whale of a time* at the LSE.

f. The use of *and* showing unplanned talk and spontaneous discourse

- *And* Leeds won last night – *and* they're on the TV on Sunday *and* for the first time for ages I have no work to do *and* can go to the pub at lunchtime.

6. Note intertextuality of email and its language

The notions of intertextuality and coherence are related as the writer or speaker has to handle its intertextuality properly. As pointed out by Candlin and Maley (1997, p. 203), one of the key components of discourse coherence is that a specific text is derived from a "plurality of sources." In other words, a text lacks coherence if it does not position itself relative to other texts within the discourse flow.

The following shows an example email depicting intertextuality and the language features. In the message, intertextuality related to prior texts is underlined and intertextuality related to predicted texts shown in italics.

Example 1: Email depicting intertextuality (internal email) (prior texts underlined, *predicted texts in italics*).

From: CXXXX
Sent: 17 June 2008 09:26
To: SXXXX
Subject: RE: XXX Risk Entity Status – CCRA
SXXXX,
As confirmed with AXXXX, our previous suggested solution *will be used to get approved risk entity from ACA:*
We rely on CA associated Risk entity table and CA life cycle state to determine whether there is on-going approval for concerned Risk entity.
There should be no impact to conversion as all converted data from XXXX are all "APPROVED". In XXXX current design, it rely on the XXXX (Life cycle state) of the RE and the program do the following checking:
If IC_XXXX_T.XXXX of the today batch 1-4 "Approved", it means that the latest approved entry for that particular risk entity is in IC_REX_T. XXXX program can retrieve risk entity information from IC_REX_T
If IC_XXXX_T.XXXX <> "Approved". XXXX program should retrieve risk entity information from credit datamart for the latest approved record. (latest record with IC_XXXX_T.XXXX 1-4 "Approved").
Hence, changes need to make is to check the CA life cycle state for those RE exist in CA associated RE table instead of IC_XXXX_T.XXXX.
Regards,
CXXXX

(Warren, 2016, p. 30)

For an analysis of business email messages written by two professionals working in a bank (Warren, 2016), a total of 32 separate discourse flows (271 emails, 762 words) were collected from an IT manager and 25 (133 emails, 5978 words) from a merchandiser during a 5-day data collection period. One common lexical word found is *please*, often used in phrases such as *please confirm*, *please advise*, *please check*, *please let me/them/us know*, *please help*, *please note*. Such a phraseological pattern helps facilitate the coherence of the discourse and invoke a prior text as in *please find* and *please see*.

As is another common word used to introduce prior discourses as in *as discussed* and *as spoken*. It is also used in the structure of *as per your request* and *as per our conversation. Based on* is also a common phrasal verb used for the same function (e.g. based on XXX's email). Possessive determiners are another potential signal of intertextuality. In the corpus there are 257 possessive determiners, and 193 (75%) of them signal intertextuality. The most common pattern is for the possessive determiner to be co-selected with a noun which denotes the prior or predicted text. Adverbs and temporal expressions (e.g. *previously*; *today*; *tomorrow*; *yesterday*; *next*; *last*; *later*; *soon/soonest*) are used to denote the sequencing of texts in a discourse flow, also signal intertextuality in the emails examined. Indirect requests in the form of interrogatives are a signal of intertextuality because they require a response from the recipient and function to predict future texts. The most common phrases used in the corpus are *can you* (16), *could you* (18), *do you* (14), and *would you* (19).

There are different ways for email writers to signal intertextuality, and thus contribute to the coherence of the email messages.

7. Use reminders tactfully

Make sure that email reminders (a) are sent using a friendly and polite tone:

> e.g. Thanks again for your interest in contributing a chapter to our edited book. I am writing to ask if you need more time on the abstract/if you can send me the abstract in a day or two. Thanks again.

(b) In your reminder, include the original email so that necessary background information or details can be referred to by both parties; (c) depending on the situation, explanation of why you need an urgent reply may also be needed: . . . After collecting all the abstracts, the book proposal can then be sent to the publisher again to proceed . . . (in a sense this is about the importance of having all the abstracts ready for the publisher to proceed and a way to motivate the contributing author to act as soon as he/she can as it is his/her desire to get the chapter published as soon as possible); (d) include a new deadline for the recipient to reply/act (e.g. in a day or two); (e) end with a *thank you* again.

Common errors in email writing made by second language learners

The following gives some examples of the wrong use of lexical words commonly found in email made by second language learners.

1. Please *and* kindly

In making requests in email, *please* and *kindly* are always used together by second language learners of English as in the following:

> *Please kindly* be reminded that you need the key card to open the door.

This is found on a hotel room door reminding the guests to use the key card to open the door.

People always think that adding *kindly* before *please* means more polite, which is why *please kindly* is so common in making requests. In fact, *please* and *kindly* should not be used together. In the preceding example, simply using *please* is good enough (i.e. *Please* use the key card to open the door).

Kindly also has a similar meaning as *please*, but it is used to show that one is annoyed or discontented, as shown in the following examples:

> *Kindly* shut up/*Kindly* turn down the music.

2. *Perusal*

When attaching documents in email, the following sentence is also common:

> The attached is for your *perusal*.

Perusal is a noun and the verb is *peruse*. This is a formal expression meaning *reading carefully*. Unfortunately, people use it to mean skimming or scanning, as shown in the following wrong examples:

> You should *peruse* the information quickly and submit a report to me.
> The CV should be prepared in a way that can help readers *peruse* relevant information easily and quickly.

In the preceding two examples, *peruse* should not be used. We need *skim* for the first one and *scan* for the second one:

> You should *skim* the information quickly and submit a report to me.
> The CV should be prepared in a way that can help readers *scan* relevant information easily and quickly.

3. First-come-first-serve *vs* first-come-first-served

The following are also common sentences in email:

> Offers are made on a *first-come-first-serve* basis.
> Applications are processed on a *first-come-first-serve* basis.

First-come-first-served means that *if you come first, you will be served first* or *those who come first are served first*. The past participle *served* should be used in the passive construction instead:

> Offers are made on a *first-come-first-served* basis.
> Applications are processed on a *first-come-first-served* basis.

4. Is open *or* is opened?

How to tell customers in email messages the opening and closing time of a shop? Is the first example or second example correct?

> The shop is *opened* from 9:00am to 9:00pm from Monday to Saturday.
> The shop is *open* from 9:00am to 9:00pm from Monday to Saturday.

Open is used as an adjective in the second example indicating the status of the shop, i.e. the opening hours daily. The passive form *opened* should be used in the following example:

> The shop *is opened* by the owner at 9:00am every morning.

The passive construction is used here to emphasise the action of the owner.

5. Staff *vs* staffs

In British English, when referring to people working for an organisation, we usually use the uncountable *staff*, as in the following examples:

> It is unacceptable that our teaching *staff* are denied access to the sports facilities of the University.
> Our *staff* and students are offered free housing and medical benefits.

The countable *staffs* has another meaning, referring to a long stick that an official holds in some ceremonies.

6. Everyday *vs* every day

The one word *everyday* is an adjective used before nouns meaning usual or ordinary (e.g. *everyday* life; *everyday* clothes):

> Developing students' positive life attitude is an exciting *everyday* activity for me as a teacher.

Every day is an adverbial phrase used after verbs as in the following example:

> Teenagers rely on the internet almost *every day* for fun or educational purposes nowadays.

7. In detail *or* in details?

Details is the plural of *detail* used as a noun:

> Please let me have the *details* as soon as possible.

Yet there is no such adverbial phrase as *in details*. The correct one should be *in detail*:

Since then, the nature of the ballot has been discussed *in detail*.
The following is an overview of the steps which will then be explained *in detail*.

8. Access to?

When *access* is used as a verb, referring to the right to enter a place, use something or see someone, there is no need to add *to* after it. See the following example:

It is not possible to *access* the documents without our permit.

Used as a noun, *to* can follow (e.g. *have access to*; *obtain access to*):

Our aim is to develop universal *access* to HIV treatments by 2000.
Do you know anyone who fits this description and who *has access* to a black estate car?

9. Worth *or* is worth?

In sales email correspondence, when we want to emphasise the value of buying certain products or services, which one of the following should we use?

This product is *worth buying*.
This product is *worth to buy*.

Worth is used as an adjective here and should be followed by the *ing* form of the verb (i.e. *worth buying*). Note that *worth* is never used as a verb as follows:

Our TV set *worths* over 10,000 dollars.
Our TV set definitely *worths* the money.

10. Bad *or* badly?

Bad is used as an adjective and *badly* as an adverb. After some sensory verbs, however, we use *bad* instead of *badly* to refer to our smell or feeling that is not good.

The water is safe but it *smells bad*.
It *looks bad* if the government keeps ignoring what society needs.

Concluding tips for sending email

Mobile device considerations

Forestier-Walker (2007) provides several tips about emailing to and from mobile devices:

- Resist the urge to press “reply to all.”

- Do not read or send messages during meetings, or when attending religious ceremonies, movies, or dinner parties.
- Respect personal time off.

Campaign Monitor (n.d.) and Nelson (2017) suggest that designing for mobile devices is not just a matter of mobile-specific writing. Other things to be considered are:

- Links and buttons should be kept to a minimum. Swapping of homepages is not easy on touchscreen devices.
- Place all important attachment buttons in the upper portion of the email, if possible. Scrolling for lengths is much harder on a touchscreen than with a mouse.
- Use display whenever it is possible and do not put extraneous details in the mobile layout.

On mobile devices, readers only want the heading to display, alongside a show/hide button (which toggles the text). This turns the email into an interactive table of contents, dramatically shortening the message length.

Good impression considerations

Siddle (2003, p. 26) outlines several tips to ensure business emails reflect the sender in a positive light:

- Do not write in all capital letters; it is the equivalent of electronic shouting.
- Answer business emails within 24 hours.
- Watch the language.
- Resist attaching pictures, letters, and large documents to emails.
- When replying to an email, include the original in the body of the message.
- Turn on the auto-reply function if out of the office for an extended period of time.

Email etiquette

Rahman (2017) suggests the following points to note concerning email etiquette:

1. Be concise and to the point.
2. Answer all questions, and pre-empt further questions.
3. Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation.
4. Make it personal.
5. Use templates for frequently used responses.
6. Answer swiftly.
7. Do not attach unnecessary files.
8. Use proper structure and layout.
9. Do not overuse the high priority option.
10. Do not write in CAPITALS.
11. Do not leave out the message thread.
12. Add disclaimers to your emails.
13. Read the email before you send it.

14 Do not overuse *Reply to All*.
15 Take care with abbreviations and emoticons.
16 Be careful with formatting.
17 Do not forward virus hoaxes and chain letters.
18 Do not request delivery and read receipts.
19 Do not ask to recall a message.
20 Do not copy a message or attachment without permission.
21 Do not use email to discuss confidential information.
22 Use a meaningful subject line.
23 Use active instead of passive.
24 Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT.
25 Avoid long sentences.
26 Do not send or forward emails containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks.
27 Keep your language gender neutral.
28 Do not reply to spam.

Emerging use of Enterprise Social Media (ESM)

With the exponential growth in the use of public networking social networking platforms (SNPs), business technology experts started developing SNPs specifically for collaboration and communication in the workplace. These platforms are generally referred to as Enterprise Social Media (ESM) which contain various communication tools, including blogs, micro-blogs, wikis, forms, instant chat and messaging, file sharing, opinion polls, bookmarks, and RSS feeds. Generally housed on corporate intranets, these platforms are in some ways Facebook-like applications for employees. Technically, enterprise SNPs are offered by major software vendors, including IBM, Cisco, Oracle, SAP, Microsoft, and Novell (Wolfe, 2011). They are generally considered more effective in facilitating team communication and collaboration (Turban, Liang, & Wu, 2011).

Enterprise Social Media is regarded as a potentially useful collection of technologies for knowledge transfer, and defined as:

> Web-based platforms allowing workers to: (1) communicate messages with specific co-workers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organisation; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular co-workers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organisation at any time of their choosing.
>
> (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfield, 2013, p. 2)

There are many communication means commonly used in organisations that allow people to achieve the aforementioned goals. For example, email allows people to communicate with a specific audience. There are also Q&A forums and message boards which allow people to broadcast messages to broad, unknown audiences. A number of contemporary knowledge management systems allow people to post files (e.g. documents, images, videos) so that people can read and search whenever they prefer. What makes ESM unique is that in addition to allowing users to do these activities all in one place, those activities can also be recorded, stored and available for co-workers to access at anytime in the future (Leonardi & Treem, 2012).

There are four main features of ESM that make it distinctive: (1) visibility; (2) persistence; (3) editability and (4) association. *Visibility* refers to "the ability [of social media] to make [users'] behaviours, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections that were once invisible (or very hard to see) visible to others" (Salmon, 2012, p. 150). For example, a status update on a social networking website can be made visible to part or the whole of a member's network (DiMicco, Geyer, Millen, Dugan, & Brownholtz, 2009). With *persistence*, social media allow for what is published to remain permanently accessible (Wagner & Majchrzak, 2006). *Editability* makes it possible for social media users to amend, modify, add to and change collaborative work published on the internet. Wikis are such types of social media applications which allow people to jointly construct new knowledge, consolidate their experiences, and innovate (Mejova, Schepper, Bergman, & Lu, 2011; Ransbotham & Kane, 2011). Finally, through *association*, social media can create and sustain relationships between entities. Treem and Leonardi (2012) distinguished between two types of associations. The first one relates people together and the second one relates people with information. As someone adds an entry into a wiki, for example, a link is then established between the author and the content created.

Perception of employers and employees towards use of social media

By 2002, Microsoft had an active internal blogging community hosted on company intranets (Efimova & Grudin, 2007). IBM also developed an internal blogging community, BlogCentral, which facilitates employees' access to tacit knowledge of experts within the company, and enhances collaboration across its many distinct communities (Huh et al., 2007). Jackson, Yates, and Orlikowski (2007) observed how internal blogging in a large, global IT company brought a number of social and informational benefits for the workforce. Social benefits mean that employees develop a better sense of belonging and gain a more positive perspective on the organisation. Informational benefits refer to the feedback on ideas gained to solve problems.

A survey (Cardon & Marshall, 2015) involving 227 business professionals examining their frequency of use of social networking for team communication compared to other communication means, perceived effectiveness of social networking tools, and attitudes toward social networking revealed that traditional communication channels are still used more frequently and considered more effective for team communication. However Gen X and Gen Y professionals tend to consider social networking tools as the primary tools for team communication in the future.

An examination of 74 corporate policy documents concerning the use of public social media sites by employers representing a variety of industries and sectors revealed some interesting findings about how employers perceive the use of social media by employees (Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Among the four features of social media communication, employees seem to emphasise *visibility* and *persistence* most as the policies examined contain most references to *visibility* and *persistence*. For example, statements highlighting the public nature of any contribution an employee might post in social media reflected visibility:

> "You will probably be read or heard by people who know you. Post as if everyone you know reads or hears every word."
>
> (Plaxo)

Similarly, an emphasis on persistence is also found through statements that directly stated that everything that employees did in social media will remain accessible for an extended period of time:

> "Remember that whatever you post may live for many years in the Web, even after you delete your copy of it."
>
> (Gartner)

> "Remember that the Internet is not anonymous, nor does it forget."
>
> (Baker Daniels)

> "Once you publish something through social media, you lose a degree of control of your message. Be certain before you post something that you are prepared to share it with a potential audience of millions."
>
> (Tufts University)

As a result, there are guidelines about what to post or what not to post:

> "Write about what you know. The best way to be interesting is to write about what you know. If you have a deep understanding of something, talk about the challenges and issues around it."
>
> (Hill & Knowlton)

> "Do not post material that is harassing, obscene, defamatory, libellous, threatening, hateful, or embarrassing to any person or entity. Do not post words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, or religion."
>
> (Razorfish)

There are also statements addressing *editability*, which is a unique feature allowing people to edit and change what have been published online:

> "Be sure to correct any mistake you make immediately and make it clear what you've done to fix it."
>
> (Nordstrom)

> "Good Writing Basics. The value of your great idea suffers to the extent that you allow misspelled words and bad grammar."
>
> (American Institute of Architects)

There are also statements in the policies examined encouraging employees to develop connections with each other (i.e. association with people).

> "Build a Following: Promote yourself by finding and sharing information that will be interesting to your friends and followers and useful for them to share."
>
> (AMP3)

Policies also encouraged employees to pay more attention to the association between them and the information they post – the second type of association according to Leonardi and Treem (2012).

> "Social communication from RightNow should help our customers, partners, and co-workers. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, build their businesses, do their jobs, solve problems, or understand RightNow better – then it's adding value."
>
> (RightNow)

The study also revealed the third type of association, which is between employees and the organisation as a whole. This is usually done through statements asking employees to post disclaimers (*Identify Yourself* policy element).

> "When you discuss Group-related information online, be transparent by giving your name and role and mentioning that you work for the Group. If you have an individual site that refers to or has an impact on the Group, use a disclaimer such as "The views expressed on this site are my own and not those of Cap Gemini."
>
> (Cap Gemini)

Communicating with business professionals using social media tools requires business professionals to adopt a new set of tools, such as blogs, wikis and other collaborative tools to achieve team goals. The form, content and audiences of professional communication via social media tools are different accordingly.

A recent study (Huang, Singh, & Ghose, 2015) examined the blog posting and reading behaviour of employees during a 15-month period at a Fortune 1000 IT services and consulting firm. The following questions are examined: (1) how employees spend their time on different types of blogging activities in an enterprise setting having the trade-offs between *work-* and *leisure-related* content and between *posting* and *reading* content; (2) the relationship between work- and leisure-related relationship and if there are any positive or negative spillover effects; (3) impact of a company policy that does not allow employees from creating leisure-related blogs on the creation and consumption of work-related blogs. In this study, a dynamic structural model was developed for the employees to make choices between reading and posting two types of blogs: work-related or leisure-related posts. Findings show that work-related blogging allows employees to express their expertise and this reputation as "experts" brings them economic benefits. Leisure readership can also signal the popularity of employees among their professional peers. The more popular they are, the happier they are likely to be at work. For a given amount of cumulative readership for work and leisure posts, employees derive greater utility from work-related cumulative readership than from related cumulative readership. Although readership for leisure posts provides less direct utility than that of work posts, employees still post a significant number of leisure posts as there is a clear spillover effect on the readership of work posts from the preparation of leisure posts. As a blogger, an employee would prefer reduced readership competition. As a reader, however, the same employee would prefer peers to post more as they can learn from their posts. Finally, a company policy banning leisure-related posting would be counterproductive for organisations because this can lead to a reduction in work-related posting and reading. Results of the study provide insights into how employee blogging behaviour and choices might be affected by enterprise adoption of social media tools.

Post-reading activities

I. Letter format

a. Put the following into a right form of business letter and divide the passage into different paragraphs. Write down the letter in the spaces provided.

Marcus Pulu Club
Kathay Airline

7 November 2018 – Ms Mable Chan, 9/F, 98B, Broadway Road, Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Dear Sir or Madam, **The little extras are best enjoyed with even more extras**

As a member of The Marcus Pulu Club, you are invited to experience the new Club rooms in Cherry Hotel, Beijing and Cherry Hotel Pudong, Shanghai with this exclusive offer. Enjoy a one-way airport transfer with butler service, all in a Wi-Fi enabled limousine when you book a Club room at any of the Cherry hotels from only RMB2,300 per night. You'll also receive RMB500 food and beverage credit for use in any of the hotel restaurants and bars upon arrival (excluding hard liquor and wine) and enjoy 60% off spa treatments. In addition, you'll earn Double Asian Miles™. All these are on top of the other privileges Cherry Hotels Club room guests receive. Please contact the hotel directly for more information or reservations. Yours faithfully, Mary Evans, Manager, The Marcus Pulu Club.

Adapted from a letter sent to the author of this book

b. Fill in the blanks to show your understanding of the different parts of a business letter.

Marcus Pulu

Kathay Airline

7 November 2018 ← _______________

Ms Mable Chan ← _______________
9/F 98B
Broadway Road ← _______________
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Dear Mable ← _______________

The little extras are best enjoyed with even more extras ← _______________

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Please contact the hotel directly for more information or reservations.

Yours sincerely ← _______________

 ← _______________

Mary Evans ← _______________
Manager ← _______________
The Marcus Pulu Club

ME: ho ← _______________
Enclosure 1 ← _______________
cc: Mr Henry Ho ← _______________
PS (if any) ← _______________

II. Five different letter layouts

Read the five different letter layouts and identify the features of each (the position of different parts of the letter, format, style, etc.). Write down the name of each style.

Marcus Pulu
Kathay Airline

7 November 2018

Ms Mable Chan
9/F, 98B, Broadway Road
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Dear Mable

Subject: The little extras are best enjoyed with even more extras

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Yours sincerely

Mary Evans
Manager
The Marcus Pulu Club

Letter layout 1:_______________

Marcus Pulu
Kathay Airline

7 November 2018

Ms Mable Chan
9/F, 98B, Broadway Road
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

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Yours sincerely

Mary Evans
Manager
The Marcus Pulu Club

Letter layout 2: _______________

Marcus Pulu
Kathay Airline

7 November 2018

Ms Mable Chan
9/F, 98B, Broadway Road
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

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MARY EVANS
Manager
The Marcus Pulu Club

Letter layout 3: _______________

Marcus Pulu
Kathay Airline

7 November 2018

Ms Mable Chan
9/F, 98B, Broadway Road
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Dear Mable

Subject: The little extras are best enjoyed with even more extras

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Yours sincerely

Mary Evans
Manager
The Marcus Pulu Club

Letter layout 4: ________________

Marcus Pulu
Kathay Airline

Ms Mable Chan 7 November 2018
9/F, 98B, Broadway Road
Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Dear Mable

Subject: The little extras are best enjoyed with even more extras

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Please contact the hotel directly for more information or reservations.

Yours sincerely

Mary Evans
Manager
The Marcus Pulu Club cc: ME Senior Manager

Letter layout 5: _______________

III. What's wrong?

Read the adapted business letter provided as follows. What is wrong with the format/layout and style? You may also need to reorder the paragraphs.

FreCham
The French Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong
1888 Bank of French Tower
18 French Road, Hong Kong

8.10.2018
Enclosures TY: AW
cc: Ms Mable Chan

Subject: Membership Renewal

Dear Dr Bruce Hui,

Greetings from FreCham!

Members, old and new, are telling us that the Chamber has a special dynamism and they are particularly impressed by our high-quality networking which is something we are also very proud of. FreCham has enviable strength because our membership comes from such a broad spectrum of national, ethnic and geographic backgrounds.

Please note that your membership renewal is due by 8 October 2018. On behalf of the Chamber's leadership, I encourage you to continue supporting us and become even more involved with FreCham activities. I am pleased to report that we have substantially strengthened our support of individual members, their companies and their business sectors. A few highlights:

- In the past 12 months members were able to join our wide variety of events – we have hosted over 500 committee seminars and events, about half of which were free to members.
- Our 40 committees boosted the number of members-only meetings and roundtables, including frequent constructive discussions with HK government officials on business issues.
- Activities to maintain ties with China continue to increase substantially, including several business delegations to China – the Beijing Doorknock visit with senior Chinese government officials in February, Kunming Delegation in May, Shenzhen Delegation in July, and Zhongshan Delegation in September.
- Our monthly business magazine – *French.hk* – continues to strengthen its coverage of Hong Kong, China and other regional business and economic issues.

I am certain that your captioned membership will assist your personal, professional and business growth. If you renew your membership by the due date, you will receive a box of

Belgian chocolates for free! For more information about this special offer or questions about your membership renewal, please do not hesitate to contact my colleagues Mable Chan at XXXXXXXX or via email at mablechan@frencham.org.hk or Peter Li at XXXXXXXX or peterli@frencham.org.hk.

Yours Sincerely,

Andy Wong
Director of Membership

Attention Dr Bruce Hui
Director
ABC Company
12 Mongkok Road, Kowloon

P.S. Forgot to mention it, but there are a number of other benefits you can enjoy renewing membership now. Please refer to the enclosure for more details.

IV. Embedded email messages
Read the following chain of messages and answer the following questions:

1 Was the first message you read written first or last? How about the last message you read?

2 How do the first and last messages compare with the other messages in terms of length?

3 Which message(s) is more complex in terms of the language used?

From: mary@. . . . . uk
Sent: 19 May 2019 12:56
To: peter@. . . . . uk
Cc: anna@. . . . . us
Subject: RE: Conference call

Hi Peter,

Due to travel arrangements, I have to ask you if we could bring forward our conference call to 25 May 2019 at the same UK time of 9:30. Of course I will let you have the updated version of the proposal before, probably by 23 May 2019.

Please let me know if this is fine and thanks very much.

Kind regards,
Mary

---- Original Message ----
From: anna@. . . . . us
Sent: 17 May 2019 14:59
To: peter@. . . . . uk
Cc: mary@. . . . . uk
Subject: RE: Conference call

9:30 UK time is fine.

---- Original Message ----
From: peter@. . . . . uk
Sent: 17 May 2019 08:43
To: anna@. . . . . us
Cc: mary@. . . . . uk
Subject: RE: Conference call

Yes, 27 May may be better as it allows us a bit more time to finalise the proposal. What time do you prefer? I can make it from 9:30 to noon time (UK time).

Peter

---- Original Message ----
From: anna@. . . . . us
Sent: 16 May 2019 09:50
To: peter@. . . . . uk
Cc: mary@. . . . . uk
Subject: RE: Conference call

Could you do 27 May instead?

----Original Message ----
From: peter@. . . . . uk
Sent: 15 May 2019 08:40
To: anna@. . . . . us
Cc: mary@. . . . . uk
Subject: RE: Conference call

Anna,
A conference call on 20 May would be fine. How about 10am your time? Will confirm with Ken again tmr about the proposal and the updates.

Peter

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Chapter 4

Conveying negative and goodwill messages

Questions for reflection

1 Why do we need to convey negative messages in the workplace? What are they about?
2 How can we de-emphasise a negative message and establish goodwill?
3 How about goodwill messages? List the goodwill correspondence available in the workplace and the purposes they serve.

Introduction

A negative message is defined in different ways. Generally speaking, it refers to "information that results in a perceived loss by the receiver, and it creates cognitive, emotional, or behavioural deficits" (Ptacek & Eberhardt, 1996, p. 496). Having to deliver bad news or negative messages that will disappoint people who may be customers, clients or staff members is inevitable. According to DeKay (2012), it is common to deliver negative messages in the workplace – in face-to-face meetings, on the telephone, during presentations, or in casual conversations, as in negative performance appraisals (Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979), customer service failures (Michel, Bowen, & Johnston, 2009), the refusal of requests (Izraeli & Jick, 1986) downsizing (Cascio, 1993), employee layoffs (Bennett, Martin, Bies, & Brockner, 1995; Brockner, 1988) and employee termination (Lind, Greenberg, Scott, & Welchans, 2000). Thus, "managers must be equipped with the knowledge of how to convey bad news in these venues" (DeKay, 2012, p. 174).

When leaders are asked to tell their most challenging tasks, delivering bad news is always at the top of the list (Bies, 2010). Managers are always reluctant to do so for a number of reasons. For example, it can be emotionally distressing to deliver the bad news (Folger & Skarlicki, 2001), as they may become a target of anger and retaliation by the news recipient (Tripp & Bies, 2009). Also, blame is a key managerial concern (Bell & Tetlock, 1989). It may be costly being blamed for the bad news, in terms of losing one's job (Gamson & Scotch, 1964), even at the CEO level (Boeker, 1992). As reported in Chan (2014), composing negative messages is also regarded as one of the biggest challenges Chinese professionals have to encounter in the workplace. The main difficulty is related to the need to address stakeholders' different expectations (e.g. saving company's face, satisfying customers' needs):

- "A negative message may involve some wrongdoing or criticism of the company. It needs special attention to play down the errors of the company and the negative impact on it."
- "It is always embarrassing to present bad news."
- "If the words are not cautiously chosen, the situation may get worse because the wordings can be misunderstood by the audience . . . cause bad effect."

- "An inappropriately drafted negative message may lead to complaints or further follow-up matters."
- "Negative messages are difficult because it is hard to convey the necessary gist with the right tone, especially towards internal higher rank or to clients."

Most business communication textbooks available focus on ways to de-emphasise the negative message through the use of a buffer, the merits and demerits of the direct and indirect approach, and different ways to establish goodwill. This chapter covers principles of composing effective negative messages supplemented with updated research findings. Goodwill messages aiming to establish good feeling or relationship are also covered. A comparison of goodwill and negative messages generates insights into what makes effective business writing in the workplace.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand the different occasions where negative and goodwill messages are required;
- decide what channels to use when conveying negative messages;
- prepare effective negative and goodwill messages.

Negative messages

1. A framework for analysing negative messages

Evidence based on a review of research on a variety of professions which require delivery of bad news suggests that there are three inter-related phases of tasks involved: preparing, actual delivery of the bad news, and shoring. An early study of US marshals (McClenahen & Lofland, 1976) showed that they first reveal the facts leading to the bad news (i.e. preparing), regard the situation as routine in delivering the bad news and then manipulate the news to make the recipients think that it is not as bad as what they believe (i.e. shoring). A similar three-phase process was also found in Clark and LaBeff (1982) when examining how physicians, nurses, law enforcement officers and clergy "report death." Preparing involves locating a structured setting to deliver the news like a quiet room for privacy. When delivering the bad news, direct terminology is used. The last stage is wrapping up which involves signing the death certificate and making arrangements for the body. In a recent study of corporate executives, Bies (2013) also found signs of a multi-phase process in the delivery of bad news. These phases were preparation (e.g. giving advance warning), delivery (e.g. account giving) and transition (e.g. public relations activities). There seems to be a standard three-phase model that guides the delivery of bad news in different professions in the workplace. The following focuses on the preparation and delivery phases.

1.1 The preparation phase

The purpose of the preparation phase is to psychologically prepare the recipient for the bad news.

GIVING ADVANCE WARNING

There are two types (Maynard, 1996): nonvocal and vocal forms of forecasting. Nonvocal forms of forecasting refer to the deliverer's behaviour (e.g. serious attitude), which may indicate the forthcoming negative message. Vocals one include strategies such as pre-announcements (e.g. Have you heard about . . .?) and prefacing (e.g. I've got some bad news . . .).

CREATING A "PAPER TRAIL"

If the bad news is severe (e.g. sacking an employee), more documentation is required. Conveying bad news to a boss also requires more documentation than to a subordinate.

CALIBRATING EXPECTATIONS

If one wants not to be blamed when rejecting budget increase requests, one can reduce the number of such requests by calibrating expectations of subordinates about resource availability before such requests.

USING DISCLAIMERS

The purpose of using disclaimers is to limit one's responsibility when bad news occurs. For example, hedging can involve highlighting the difficulty of the task (e.g. "I'm not sure this is going to work, but . . .") or identifying mitigating circumstances in the situation (e.g. "I am operating under severe constraints").

PROVIDING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR VOICE

Allowing the opportunity for voice can allow the recipients to express their stance before any decision is made.

COALITION BUILDING

When the bad news has serious outcome (e.g. product quality problems, loss of major customers), one may need to seek help from key people in the organisation to reach consensus about the situation and what should be done to address the problem, which is part of coalition building (Pfeffer, 1981).

REHEARSAL

Both mental and actual rehearsal (Cox, 1987) are important for those who need to deliver bad news, as this is emotional distressing.

1.2 The delivery phrase

The delivery phase refers to all activities involved in the actual delivery of the bad news.

TIMING OF THE DELIVERY

The timing of the delivery of bad news is critical in conveying not just life and death issues as in the case of medical professionals but also bad news in everyday occurrence in the workplace. Managers seem to be much more concerned about timeliness of bad news delivery to their superiors rather than their subordinates.

MEDIUM OF DELIVERY

Which medium of delivery to be used is another key concern and this is highly related to the richness of the media chosen. In the context of delivering bad news, a medium, such as face-to-face communication, is much richer than media such as email, texting, or phone calls as there are facial expressions and body language cues which allow better understanding and immediate feedback.

FACE MANAGEMENT AND SELF-PRESENTATION

The manner in which the bad news is delivered is another key concern, which is related to how sensitive one is in saving the recipient's face and presenting oneself. Job applicants may feel more fairly treated if the rejection message is delivered with respect (Bies & Moag, 1986; Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1994). Similarly, if bad news about pay cuts is delivered with interpersonal sensitivity, few employee theft cases are found (Greenberg, 1993).

ACCOUNT GIVING

Giving an account or explanation can achieve a few purposes: (1) people expect an account to be offered when receiving bad news (Bies & Moag, 1986); (2) the account can also be manipulated by bad news deliverers to change the recipient's perception of them. The different types of explanation available are introduced in section 3, together with the correlation between the medium to be used for bad news delivery.

TRUTH TELLING AND INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

Bad news recipients expect the truth and all necessary facts being disclosed.

The following describes in detail specific ways to convey bad news effectively. Much of what is presented is related to the preparation and delivery phrases, and the guidelines, principles and rationale are consistent with each other.

2. *Two different approaches in conveying negative messages: direct and indirect*

Advice from textbooks concerning writing negative messages tends to focus on routine situations such as refusing claims and rejecting requests (for example, see Carter, 2012; Lehman & DuFrene, 2012; Limaye, 2001; Oliu, Brusaw, & Alred, 2009; Shwom & Snyder, 2012). Nowadays, there are a variety of challenging situations that require negative messages, including notices of canceled flights (Jansen & Janssen, 2010), product recalls (Shwom & Snyder, 2012), negative policies or organisational news (Alred, Brusaw, & Oliu, 2011; Bovée & Thill, 2012; Shwom & Snyder, 2012), rate increases and price hikes (Guffey & Loewy, 2011) and constructive criticism in staff appraisals (Lehman & DuFrene, 2012; Locker & Kienzler, 2010).

Negative messages can be delivered using the direct or indirect approach. Unlike goodwill messages or other business correspondence, which typically use the direct approach revealing the purpose in the introduction, we are always advised to use the indirect approach in conveying negative messages. A simple way to remember the difference between the two approaches is to work out if the bad news comes before the explanation or reasons. If this is the case, then the direct approach is used. Alternatively, if the reasons come before the bad news, the indirect approach is used.

Jansen and Janssen (2010) conducted a series of experiments examining how the structures of direct and indirect messages affect comprehension, compliance and evaluation of the writer. It was found that indirect messages were more effective in preserving the "face" of the recipient so that the negative message can be accepted more easily. Jansen and Janssen explained that the indirect structure works because offering the explanation makes the recipient gradually understand the deliverer's thinking, as "the decision becomes a part of their cognitive belief system before they actually read it" (p. 60).

Direct approach

Sometimes the direct approach is used in preference to the indirect approach regarding the negative messages. The three main situations where the direct approach is considered preferential are:

1 Bad news is not serious: when the bad news is insignificant or of little importance to the reader.
2 Bad news can be overlooked: when it is extremely important for the reader to understand the bad news, the direct approach is used. This may be especially important when using email to send bad news. Presently, with the volume of spam mail, it sometimes is crucial to use the direct approach.
3 Company policy: Sometimes companies have a direct correspondence policy that requires all mail to be constructed using the direct approach.

Alred et al. (2011) suggest that "Although the directness of correspondence may vary, it is generally more effective to present good news directly and bad news indirectly, especially if the stakes are high" (p. 116). This also echoes the findings of Veltsos (2012), who examined the 13 data breach notification templates from state and federal agencies and concluded that the direct approach may be an effective way to inform users as the purpose of breach notifications is to "inform users required by law, to overcome optimism bias, and to overcome rational ignorance" (p. 203). The direct approach achieves so by presenting the bad news early in the message and then offering adequate information about identity protection.

Indirect approach

The indirect approach for writing negative messages is the preferred approach and is predominantly used in three situations:

1 To refuse requests
2 To refuse claims
3 To announce bad news to customers and/or employees

Replies to complaints are a type of negative message when used to refuse claims. The format of adjustment letters that deny responsibility is very similar to the one used in most negative messages. The following is a comparison:

Replies to complaints	Negative messages
Part 1: acknowledge complaint	buffer
Part 2: findings	reasons
Part 3: decision (deny responsibility)	bad news
Part 4: compromise	closing

Please read the following definition and examples of the components of negative messages written using the indirect approach:

1 Buffer: Schryer (2000) defined that buffer is a neutral or positive statement intended to soften the impact of the refusal; Locker (1999) suggests that a buffer enables the writer to delay the negative information and ensures that the reader keeps reading the message. A neutral tone is used which does not reveal the bad news or convey a false impression of good news. There are many different ways to buffer bad news:

1.1 Best news – in all bad news there is usually something that is not too bad or might even be good. This is what should be focused on if using this approach in the buffer.

e.g. At ABA, we understand how important it is for you to be able to fulfill your dreams in life. Therefore, we tailor products and services that offer you a total peace of mind. The increased life expectancy of people in Hong Kong and the steadily rising local needs are met; we are delighted to inform you that your benefit coverage under the XXX plan will be enhanced. The key enhancements include:

The writer first presents the best news about enhanced benefit coverage before announcing the bad news concerning the increased cost the recipient has to pay.

1.2 Compliment – usually used for negative responses to request messages. For example, even though in the third paragraph you might have to say that your company cannot sponsor a meaningful "Give the Elderly a Hand" event, we can still compliment the cause and the worthiness of the activity in the first paragraph using this buffer.

e.g. The "Give the Elderly a Hand" activity has been a successful event of the year, raising the awareness of the public towards caring about the aged.

1.3 Appreciation – this is to acknowledge receipt of a message.

e.g. Thank you for applying to be a volunteer at the XXX Games. We greatly appreciate your interest in joining the volunteer program.

e.g. Thank you for submitting an application for the 2016 Teacher of the Year Award.

1.4 Agreement – provides a general statement that the reader will agree with; in other words, focus the bad news on something that is beyond your control.

e.g. We have been undergoing an unprecedented downturn in all sectors of the economy.

1.5 Facts – use numbers, percentages and strong statements in the buffer about information leading to the bad news. The preceding agreement buffer can be rewritten into a fact buffer:

e.g. In the preceding year when a financial tsunami took place, the Hong Kong economy saw a resistant 10% decrease in GDP with a simultaneous 5% per annum increase in the unemployment rate.

1.6 Understanding – this is to show that you are concerned about what the readers think and feel. Usually a personal tone is used in this type of buffer.

e.g. On behalf of ABC Airlines, I would like to express our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families and the loved ones of the victims of the event in the U.S. Our thoughts are with those involved in this tragedy.

This buffer is used in an email message sent to passengers of an airline company after the 9/11 incident before announcing new safety measures that might have caused them inconveniences.

1.7 Apology – when apologising in negative messages, apologise for the customers' feeling of disappointment rather than a fault in a product or a mistake that has been made. For example rather than saying that the video player was faulty, express apology for making the customers unhappy.

e.g. × We are sorry that the video player was faulty.
e.g. √ We are sorry that you are not happy with the video player that you purchased.

While a buffer is always suggested in business English textbooks, Salerno (1988), in a study of his own job rejection letters, ruled against buffers, judging them either "insincere or merely ritualistic," and Brent (1985) reported that readers, especially business readers, find the indirect arrangement transparent and manipulative. Limaye (1988) also found that over half of editors rejecting journal articles placed the bad news in the first paragraph. Readers may need to be flexible in deciding whether buffers are necessary, and what may be more effective in different scenarios.

A few researchers suggested (e.g. Locker, 1999; French & Holden, 2012) not using buffers in bad news messages; instead, organisations can "buffer" bad news messages by cultivating a positive organisational culture *prior* to an acute organisational crisis. Organisations that focus on appreciating and cultivating positive organisational traits such as hope, resiliency, and optimism prior to a crisis may be more successful in gaining employee support during and after the crisis. By working prior to an organisational crisis to craft a culture that values positive psychological traits such as hope, optimism, and resiliency, business communication professionals can contribute to the creation of a new kind of psychological buffer. This new model of incorporating lessons from positive psychology may help organisations guard against panic during times of crisis and provide a positive framework that can make our workplaces more optimistic, resilient and humane.

2 Reasons: Using the indirect approach, we provide the reasons before revealing the bad news. The purpose is to soften the negative impact and make it easier for the recipient to accept the negative message. A number of textbook writers suggested the importance to give reasons for refusal requests. Guffey (2007), for example, emphasises that "without

sound reasons for denying a request or refusing a claim, a letter will fail, no matter how cleverly it is organised or written" (p. 289). Lehman, Himstreet, and Baty (1996) suggest that "by the time a receiver has finished reading the explanation, the upcoming statement of refusal may be foreseen and accepted as valid" (p. 285).

According to Limaye (2001), there are two conceptual frameworks involved: opportunity cost and attribution. Opportunity cost refers to the "price or rate of return that the best alternative course of action would provide" (Friedman, 2012, p. 402) implying that one is entitled to compensation for failure to receive the best alternative course. Applying this to job application for example, if one is being rejected, one may expect an explanation as opportunity costs might have incurred in the preparation of the application (at least some applications are solicited and opportunity costs are incurred). Another conceptual framework is attribution which suggests that people ascribe motives and reasons for the lack of explanation and they tend to put the blame on the decision makers if they are affected adversely (Valle & Koeske, 1977). If one's promotion is denied without reasons, for example, the employee may ascribe his/her failure to the boss bias or meanness, but in fact the one being promoted is simply more qualified.

There are some criteria to consider when preparing for the reasons or explanation:

2.1 Be cautious: It's true that we need to be as specific and clear as possible when providing the reasons, but we also need to be aware of confidentiality and try not to reveal anything that put our company at risk.
2.2 Reader benefits: Provide reasons that show that we are still helping the recipients; or some other groups or organisations are aided because of the forthcoming bad news.
2.3 Company policy: If it is the company policy of not allowing a request or complaint to be considered, include that in the paragraph but make sure that the reason is explained clearly to justify the decision.
2.4 Serious and fair: Assure the recipient that you have investigated the matter thoroughly, fairly and in a professional manner. Make sure that all issues and concerns are addressed appropriately and fully.

3 Ways to de-emphasise a negative message
In an indirect approach, we do not put the bad news in the first paragraph; we also need to avoid ending a message with the bad news. There are other ways to de-emphasise a negative message:

3.1 Passive constructions: By using the passive constructions, we avoid emphasising *we* or *our company* when they are to be blamed for the negative message.

e.g. To help ensure the safety of passengers, the following airport security measures *will be carried out*.

3.2 Accentuating the positive: Once again this is basically trying to put a positive spin on a negative event.

e.g. We have been doing our best to ensure *a safe and enjoyable journey for you and your family*. Thank you for your patience. . . . Please continue to check www.abc.com.hk for updates of our service.

3.3 Implying a refusal: Sometimes we can simply imply the negative message instead of explicitly announcing the bad news.

e.g. An agreement was reached that the salary and commission rates of staff members *should be kept confidential*.

3.4 Compromise: A compromise or alternative is given to soften the bad news and maintain goodwill. Studies show that alternatives are what people like most among other initiatives of de-emphasising the negative message (Guffey & Loewy, 2016; Locker & Kienzler, 2015; Guffey, Almonte, & Karka, 2009).

e.g. Although the exact salary and commission rates cannot be released, we can *provide you with the list of top sales people for your reference*.

4 Closing

In the closing of a negative message, try to establish goodwill and leave the reader with something positive. There are different ways to close a negative message with goodwill.

4.1 Forward looking: Anticipate future business by not shutting down any future opportunities.

e.g. Thank you for writing to the Editor of the World Magazine this time. Do *write to me in future* if you have any proposals or comments. I *look forward to working together* to make the magazine an asset of the community.

4.2 Re-statement of the alternatives: Reiterate a compromise or alternative if one is possible. If possible, make it personal by leaving a direct line or contact point – depending on company policy and amount of refusals.

e.g. I *hope you find the list of top sales people in our company useful*. Please contact me on 2123 4567 if there is anything I can be of help in the future.

4.3 Goodwill: Usually in a request situation, you may offer your best wishes to the reader.

e.g. The book you are working on must be of interest of the readers and I wish you *all the best* in publishing the book.

4.4 Gifts: Coupons; samples, promotions, discounts are all examples of freebies that companies offer to soften bad news.

e.g. Please find attached some discount coupons for dining and accommodation in your future stay in our hotel.

3. Different explanation types

There are four explanation types according to Bies (1987), IRMA (2018) and Tran (2016): (a) casual; (b) referential; (c) ideological; and (d) penitential accounts. These terms may sound new to you but these reasons are actually very commonly used in conveying negative messages.

Causal accounts are to "lessen a manager's apparent responsibility for a negative outcome by pointing out circumstances that direct blame away from himself or herself." In other words, this is to demonstrate that something is beyond one's control and he or she should not be blamed for the decision made. For example, using "the poor economy" or "the senior management's decision" to refuse employees' request for a pay increase is commonly used by managers to avoid being accused (Timmerman & Harrison, 2005, p. 386).

Referential accounts "serve to reframe a negative *outcome* by providing a different comparison standard for evaluating the outcome." This account aims to reframe/change one's perception of the negative outcome, which consists of three types: (a) social – comparing the victim to others who have worse outcomes; (b) temporal – highlighting better outcomes in the future; and (c) aspirational – indicating that the employee's expectations were unrealistic. This is to have the "victim" believe that he/she is better off than originally thought (Timmerman & Harrison, 2005, p. 386).

Ideological accounts also involve reframing or changing one's perception, this time focusing on the *action or decision* of the manager: "used with the intention of reframing the action of the manager by appealing to superordinate goals such as 'for the good of the organisation' or that the action was intended to be 'character building' for the employees." The decision maker does not deny the responsibility but suggests that the decision was the right thing to do (Timmerman & Harrison, 2005, p. 386).

The last explanation type is penitential account or apology aiming to reframe one's perception of the *decision maker*: "The decision maker acknowledges the harm, takes responsibility for causing it, and offers a sincere apology." This may "restore the decision maker's image in the eyes of the recipient of the unfavourable outcome" (Timmerman & Harrison, 2005, p. 386).

The effectiveness of all four types of accounts in influencing one's perceptions has been supported by empirical studies (see Tucker, Yeow, & Viki, 2013; Gilliland et al., 2001; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998, pp. 143–149, for a review).

A meta-analysis of social accounts (Shaw, Wild, & Colquitt, 2003; Sandell & Svensson, 2016) reported that explanations were more effective when they took the form of an excuse (i.e. a causal account) than a justification (i.e. a referential or ideological account). Explanations perceived as inadequate were worse than no explanation at all. Explanations regarded as unreasonable or illegitimate may lead to even more negative reactions by employees, such as retaliation (Skarlicki, Folger, & Gee, 2004; Hubert & Ngai, 2010).

4. Authentic examples for analysis

1. "We have attracted about 16,000 applicants and you are one of these 16,000 generous and enthusiastic individuals. However, we need only 2,400 volunteers for the XXX Games being held in Hong Kong, so we are not able to offer places to 85% of people who applied. We have faced the most difficult task in selecting the 85% because all of you are so suitable and competent. We needed to face reality and with reluctance we could not offer volunteer positions to many of you."

Analysis: This is a reply rejecting one's application of being a volunteer. The preceding reason is effective because of the following reasons: (a) with numbers to highlight the contrast between the overwhelming number of applicants (16,000 applicants) and the limited number to be accepted (only 15%); (b) using compliments to indicate that the applicant is suitable and qualified (e.g. *you are so suitable and competent*); (c) suggesting reluctance in making such a decision (e.g. *the most difficult task*; *with reluctance*).

2. "We have for so many years been using established operational procedures to ensure that customers' deposits and information are safe. This incident was however an isolated event which we currently believe was due to human error, and a full investigation into the incident and its causes is now under way. We are committed to taking appropriate actions to ensure that such an incident does not happen again. Please be assured that other banking operations and services are not affected and you can continue to use all of our branch and other banking services with confidence."

Analysis: This is a message to the bank customers whose valuables were thrown away and crushed in a renovation blunder. The key word in this paragraph is *isolated*. It is very important to emphasise that this is an isolated event due to human error in order to save the credibility of the bank. No other reasons seem acceptable. The other steps taken are (a) full investigation in place; and (b) assurance that the same incident will not happen.

3. "The large number of applications received this year made the selection process especially difficult. Your application was one of 23 very strong contenders."

Analysis: This is a reply to the author who applied for a teaching award a few years ago. I was not selected not because I am not suitable but because of the large number of applications received. Compliment is also used, highlighting that the applicant "was one of 23 very strong contenders."

The following is adapted from an email message prepared by an airline company for its passengers after the 9/11 incident. The negative message is the introduction of safety measures which may cause inconveniences to the passengers. Let's see how the negative message is conveyed effectively using the principles outlined earlier.

Date: Wed, 19 Sep 2001 23:19:57–0500
To: Email Express Recipient
From: ABC Airlines
Subject: A message from Mable Chan, Vice President Asia, ABC Airlines

Dear XXX,

On behalf of everyone at ABC Airlines I would like to offer our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families and loved ones of the victims of the events in the US. Our thoughts are with all those involved in this tragedy, and our heartfelt support goes out to those selflessly helping in the rescue effort.

In addition to the tragic loss of life, the events of last week have had a considerable impact on America, and her airlines. Minor modifications to the ABC Airlines schedule in Asia Pacific have thus been made. Please visit www.abc.com/asia for the most updated information regarding schedules and services.

To help ensure the safety of our passengers, airport security has been enhanced. We outline here what you need to keep in mind before travelling:

- Passengers should verify flight status and reservations before arrival through the "Flight/Gate" status box at www.abc.com/asia.
- Arrive at the airport 3 hours prior to departure for international flights due to increased passenger security screening and increased aircraft and airport security inspections.
- No liquids in containers larger than 3.4 ounces will be allowed through security.
- ABC has discontinued off-airport checked baggage services at the moment.
- Our current policy of allowing one carry-on bag plus a purse or briefcase remains.

ABC Airline is doing everything in our power to ensure safe enjoyable travel for you and your family. With that in mind, we thank you for your understanding and continued patience in the days and months ahead. Please continue to check www.abc.com/asia for continued updates on ABC Airlines service.

Analysis

4.1 Structure

The negative message was written using the indirect approach. It starts with a buffer which describes the background of the whole message, prepare the readers for the bad news and establish common ground with the readers by expressing sympathy: “I would like to offer our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families and loved ones of the victims of the events in the US.” The bad news is presented in the next paragraph (i.e. minor modifications) together with its purpose (i.e. to ensure safety of the passengers). The rest of the paragraphs outline details of the safety measures, and the message establishes goodwill in the last paragraph (i.e. safety measures to ensure not only your safety but your family).

4.2 Initiatives to de-emphasise the negative message

(a) The use of the passive voice to show that it is not the company’s responsibility to introduce these changes. It is due to external circumstances and the new policies of the Airport Authority. The modifications are presented as irreversible “fait accompli.”
e.g. “Minor modifications . . . have been made.”
“Airport security has been enhanced.”

(b) The style is quite formal in the first paragraph when offering condolences (e.g. on behalf of; would like to; offer condolences and sympathy), and it is more neutral and straightforward in expressing involvement in paragraph 3 using personal pronouns *we* and *you*.

(c) Use of positive words to qualify the negative message so that it does not look negative. For example, the bad news is presented this way: “minor modifications”; “airport security has been enhanced.”
e.g. “Minor modifications . . . have been made.”
“Airport security has been enhanced.”

(d) Attempt to establish goodwill in the closing stressing that the modifications that have to be made are for the benefit of the reader (i.e. *you and your family*).

Goodwill messages

There are different types of goodwill messages aiming to establish goodwill and relationship. The purpose is to show that we do not care about making money only. Most business English textbooks categorise thank you/appreciation messages, congratulations messages, sympathy/condolence messages and invitation messages as goodwill messages (Krizan, Merrier, Logan, & Williams, 2010; Geffner, 2007; Bovée, Thill, & Schatzman, 2004; Boone, 1998). Persuasive invitation messages such as those inviting speakers to speak without honorarium or inviting someone to do something for a favour are covered in Chapter 5 instead when introducing persuasive messages.

In goodwill correspondence:

1 Show that you care about other things besides profit.
2 Do not include a sales pitch, except in invitations.
3 Be sincere, but be concise and don’t make your message too long.
4 In the case of sympathy messages, offer practical help but nothing too specific.

Goodwill messages share similar content and structure: Purpose of writing; elaboration on the purpose; repetition of purpose. The first paragraph is used to express initial thanks/congratulations/sympathy/invitation, that is, to reveal the purpose in the first paragraph explicitly.

Initial thanks:

1 Thank you very much for . . .
2 I would like to commend one of your employees who has done a superb job . . .
3 We would love to express our gratitude for your generous donation.
4 Please accept our sincere gratitude.
5 We are very grateful for your support.
6 I would like to express our appreciation . . .

Initial congratulations:

1 Congratulations on . . .
2 Let me congratulate you on . . .
3 Please accept our congratulations on . . .
4 I was really delighted/happy/glad/thrilled to hear that . . .

Initial sympathy:

1 I was saddened/distressed to hear of . . .
2 I would like to extend deepest sympathy/condolences to . . .
3 I was sorry to hear that . . .
4 I was very concerned to hear about . . .
5 It was a great shock to hear the sad news about . . .

Initial invitation:

Formal:

1 You are cordially invited to . . .
2 I take great pleasure in inviting you . . .

Less formal:

1 I would like to invite you to . . .
2 You are invited to . . .

Informal:

1 Please come . . .

In the body of goodwill messages, we must show sincerity by adding our personal comments, which means more elaboration on why we need to show appreciation, thanks or congratulations.

In the case of showing sympathy or condolences, give details about what you or others think about the deceived person whose family members may want to know to feel comforted. In the body of standard invitation messages, give details about the event/function people are invited to. In the last paragraph, we repeat the purpose (i.e. repetition of thanks/appreciation/congratulations/sympathy). Please see the following examples of goodwill messages and analyses.

Examples: Thank you messages

Thank you messages can be sent to customers or employees in the workplace for different purposes:

To a customer . . .

- who has made a first order;
- who has made a very large order;
- who has made an order after a long period of silence;
- who has paid a long-overdue bill;
- who is consistent on paying on time.

To an employee . . .

- who has made a special effort;
- who has made particularly valuable suggestions;
- who has produced consistently good work.

Andrew S. Grove, founder, Intel Corporation, the world's largest chip manufacturer, advises:

> There are no economic constraints that prevent you from thanking people for their efforts. But keep in mind that a mere thank you, accompanied by general comments, is pretty hollow. . . . Specificity, warmth, and sincerity are as important as the difference between a personal note and a computerised form letter.
>
> (Grove, 1992, p. 29)

Authentic example 1

The following is adapted from a thank you message delivered to colleagues of a university thanking them for participating in the Dress Casual Day.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for joining the *Dress Casual Day* on 30 October 2016. We are glad that over 400 colleagues and students from 46 departments/offices joined the event. The three most enthusiastic departments were: ABC (58 participants); DEF (34) and GHI (24). Let me take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the departmental coordinators who make this event a huge success.

Initial thanks

Special thanks also go to the Maxim's Caterers for their generous sponsorship of cake and drink coupons to all participating HappyU members.

More elaboration on the appreciation

With your enthusiastic support, we have raised about HK$38,000 (largest amount raised from ABC: $7,410) for the Community Chest which will allocate the donations to support family and child welfare services. Thank you very much again and I look forward to . . .

Repetition of thanks

XXX
Director of Public Relations Office

Authentic example 2

The following is adapted from a sympathy message from the President of a university to staff members/students concerning the passing away of an alumnus.

Dear colleagues and students

It is with great sadness that I am writing to inform you of the passing away of our beloved "Big Brother," one of Happy University's oldest graduates, Dr Wong, at the age of 90.

Indicating initial sympathy

Dr Wong's connection with our University dates back to 1935, when he was enrolled as the first cohort of students for a diploma programme in the Engineering Department. Undeterred by the tough economic situation that prevailed in the earliest years of his career, Dr Wong achieved success in his career through determination and hard work, well reflecting the spirit of our home, Hong Kong.

Dr Wong devoted himself to the engineering industry for over 60 years. He was Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Engineering, Managing Director of Tai Ku Engineers Limited and served as President of the Hong Kong Engineering Association.

Over the years Dr Wong has maintained strong ties with our University. In recognition of his significant and sustained contribution to the University, the engineering industry and the community, Happy University conferred on him the titles of University Fellowship in 2003, Outstanding Alumni in 2006, and an Honorary Doctorate in 2010. As the Honorary Life Chairperson of the Happy University Foundation, Dr Wong provided us with invaluable advice on our development.

The body elaborating on Dr Wong's achievements

Dr Wong will be fondly remembered by us all. Please join me in offering his family our deepest condolences at this difficult time.

Showing sympathy again

President
Happy University

Post-reading activities

Negative messages

I. Look for an authentic negative message and comment if it is effective, and suggest ways to improve it.

Goodwill messages

I. Goodwill messages are a necessary part of dealing with people in business. The purpose is to establish good feeling or relationship. Under what situations do we send goodwill messages? What type of goodwill correspondence might be written in each of the following situations?

- your client has received the Young Engineer of the Year Award

____

- a client has moved to larger premises in Central

____

- your colleague has died

____

- your friend has just retired

____

- an acquaintance has suffered a serious business setback

____

- an acquaintance has opened a new branch of his business in China

____

- a client has made a first order

____

II. List three situations when you send goodwill correspondence for the following purposes (e.g. I send thank you messages in order to . . . , etc.).

<u>Purpose 1: Thank you</u>
Situation 1: ____
Situation 2: ____
Situation 3: ____

<u>Purpose 2: Congratulations</u>
Situation 1: ____
Situation 2: ____
Situation 3: ____

<u>Purpose 3: Sympathy</u>
Situation 1: ____
Situation 2: ____
Situation 3: ____

<u>Purpose 4: Invitation</u>
Situation 1: ____
Situation 2: ____
Situation 3: ____

III. Apply what you have learned and write on two of the following topics:

a Write a message to thank the Communications Services Centre for an excellent guided tour arranged for your students taking the course *Business Communication*.
b Write a message to congratulate someone on being elected to the Legislative Council.
c As the Head of the Mainland Affairs Office of The Happy University of Hong Kong, write a message to thank colleagues for joining the mainland promotion tours giving talks about the undergraduate programmes offered in their departments.
d Write an email message to thank a staff member of African Airlines to appreciate her competence, politeness and professionalism in dealing with two patrons who made complaints and grumbles about waiting in line for check-in.

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Chapter 5

Persuasive messages

Sales correspondence and job applications

Questions for reflection

In the course of your work in the business/professional world, you will often need to send persuasive messages, i.e. messages which attempt to influence or change the attitudes, views or actions of colleagues, clients and customers.

1 List the different persuasive messages that you need to convey at work (both orally and in writing).
2 What are the challenges you encounter in conveying persuasive messages?
3 Recall your experience of persuading someone. Name one successful case and one failure case and explain what you did to make one successful and the other not.

Introduction

Now more than ever, in the arenas of national security, public relations, marketing, corporate management, personal relationship and persuasion, the art of communicating strategically is essential (Farwell, 2012; Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007; Halmari & Virtanen, 2005). There are many occasions where we need to persuade and influence. The following list outlines some of the persuasive tasks we may encounter in the workplace or our daily life:

- Persuade subordinates to take up a job/task;
- Persuade subordinates that the management's decisions are correct;
- Persuade a speaker to give a talk to your colleagues/students;
- Persuade colleagues to offer help;
- Persuade your boss to support your initiatives or/and adopt your suggestions (e.g. in a proposal, business report, sales presentation);
- Persuade customers to buy a product/use your services;
- Persuade the public that your organisation is credible;
- Persuade customers in a reply to complaint that the options provided are the best which could be offered;
- Persuade peers/friends not to give up;
- Persuade companies to compensate (e.g. in claim letters);
- Persuade teenagers not to take drugs in TV broadcasting.

This chapter provides a well-grounded understanding of available persuasive techniques that can be employed and applied to excel in different aspects of the readers' life. It provides an overview of the key communication strategies to influence, engage and empower. Persuasive techniques used by celebrities and professionals in different sectors of the workplace are demonstrated and their impact highlighted. Successful persuasion requires one to have the skills to access, analyse, evaluate and create various communication strategies in different situations and to use the key language features to achieve this purpose. The two main language features are content words and grammatical words. Content words carry specific meanings, such as nouns, adjectives and verbs. Grammatical words express a functional or structural relationship with other words in a sentence, such as prepositions providing more information about nouns, *to*-infinitive for giving reasons or telling purposes and conjunctions indicating the relationship between ideas or events. In the ever-changing workplace environment and globalised communication network, being able to set criteria and evaluate persuasiveness in one's professional and personal lives is key to success.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand basic principles to persuade and communicate effectively;
- understand how to influence, engage and empower through strategic communication;
- apply persuasive techniques in producing sales correspondence/job application letters;
- protect yourself against manipulation, and learn important tools to facilitate personal and professional life.

Persuasive strategies: Aristotle's three modes of persuasion

According to Aristotle (1954), there are three modes of persuasion: ethos (character); pathos (emotion) and logos (reason and logic). These three modes of persuasion can take the audience from where they are to where you want them to be: "There is persuasion through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence. [. . .] There is persuasion through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [pathos] by the speech. [. . .] Persuasion occurs through the arguments [logoi] when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 39). Ethos is related to the credibility of the speaker/writer, which can be realised through one's virtuous character, intelligence and knowledge of the subject or attempt to show goodwill. One does not need to possess all these attributes but should be able to at least demonstrate them. Pathos is to appeal to the hearer/audience's emotion (e.g. anger, patriotism, fear, confidence, kindness). We judge differently when we are happy, angry or afraid. The use of pathos is thus a way of convincing the audience by creating an emotional response to an impassioned plea or a convincing story. Logos is to argue with reasons, examples and facts. Read the following speech by Obama:

> That's why I'm in this race. **I love this country too much** to see it divided and distracted at this moment in history. I believe in **our ability to perfect this union** because it's the only reason I'm standing here today. And I know the promise of America because I have lived it. So **don't ever forget that this election is not about me**, or any candidate. Don't ever forget that **this campaign is about you-about your hopes, and your dreams, about your struggles, about securing your portion of the American Dream.**
>
> (Obama, 2008)

This is the victory speech made by Obama in 2008. The words in bold are used to establish his credibility (i.e. ethos), highlighting that he is selfless, and he joined the election because he loves the country and so does everyone else.

In the following speech, Obama appealed to both ethos (i.e. not long for my own ambition) and pathos (i.e. fear: the fierce urgency of now) in making the audience trust that he, together with the Americans, are the real agents of change in the country.

> Ten months ago, I stood on the steps of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, and began an unlikely journey to change America. **I did not run for the presidency to fulfill some long-held ambition** or because I believed it was somehow owed to me. **I chose to run in this election – at this moment – because of what Dr King called "the fierce urgency of now."** Because we are at a defining moment in our history. Our nation is at war. Our planet is in peril. Our health care system is broken, our economy is out of balance, our education system fails too many of our children, and our retirement system is in tatters. **At this defining moment, we cannot wait** any longer for universal health care. **We cannot wait** to fix our schools. **We cannot wait** for good jobs, and living wages, and pensions we can count on. **We cannot wait** to halt global warming, and **we cannot wait** to end this war in Iraq. **Most of all, I believed in the power of the American people to be the real agents of change in this country –** because we are not as divided as our politics suggests; because we are a decent, generous people willing to work hard and sacrifice for future generations; and I was certain that if we could just mobilise our voices to challenge the special interests that dominate Washington and challenge ourselves to reach for something better, there was no problem we couldn't solve – no destiny we couldn't fulfill.
>
> (Obama, 2007a)

The following is an extract of the remarks by President Trump at signing of a presidential memorandum targeting China's economic aggression. He first appealed to the Americans' pathos (in this case fear) by highlighting the large number of factories which closed and the jobs that were gone, in addition to the tremendous amount of trade deficit. This is to pave the way for them to see the need for seriously discussing this with the President of the People's Republic of China and what he did/planned to do to gain control of the situation.

> THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you everybody. This has been long in the making. You've heard many, many speeches by me and talks by me, and interviews where I talk about unfair trade practices. **We've lost, over a fairly short period of time, 60,000 factories in our country – closed, shuttered, gone. Six million jobs, at least, gone**. And now they're starting to come back. You see what's happening with Chrysler, with Foxconn, with so many other companies wanting to come back into the United States. But we have one particular problem. And I view them as a friend; I have tremendous respect for President Xi. We have a great relationship. They're helping us a lot in North Korea. And that's China. But **we have a trade deficit**, depending on the way you calculate, of **$504 billion**. Now, some people would say it's really $375 billion. Many different ways of looking at it, but any way you look at it, it is the largest deficit of any country in the history of our world. It's out of control.
>
> We have a tremendous intellectual property theft situation going on, which likewise is hundreds of billions of dollars. And that's on a yearly basis. I've spoken to the President. I've spoken to representatives of China. **We've been dealing with it very seriously.**
>
> (Trump, 2018)

Based on an analysis of the persuasive strategies used in business English (Said, 2016), 20 workplace texts were collected and 190 persuasive strategies were found to be used, of which logos was the most dominant (105 strategies, 56%), followed by pathos (90 strategies, 48%) and ethos (67 strategies, 36%). Here are some examples of each:

- *Logos*

  1. The benefits and positives are obvious.
  2. Like the rest of the world, we are at something of a crossroads, where traditional advertising methods no longer provide the impact.
  3. By 2010 the US workforce will have an increase of 29% in 45–64 year olds, and 14% of those who are 65 years old plus.

- *Pathos*

  1. Our aim is to serve you, the local people, locally.
  2. We feel they will have more understanding of your particular needs.
  3. It listens to your ideas, your suggestions and your needs.

- *Ethos*

  1. We have extended our opening hours because that has been one of the suggestions we have been given.
  2. I promise we will take very good care of it.
  3. I have been carrying out "missions for growth" over the last two years.

Persuasive strategies: Six weapons of influence

Professor Robert B. Cialdini is famous for his book on *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (1993). The book has sold more than three million copies and have been translated into more than 30 languages. He went undercover for three years trying to observe how persuasion is realised in daily life. Based on his experience, he concluded that there are six weapons of influence: (1) reciprocation; (2) commitment and consistency; (3) social proof; (4) liking; (5) authority; and (6) scarcity.

- **Reciprocation: People tend to return a favour**

  e.g. free estimates
  free samples
  free information (video; leaflets)

- **Commitment and consistency**

  If people commit, orally or in writing, to an idea or goal, they are more likely to honour that commitment.
  e.g. charity organisations calling first asking you to sign a petition (seemingly harmless) and then calling back asking you to make donations

e.g. receiving a phone call asking if you will vote in the coming election and you tend to be consistent in voting afterwards (compared with those who did not receive the phone call)

- **Social proof**

  People will do things that they see other people are doing.
  e.g. “Join over 2000 other satisfied customers and experience the power of . . .”
  e.g. “Just look at how the 1000 customers have transformed themselves after using our skin-care products.”

- **Liking**

  People are easily persuaded by other people that they like.
  e.g. Girl Guides/elderly people selling cookies

- **Authority**

  People will tend to obey authority figures.
  e.g. Dr Chan/professors from Cambridge University

- **Scarcity**

  Perceived scarcity will generate demand.
  e.g. Only 1 left; discount until midnight tonight

More examples (social proof)

Question:

Thank you, Mr. President. You’ve said in the past that waterboarding, in your opinion, is torture. Torture is a violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. Do you believe that the previous administration sanctioned torture?

Answer:

What I’ve said – and I will report – is that waterboarding violates our ideals and our values. I do believe that it is torture. **I don’t think that’s just my opinion; that’s the opinion of many who’ve examined the topic. And that’s why I put an end to these practices. I am absolutely convinced it was the right thing to do,** not because there might not have been information that was yielded by these various detainees who were subjected to this treatment, but because we could have gotten this information in other ways, in ways that were consent with who we are.

(Obama, 2009)

More examples (liking)

That’s the journey we’re on today. But let me tell you how I came to be here. As most of you know, I am not a native of this great state. I moved to Illinois over two decades ago. I was a young man then, just a year out of college; I knew no one in Chicago, was without money or family connections. But a group of churches had offered me a job as a community organiser for $13,000 a year. And I accepted the job, sight unseen, motivated then by a single, simple, powerful idea – that **I might play a small part in building a better America.**

My work took me to some of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. I joined with pastors and lay-people to deal with communities that had been ravaged by plant closings. I saw that the problems people faced weren't simply local in nature – that the decision to close a steel mill was made by distant executives; that the lack of textbooks and computers in schools could be traced to the skewed priorities of politicians a thousand miles away; and that when a child turns to violence, there's a hole in his heart no government could ever fill.

It was in these neighborhoods that I received the best education I ever had, and **where I learned the true meaning of my Christian faith.**

After three years of this work, I went to law school, because I wanted to understand how the law should work for those in need. I became a civil rights lawyer, and taught constitutional law, and after a time, I came to understand that our cherished rights of liberty and equality depend on the active participation of an awakened electorate. **It was with these ideas in mind that I arrived in this capital city as a state Senator.**

(Obama, 2007b)

Steps to prepare for persuasion

(1) Anticipation

- Analyse the situation (e.g. the purpose you want to achieve)
- Analyse the audience (e.g. demographic and psychographic information)

(2) Persuasive message itself

- Strategies to be used (e.g. appealing to the audience's logic or emotion)
- Organisation/structure (i.e. how to present the ideas)

Physiological needs level: Basic requirements for survival
Security needs level: The need for shelter and job security
Social needs level: The need to belong, to be with others and to be accepted by them
Esteem/ego needs level: The need for respect from others.
Self-actualisation needs level: The need to realise potential

Examples:

- "You are looking for a purpose to your commitment. So are we. You want to safeguard the future. So do we." (Security needs)
- "It's a great feeling being of a successful team, isn't it?" (Social needs)
- "Today I am proud to announce the result of our Best Staff of the Year competition" (Esteem/ego needs)

Two approaches in preparing persuasive messages

One of the most common types of persuasive message is request for favours or action. As with "bad-news" messages, experts in business communication recommend that writers adopt either a direct or an indirect approach (with the following "moves"):

Table 5.1 Direct and indirect approaches

DIRECT	*INDIRECT*
Main idea – purpose ↓ **Explanation** ↓ **Closing**	**Explanation – buffer** ↓ **Main idea – purpose** ↓ **Closing**

An indirect approach is often used when the topic of the message is complex or problematic. For example, if you would like someone to donate a large sum of money for a good cause (hospital, school, etc.), it may be a good idea to explain the background to the request before stating the purpose of the letter (which might come towards the end of the message). If you used the direct approach (with the purpose stated very clearly in the first sentence), the recipient might think it was somewhat impertinent.

The AIDA organisational plan (i.e. attention, interest, desire, action) is often used when an indirect message is required (Thill & Bovée, 2017). The first action is to seek the reader's attention (A) with a benefit that is of interest. This should then be followed by building the reader's interest (I) by giving more details about the benefits appealing to his/her logic or emotions. The third step is to build desire (D) by explaining how the offer can benefit the reader. In doing so, try to reduce resistance by addressing any questions/concerns that the reader might have. Finally, give a strong call to action (A) and provide a convenient means for the reader to do so.

Analysis of persuasive messages

1. Asking for a donation

FACULTY of ARCHAEOLOGY
c/o Development
Office Fox
House of Limegarden
Street Aberdeen 7D
Tel: + 44 1888 288 188
Fax: +44 1899 288 188
Email: archaelogy@happyU.uk

August 2018

Dear Mable,

Archaeology is on the move. We are now embracing exciting developments: New ways of doing research, new academic staff, more encouragement of archaeology in schools, and remarkable new facilities, which will fit us for a future as significant as our past.

Today, you are invited to play a significant part in this development, and in the future of Archaeology teaching and research at Happy University. By sending a donation, using the form at the bottom of this letter, you can help maintain the traditions that served us so well, whilst enabling us to build a future of which we can all be proud.

In July we move to a new Faculty Centre in what was the old Happy Boys' School on John Street. In our current location, we simply don't have space for what we have to do. Once archaeologists worked alone. Today, archaeology is a more collaborative exercise, and collaboration needs space – for research assistants, post-doctoral fellows and all the material needs that come with them. Your donation, today, will help us make the very best use of our new surroundings.

We have already seen the generosity of our alumni. Four years ago we appealed to people like you. The marvelous sum of £200,000 that was raised has already been spent wisely, funding academic posts, graduate scholarships and our innovative "Archaeology off the Shelf" initiative in schools. Of course, not every one of our graduates was able to give on that occasion, so I hope that this new appeal will be seen as a second opportunity, not to be missed.

The enclosed leaflet explains how we want to use the money raised from this appeal. There are two themes, "Maintaining tested traditions" and "Breaking new ground."

We are committed to maintaining our tradition of high-quality teaching and the excellence of our research by recruiting more new tutors. These appointments give targeted early career opportunities to young academics of outstanding merit. In helping create these posts you will help us to uphold our tradition of excellence in scholarship well into the future.

We recognise that the University's tutorial system remains central to Happy education. Your role in helping us retain its value across the collegiate University is very important.

We will break new ground with innovative, collaborative research centres, new facilities, and surroundings that are fit for the future. Moreover, the start-up funding that you can help provide for young scholars and new research work today will enable us to attract significant funding from research grant offices and other sponsors. In that sense, your donation is truly an investment in archaeological scholarship that will be multiplied in years to come.

Further important developments lie ahead. It is planned that in 2020 we will move again, as a central element in an outstanding new integrated Humanities Centre based on the site of the former Happy Hospital. Redevelopment of this hospital site has been a key strategic objective of the University, and we are glad to be one of the first faculties to move there.

The groundwork starts now, in supporting new, innovative work, and in maintaining the firm foundations of teaching and research for which Archaeology at Happy is so renewed. The undergraduates whom you and we support today are the graduate students and young academic staff tomorrow, who will chart our ever-changing future.

I do hope that you can contribute to this appeal. We need you, as we need all of our graduates, to be as generous as you can be; indeed as generous as you have been.

Please return your gift with the slip below, and please accept my personal gratitude for your willingness to help us achieve our goals that will serve many generations of Happy archaeologists.

Yours sincerely,

Chris.

Christopher Evans
Chairman of the Faculty Board
Faculty of Archaeology
Happy University

P.S. If this letter has encouraged you to consider making a gift to support Archaeology at Happy and you would like to support your College as well, please indicate such a preference on the reply form. In whichever way that you choose to express your support, Happy archaeologists are deeply grateful to you.

Indirect approach:

P1:	Buffer: new development of the department and the needs for new academic staff, better facilities, etc.
P2:	Purpose of the letter (i.e. donation) and the needs of doing so
P3:	Details about the needs
P4:	Good record about how the money was spent
P5:	Summary of the two themes: “Maintaining tested traditions”; “Breaking new ground”
P6–7:	Elaboration of the first theme
P8:	Elaboration of the second theme
P9–10:	How this need paves the way for a better future
P11–12:	Urge for action (i.e. donation)

Summary of its effectiveness:

1 Effective use of the indirect approach, explaining the needs and building the readers' interest and desire to offer help
2 Positive use of words (e.g. exciting developments, remarkable new facilities, marvelous sum of, tested traditions, breaking new ground, high quality, excellence)
3 Clear structure
4 Convincing arguments (what we need; why; outcome)
5 Appeal to our sense of belonging being one of the Happy archaeologists (Happy, archaeology; archaeologists)

2. Asking for help

Dear Principal,

I refer to my email sent earlier concerning the FREE English lessons on tense provided by the Department of English for your primary three students.

Direct approach referring to past email

Last year and early this year, hundreds of secondary and primary students attended the free lessons we organised for them on tense. Students who joined the classes learning tense through three different approaches had significant improvement in the post-test results showing the effectiveness of the approaches. Teachers also benefit from the sets of teaching materials we developed for them. There are even schools and principals recommending other schools to join us having taken our classes.

Provides brief background information about the schools which joined the project and the effectiveness; social proof

The effectiveness of the lessons motivates us to arrange lessons for more primary school students this year. We would like to offer lessons to **primary 3** students who have not started learning the English simple past. You can benefit in the following ways:

1 Students benefitting from learning the English simple past through three different approaches.
2 Teachers will be more aware of different effective approaches in teaching tense and they will be given the whole set of teaching materials for reference and future use.
3 Dr Chan can provide free consultancy service for your school concerning teaching and learning of English.

4 Dr Chan can be invited to speak to teachers or students on topics that might be of interest.

Provides reader-centred information (value of participation)

Please see attached the schedule from January 2016 to February 2016. Please read our plan carefully and let us know if the schedule or any other time suits your students. We recommend the whole form of students to join so that all of them can benefit, and we need at least **45 primary 3 students** (after the pre-test) to join so that there could be about 15 students in each of the three groups (please see the attached for details)

Details about how to participate

Please note that the arrangement of free lessons does not require too much extra work. What teachers have to do is to recruit students interested in the free lessons, let us know the schedule available, and book classrooms for the lessons.

Reduces resistance by emphasising that this does not add to the teachers' workload

We would very much appreciate it if you could forward this email with attachment to the English Panel Chair for arrangement. This will be a good opportunity to improve the teaching and learning of not just the English simple past, but other related grammatical items. I hope your teachers can consider this seriously and reply by **18 December** 2015 (Friday). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my research assistant XXX through email: XXX or phone: XXX.

Tells what action to take and summarises benefits again, and provides necessary contact information.

Looking forward to your favorable reply.
Mable Chan (Dr)
Research Assistant Professor

Sales correspondence

Sales promotion letter is an unsolicited letter addressed to a selected group of prospective customers (individuals or companies) in order to persuade them to buy a product or service. Since most of these customers may not be interested in the product or service, writers of these sales promotion letters have a difficult task in first raising their interest and then convincing them of the value or benefits of the product or service being promoted.

According to Bhatia (2014), a sales promotion letter should:

- be persuasive, in a sense that its writer aims to elicit a specific response from its reader(s);
- capture the attention of the potential customer, even if s/he has no immediate need for the product or service being offered;
- be short and effective, but there should be enough details about the product or service in the letter for those customers who already have some need for or intention to buy the product or service;
- offer an appraisal of the product or service in terms of the perceived interests or needs of the potential customer;
- serve as the first link between a potential seller and a prospective customer.

Bhatia (1993) concluded the following seven moves for writing sales letters.

Move 1: Establishing credentials (more or less obligatory)

- "To capture the readers' attention and to impress upon them that the writer of the letter represents a company that "has a well-established reputation" (p. 49); to indicate "the writer's perception of the interests and needs of the potential customer" (p. 50); and to imply that s/he or the company can fulfill them by offering the product or service.

  e.g. We are expertly aware that Chinese professionals need to be equipped with effective communication skills in order to excel in career (a need to be addressed).

Move 2: Introducing the offer

- Offering product/service

  e.g. *Best English* now provides a week-long *Communication Training Programme* designed to develop the communicative competence of Chinese professionals.

- Essential detailing of the offer

  e.g. We explain the features of workplace English, and we also discuss different genres of writing and how communicative competence is essential.

- Indicating value of the offer (evaluating the products or services)

  e.g. The programme is both rigorous and flexible. It can be tailored to fit the needs of a whole organisation or just a few levels within the company.

Move 3: Offering incentives

- "To convince the potential customer about the attractiveness of the offer" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 55)
- "To make the offer more attractive in the form of special offers" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 52)

  e.g. We are pleased to inform you that if your company sponsors five or more staff for the training programme, we will offer you a discount of $1,000 per person.

Move 4: Enclosing documents

e.g. For your convenience, I enclose a reservation form which should be completed and returned directly to me.

Move 5: Soliciting response

- To encourage the reader (the prospective customer) to continue further communication by including a specific telephone number and/or the name of the person to contact the company

  e.g. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the programme in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Move 6: Using pressure tactics

- "To push the already inclined or half-inclined customer to take an immediate decision" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 55)
- "To prompt the already half-inclined customers to take a quick action about the product or service being promoted" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 54) (e.g. by offering some additional savings or gains if the customer decides to buy the product or use the service before a specified deadline or by limiting the number of participants required for a course)

  e.g. As the number of participants for the training programme is limited, please confirm as soon as possible if you are going to join.

Move 7: Ending politely

- Situational closings are directly derived from the function of the letter concerned.
- Relational closings indicate the attitude of the writer towards "future business relations (to initiate, maintain or terminate business relations)" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 55) or "future communications" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 49) (to encourage or discourage further communication with regard to a particular matter), and the reader (to build goodwill or threaten action).

  e.g. Thanks for your consideration; please let me know if you have any questions.

Linguistic features in the move structure of sales messages

Based on a collection of 102 sales messages (Chan, 2019), the following section describes the linguistic features in the move structure of sales messages using Bhatia (1993)'s model.

Move 1: Establishing credentials

It briefly gives background information about the company, usually in terms of long history of service. Content words and grammatical words share similar importance in this move. The common language feature is the use of adjectives and prepositions. Adjectives rank second and prepositions rank third in the combined word list (content words and grammatical words). The preposition *in* ranks third in the grammatical word list, only next to the article *the* and conjunction *and*.

e.g. HKIM, founded **<u>in</u>** 1982, is an **<u>independent</u>** marketing professional body in Hong Kong.

Move 2: Introducing the offer

The sub-move of *Essential detailing of the offer* indicates that the products or services provide benefits to the readers. The use of content words such as adjectives of quantity and quality is dominant, ranking second in the combined word list, only next to nouns.

e.g. The new iMac features nearly **twice** the processing speed, **advanced** graphics, and **ultrafast** Thunderbolt I/O.

In the sub-move of *Indicating value of the offer*, grammatical words are mainly used. Specifically, the use of *to*-infinitive is common in indicating in what way the product or service can help the readers. It ranks third in the grammatical word list, only next to the article *the* and conjunction *and*.

e.g. In other words, it **offers** choice and flexibility to you **to achieve** your goal.
Our qualified native English speaking teachers **use** an up-to-date methodology **to make** the classes effective, interactive and interesting.

Move 3: Offering incentives

To increase the chance of purchase, gifts or discounts may be offered to potential customers within a certain period of time through the use of grammatical words. The use of the preposition *for* to refer to customers, products or a period of time is dominant. It ranks third in the grammatical word list, only next to the article *the/a* and conjunction *and*.

e.g. Receive a voucher **for** every successful mortgage application . . .
50% off **for** PolyU staff.
Free e-Cert subscription **for** the first 3 years.

Move 4: Enclosing documents

Only two sales letters collected consist of this move, and no common language features generated for discussion.

Move 5: Soliciting response

Content words are commonly used in this move to solicit response. Imperatives and adjectives rank second and fourth respectively in the combined word list, only next to nouns and number value (e.g. telephone numbers). See the following examples:

e.g. **Activate** now to enjoy our Refunded Return Service on all your future purchases with PayPal.
Should you be **interested** in learning more of it, please feel **free** to contact us.

Move 6: Using pressure tactics

Content words and grammatical words share similar importance in this move. Adjectives and prepositions are used to indicate limited quotas or when the offer expires. Adjectives rank second and prepositions rank third in the combined word list. The preposition *on* is most frequently used.

e.g. Vouchers are **<u>limited</u>** to 500 only **<u>on</u>** a first-come, first-served basis.
Hurry, offer ends **<u>on</u>** 9/30/2015.

Another common language feature is the use of the preposition *to* to specify how many products remained or to whom the offer is given. It is the second most frequently used preposition.

e.g. Vouchers are limited **<u>to</u>** 500 only on a first-come, first-served . . .
. . . because the price will go back **<u>to</u>** $249 after July 15th . . .
. . . off discounted tickets are available **<u>to</u>** PolyU students and staff on a first-come-first-served basis.

Move 7: Ending politely

To-infinitive is commonly found in this move to indicate possible communication in the future, ranking top in the combined word list.

e.g. We'd be keen **<u>to</u>** hear what you think.
Please feel free **<u>to</u>** come . . .

An examination of how successful online sales letters are in garnering sales (Mustafa, Kahar, Bunari, Zakaria, & Habil, 2012) shows how persuasive elements are effectively used. The following shows the analysis based on Cialdini's six principles of persuasion (1993):

Principles of persuasion	**Examples**
Reciprocity	People tend to return a favour e.g. "free samples"; "discounts"; "enclosing bookmarks with survey forms to respondents"
Commitment and consistency	People's desire to commit to their held beliefs and attitudes e.g. "voting for the same political party/candidate even though the candidate has proven to be incompetent"; "signing a partition"
Social proof	People tend to do something that other people are doing e.g. "testimonials for products"; "your neighbor has bought this product too"
Authority	People tend to listen to someone whom they think are having relevant authority or expertise e.g. "toothpaste advertisements with dentists as spokes-persons"; "sports celebrity endorsing sports equipment"
Liking	People tend to be influenced by those they like e.g. "celebrity endorsing products"; "beautiful women and handsome men" in advertisements
Scarcity	People tend to buy products whose availability is limited. e.g. "sale for a limited time period"; "only x number left"; before they are out of stock"

(Mustafa et al., 2012, p. 395)

Findings of the same study (Mustafa et al., 2012) also show that the most frequent move found in the online sales corpora is Move 2: *Introducing the offer*, which is regarded as an obligatory move, as the offer selling particular products or services is the heart of a sales letter. It was also found that specific persuasion principles seem to be used for certain moves and steps of the sales letters. For example, authority is commonly used at the beginning of a sales letter to establish credentials while the only persuasive means used in Move 3*: Offering incentives* is reciprocity.

Another study (Cheung, 2009) examining electronic sales messages arrived at the following moves of a sales letter: Move A: Setting the scene; Move B: Establishing credentials; Move C: Introducing the offer; Move D: Building goodwill; Move E: Offering incentives; Move F: Using pressure tactics; Move G: Triggering action; Move H: Soliciting response; Move I: Reinforcing the offer; Move J: Building rapport. Most core moves (e.g. establishing credentials; introducing the offer; offering incentives; using pressure tactics) are similar to Bhatia (2014)'s and there are more specific sub-moves included to tell how we can for example set the scene and introduce the offer.

The following outlines some sub-moves identified in the study to realise Move A: Setting the scene and Move B: Establishing credentials (Cheung, 2009, p. 36).

Moves	**Steps**
Move A Setting the scene	Step A1: Relating to a social issue e.g. [Translation] According to the latest information from the International Diabetes Federation, Hong Kong has the highest number of diabetic patients in the world, and Singapore ranks fourth. Step A2: Relating to culture e.g. The Year of the Horse is coming. Being the symbol of success and prosperity, the horse is a very popular lunar animal among the Chinese. Step A3: Relating to the market situation e.g. You may have heard about the changes that are taking place in the banking industry because of. . . . I am writing to explain to you how our banking services will be affected. Step A4: Relating to the viewer e.g. Planning a trip for National Day? Having things stolen may be just one of the unwelcome surprises that can happen when you're traveling. Step A5: Relating to the maker/character e.g. With a strong sense of self-reliance, spirit and determination we strive to overcome our disabilities.
Move B Establishing credentials	Step B1: Highlighting financial strengths e.g. [Translation] Since AIG is a leading U.S.-based international insurance and financial services organisation with total assets of over $400 billion, these terrible attacks will not adversely affect our financial structure. Step B2: Highlighting leadership e.g. Fraud can be remote and inaccessible. IFC is the leading event that connects organisations from around the globe. The UN Secretary General fully supports programmes that help to eradicate financial crime, and effective fraud prevention frequently depends on relationships that have been created at this event.

Step B3: Highlighting uniqueness
e.g. You simply can't lose! No publication guides you like Harvard Business School Publishing's Harvard Management Update.

Step B4: Highlighting recognition/status
e.g. [Translation] Thanks to its good value and superb quality, over 95% of the schools in Hong Kong have chosen NEC projector to facilitate classroom teaching, making NEC the distinct number ONE supplier in the market.

Step B5: Highlighting exclusiveness
e.g. Remember, not everyone was selected for this chance to enjoy a free copy of Benchmark and receive a FREE Executive Briefcase.

Step B6: Highlighting expertise
e.g. [Translation] As the leading brand in Thailand, Double A paper is made from the highest quality raw materials with over 17 years of research.

Step B7: Highlighting track records
e.g. [Translation] Earlier on, we successfully helped a well-known Japanese cosmetic brand named "IPSA" to customise and launch its localised website in Hong Kong.

Job application letters

The communicative purpose of a job application letter is to obtain an interview for a job by highlighting relevant information in the curriculum vitae that shows one is qualified for the position. Bhatia (2014) suggested the same seven structural moves of a letter of application arguing that its structure is similar to that of a sales letter.

Structural moves of job application letters

Move 1: Establishing credentials (more or less obligatory)

In sales correspondence, this is where we capture the readers' attention by highlighting the credibility of the writer/company or highlighting the needs of the potential customers that can be addressed by the products/services to be offered. In a job application letter, this is to establish credibility as a job applicant by outlining the position to be applied for and explain briefly one's suitability.

e.g. I am writing to apply for the position of *Marketing Director*, as advertised on careers page. I believe that my rich experience in marketing work and relevant qualifications make me a qualified candidate.

Move 2: Introducing the offer/candidature

Move 2a: Offering the product or service/offering the candidature
Move 2b: Essential detailing of the offer/essential detailing of the candidature
Move 2c: Indicating value of the offer/indicating value of the candidature

Introducing the candidature may come before establishing credentials because of the English sentence structure, as shown in the following example:

e.g. I would like to apply for the position of *Translator*, as advertised in *The South China Morning Post* of 26 November 2018.

Essential detailing of the candidature is to outline briefly one's qualifications, work experience and personality traits.

e.g. I graduated from *The Chinese University of Hong Kong* in *English and Translation* in 1999. I have gained work experience in translation during my internship last summer.

Indicating value of the candidature is important as this is to show how the candidate is qualified.

e.g. Although I am a fresh graduate, I have gained work experience in marketing through internship in summer 2018. Through the experience, I have gained valuable experience of promoting the company, organising events, looking for sponsors, dealing with clients, and so on.

Move 3: Offering incentives

Unlike in a sales letter, we cannot provide incentives in a similar way to employers. In a job application letter, we can offer incentives by adding other information that may appeal to the employers:

e.g. I specialised in translation and interpretation but I can also teach linguistic courses. My cultural background can also ensure a better teacher-student relationship.

Move 4: Enclosing documents

A concise and clear sales message/job application letter is important. Other necessary information such as CV or writing samples should be included as attachment:

e.g. Please refer to my attached resume for details of my qualifications, experience and research interests.

Move 5: Soliciting response

In a job application letter, we need to provide contact information for the employer to arrange for interviews.

e.g. Please feel free to write me at the above address or call me on 27667543.

Move 6: Using pressure tactics

Of course we cannot force the employer to hire us. We can perhaps indicate our availability as shown in the following example:

e.g. I have to give notice to my present employer in early May and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Move 7: Ending politely

A job application letter usually ends with the candidate's desire for an interview opportunity:

e.g. I hope you will find my qualifications and experience useful and I look forward to explaining my suitability to the position in an interview.

Strategies of promoting oneself and language use

To examine the structure and language use of job application letters written by native speakers of English, a corpus of 40 such letters consisting of 1,895 words was created (Henry & Roseberry, 2001); the letters were collected from different sources applying for a range of jobs including secretarial and administrative posts, senior management posts and academic positions. The obligatory and optional moves were identified and also the strategies used to achieve each of the moves.

Move 1: Opening

The job applicant invites the reader to read the letter (40 out of 40 letters examined included this move).

Move 2: Referring to the job advertisement

The job applicant refers to the job advertisement in which the position was named and described (this move was present in 19 letters in a corpus of 40).

Move 3: Offering candidature

The applicant expresses interest in applying for the opening (40).

Move 4: Stating reasons for applying

The applicant gives reasons for applying for the job (11).

Move 5: Stating availability

Indicating when he/she would be able to take up the position (2).

Move 6: Promoting the candidate

Highlighting what makes himself/herself qualified for the position in terms of qualifications, work experience, personalities, etc. (40).

Move 7: Stipulating terms and conditions of employment

Indicating expected salary, desired working hours and other relevant contractual matters (4).

Move 8: Naming referees

Naming referees who can provide references to support the application (2).

Move 9: Enclosing documents

Outlining documents enclosed (34).

Move 10: Polite ending

Closing the letter in a conventional manner (40).

Move 11: Signing

Signature required claiming ownership of the letter (40).

In promoting oneself, there are dominant strategies adopted by native speakers of English, including (1) listing relevant skills and abilities; (2) stating how the skills were obtained; (3) naming present job; (4) listing qualifications; and (5) predicting success.

Listing relevant skills and abilities refers to facts about one's skills and abilities possessed, for example, "I have five years of industrial experience as a fermentation scientist."

There are sentence structures that are common in listing skills and abilities:

- I am Noun Phrase (NP) (e.g. I am a technical writer).
- I am Adjective (Adj) (e.g. I am very skilled with X; I am experienced in X; I am responsible for X).

In positively evaluating oneself, the following sentence structures are also common:

- I consider NP Adj (e.g. I consider myself to be an overachiever/I consider myself adaptable).
- I feel that (e.g. I feel that I possess the ability to do X).

The use of modals is also very common:

- I *can* use my strong capabilities.

Because of the need to list a number of skills and abilities, the use of *also* is dominant (e.g. I also have experience in X; I am also familiar with X).

Stating how the skills were obtained is to emphasise how the experience was obtained: "I recently finished teaching a seven-week short course for radio and TV announcers and newsreaders." In terms of the use of verbs, there is a wide range including participation in important activities (e.g. involved, developed, designed, monitored). These verbs are used in either the present perfect or the simple past. To indicate the time frame, the use of *during* and *which* is also common, together with time adverbials such as *for the last years*; *since 20XX*; *during 20XX*; *during that time*.

In *naming present job*, a variety of tenses are used. An example of the present progressive is *Currently I am working as X*. The simple present can also be used in *Presently I am employed as X*. The present perfect can also be used as in *Since returning to X, I have*. . . .

To *list qualifications*, this sentence structure is dominant: I verb . . . NP (degree). Two verbs are common and they are *graduate* and *complete* (e.g. completed an MA in . . .).

Predicting success means how we believe we will be successful if employed for the position being applied for. This can be done as follows:

- With my experience and education I can be a strong asset to . . .
- My experience of coordinating X and corresponding with Y should put me in good stead to . . .

Duangkhot (2017) analysed an effective job application letter suggesting the importance of praising oneself in this way:

- I feel my educational training and professional background **make me well suited** for the demands of this position.
- I believe the rest of this letter will illustrate **what a great addition I would be to your workforce**.
- As you'll note on my resume, along with **a full complement** of safety courses, **my familiarity with** government safety regulations has been developed through an internship at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.
- It is this type of **innovative thinking**, **hard work**, and **dedication** which I would bring to your department as an Assistant Safety Supervisor.
- The office director was so pleased with my work that I **was given the 2005 Student Worker Award**.

Not just praising oneself, it is also important to praise the company. Note how the candidate praises the company and in return himself:

- I feel my educational training and professional background make me well suited for the demands of this position (praising oneself).
- I am especially interested in your company because I see that you are the **leading insurance company** in the Midwest region and also earned a Worker Safety Zone award from the Winsconsin Safety Commission. I'd love to contribute to **a company as interested in workers' safety as yours seems to be** (praising the company).
- I believe the rest of this letter will illustrate what a great addition I would be to your workforce (praising oneself).

Post-reading activities

I. Answer the following questions using what you learned about persuasive strategies in this chapter:

- Aristotle's three modes of persuasion: _________; _________; _________
- Robert Cialdini's six weapons of influence: _________; __________; _________; _________; _________; _________

1. Why is it important for online shops to get more Facebook likes? What does this imply?

____

2. Why do you think teachers introduce themselves (e.g. work experience, teaching award received) in the first lesson?

____

3. People tend to put tips into the tips jar with lots of money; what can be used to account for this?

____

4. TV ads invited pop stars/dentists/doctors to promote their products or services. Why?

____

5. You tend to be interested in products which are running out of stock. Why?

____

6. There is a pledge saying that customers can request for a refund if they do not like the products bought. Still, not many customers ask for a refund after purchase. Why?

____

7. When you go online or use Facebook, you may notice a big headline asking you to grab the company's free online marketing course. What you need to do is to sign up by entering your email address. What do you think is the intention of doing so?

____

8. An online shop put a badge indicating "the buyer pick"/"best-selling tops" next to some of the clothes and these clothes with the said badge sell at double the rate of styles without the badge. Do you know why?

____

II. You are senior members of staff in a medium-sized, family-owned Hong Kong company (You should decide the nature of the company after reading the background information.). A major international company has expressed a strong interest in buying your company. You are in favour of the takeover because you feel that it is in the long-term interests of your company. Although your company is in a relatively healthy position (profits continue to be satisfactory), it seems to have reached a plateau, partly because it has been slow to adapt to the rapidly changing business environment.

Your task is to announce to the assembled staff that you are minded to go ahead with the takeover. Although you are convinced of the need for the takeover (the potential benefits are overwhelming in your view), you realise that many members of staff – who have become unsettled by takeover rumours in recent weeks – will be highly sceptical. You therefore need to convince them that the takeover is the right way forward for the company.

Start your preparation by noting down the **threats** and **opportunities** presented by the takeover and then plan a short presentation. Do not write a script – you have no time to do this. Just note down the main "moves" that you will make in the presentation. In this task you are not presenting "bad news" – you are firmly convinced that the move is in the best interests of the company (i.e. it is "good news," even though some of the staff may initially view it otherwise).

Prepare a speech and persuade your employees of the advantages of the takeover (and at the same time minimise the disadvantages).

III. Imagine that you are going to promote this book, *English for Business Communication*, in the form of a sales letter. Brainstorm some examples to demonstrate the moves listed in the following table.

Moves	*Examples*
1. Establishing credentials	
2. Introducing the offer	
• Offering the product or service	
• Essential detailing of the offer	
• Indicating value of the offer	
3. Offering incentives	
4. Enclosing documents	
5. Soliciting response	
6. Using pressure tactics	
7. Ending politely	
• Situational closing	
• Relational closing	

IV. Write an effective cover letter applying for a particular position you are interested in. Follow the moves and tips provided in this chapter.

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Chapter 6

Persuasive messages

Enquiry and invitation messages

Questions for reflection

1 Have you written any enquiry messages? What did you enquire about? What did you include in the message?
2 How about invitation messages? Have you written any? Who did you invite? What did you include in the message?
3 In what way are enquiry messages and invitation messages persuasive?

Introduction

Most business communication books on the market do not regard enquiry messages and invitation messages as persuasive. They seem to regard enquiry messages as rather factual messages asking for information or help. Invitation messages are normally put under good-will messages used mainly to invite people to banquets or events including factual details of the event (e.g. date, time).

According to Ashley (2008), an enquiry message should contain: (1) opening; (2) asking for catalogs and price lists; (3) asking for details; (4) asking for samples, patterns, and demonstrations; (5) suggesting terms, methods of payment, and discounts; (6) asking for goods on approval or on sale or return; (7) asking for an estimate or tender; and (8) closing. The tone of writing should not be too causal or too formal. In Bilbow (2015), the first paragraph of an enquiry message is to ask the question we want to have answered (e.g. I would appreciate further details about . . ./We would like you to send us . . ./Could you give some idea about . . .?). The second paragraph is to give details about why you are writing to him/her (e.g. the name of his shop was featured in the newspaper, you saw an advertisement, a friend gave you his name, etc.). We should also give some background information about ourselves, the writer. The last paragraph ends with an expression of how much we appreciate the help. In Guffey (2010), enquiry messages are put under the chapter of *Routine Letters* used mainly for information requests, order requests and simple claim requests. The first paragraph is the opening asking the most important question politely; the body explains the request logically and closing requesting a specific action and showing appreciation.

This chapter explains the role played by persuasion in enquiry messages and invitation messages, and in what way enquiry and invitation messages are effective.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to understand

- what enquiry and invitation messages are;
- how persuasion is involved to make enquiry and invitation messages effective.

Enquiry messages

In an analysis of 522 email messages from a Malaysian private educational institute (AlAfnan, 2015), the four main communicative purposes are discussion messages (36%), enquiry messages (33%), courier messages indicating enclosure (17%), and informing messages (14%). Enquiry messages were found to be the second most common communicative purpose of email messages in the corpus. Thirty-three percent (173 email messages) of the corpus belonged to this type of messages. Findings of the study show how the moves of an enquiry message help realise the communicative purpose of requesting actions: M1: Identifying topic (99%); M2: Salutation (79%); M3: Requesting action (100%); M4: Closing (80%); and M5: Signature (92%).

Enquiry messages refer to the messages that are mainly requests or responding to requests in the workplace. The request is the core move in the first email that carries the enquiry, and the response is the main one in the second email in the chain that carries the reply. Both are jointly regarded as a single communicative purpose. The three content moves are the main move of the communicative purpose, including "requesting or responding to requests," which appeared in all enquiry messages, an intertextual move that related the email to previous correspondence and the supporting move mainly used to further explain the main move.

According to Jalilifar and Beitsayyah (2011), based on an analysis of 100 English business letters enquiring information from local and international companies, the following moves are generated: Move 1: Establishing the negotiation chain (e.g. through addressing and greeting the addressee, defining participants); Move 2: Opening (providing information); Move 3: Requesting information (e.g. asking for catalogues, price lists; asking for details; giving opinions, indicating intention); Move 4: Closing.

We can see from the different studies that enquiry messages are mainly about asking for information, advice or help for different individual purposes. In order to elicit a reply, simply including what you request and what you want to know, however, may not work.

What follows is an authentic enquiry message which is too writer-centred.

Dear XXX,

We are now conducting a benchmarking exercise on manpower and departments involved in the Inauguration Ceremony for New Students/First Assembly and Congregation. The purpose of this exercise is to compare the manpower required and review our practices of organising such kind of events. Information received is strictly confidential and for our reference only.

Grateful if you could answer the following questions or provide contact information of the relevant departments to us:

Welcoming ceremony/inauguration ceremony for new students/first assembly 開學禮

1 Major units/department involved:
Example: Academic Secretariat/Public Relations Office
2 Manpower for major unit/departments:
Example: 10 staff (1 section head, 6 Executive Officers and 3 Clerical Officers)
3 Other units/departments involved:
Example: Alumni Affairs Office, Facilities and Management Office

Congregation (University-wide congregation/conferment of honorary degrees) 畢業禮

4 Major units/departments involved:
Example: Academic Secretariat/Public Relations Office
5 Manpower for major units/departments:
Example: 10 staff (1 section head, 6 Executive Officers and 3 Clerical Officers)
6 Other units/departments involved:
Example: Alumni Affairs Office, Facilities and Management Office
7 No. of target audiences:
Example: 1500

Congregation (Conferment of faculty-based awards/programme-based awards/all other levels of awards) 學院畢業禮

8 Major unit/department involved:
Example: Academic Secretariat or Faculties?
9 Manpower for major unit/departments:
Example: Faculties and departments Administrative Officers (AO)/Executive Officers (EO)/Clerical Officers (CO): Around 1/3/2 (for each section)
10 Other units/departments involved:
Example: Public Relations Office, Alumni Affairs Office
11 No. of sessions for Faculty/School:
Example: Our University has 4 Schools/Faculties and therefore we have 4 individual Commencement Ceremonies
12 No. of graduates:
Example: Around 6000 graduates

This writer is seeking information on certain aspects of organising the inauguration ceremony/first assembly/congregation. This is an *unsolicited* enquiry from one local university to another one. In the Introduction, the writer should state the *purpose* of the message clearly, and should have first identified himself/herself (and the affiliation/department). In nearly any enquiry message, it is a good idea to provide some indirect motivation as to why the recipients should want to help you with your enquiry. This email is rather writer-centred instead and no motivation can be found.

Here is another authentic enquiry message from a jeans company to a department of a local university in Hong Kong.

> Dear Madam,
>
> We are exploring the idea of working with a leading tertiary institution on an innovation idea to offer jeans a new life. Your institution and department came up in our research, and we would like to arrange a preliminary meeting next week to explore the feasibility of a partnership between ABC Jeans Co. and your department.
>
> ABC Jeans Co. designs and markets jeans and jeans-related apparel in more than 150 countries worldwide. Last year, we started a campaign in Asia to collect used jeans from consumers for communities in need. This year we are interested to explore a longer-term innovative solution to recycle the used denim in order to extend the life of the jeans.
>
> So far, we haven't found that global innovative solution yet. ABC Jeans Co. has been a leader in responsible business practices, and we are committed to promoting sustainability in every part of our business. This year, we are also introducing a new care label on all our products that instructs consumers to wash cold, line dry and donate their unwanted jeans. For more than three decades, we've been tackling sustainability at the factory/production level and would like to involve our consumers now, specifically our youth.
>
> Our Senior Director and I will be in Hong Kong next week and we are available on Monday 10 August, any time from 10:00am–2:00pm to meet you. Please let me know if this is possible, and if you have any further questions.
>
> If there is a more appropriate department that I should be writing to, appreciate if you could forward this email to the right person.
>
> Thank you.

Analysis

Clear purpose?

The purpose is stated in the first paragraph (i.e. enquiring about the possibility of partnership). Yet the first paragraph could be improved in three ways:

(1) Identify oneself.
(2) The desire of having a meeting could be mentioned towards the end of the letter after the recipient has been convinced that there is a need for the cooperation, and then the meeting.
(3) The idea/purpose of the project could be made clearer. The readers might not understand what it means by "giving jeans a new life." Though the need can be explained in detail in the body, making this clear in the introduction is still significant.

Need for partnership?

- Explore a longer term innovative solution to recycle the used denim.
- Commitment to sustainability.
- Desire to include the youth to be part of the sustainability conversation.

Motivation for response?

- The idea of working with a leading tertiary institution.

Effective as an enquiry message overall?

In order to elicit a response, and even make the tertiary institution interested in the cooperation, the following points should be noted:

(a) The idea of partnership should be clearly stated in the letter. What kind of partnership is it? What kind of role does the jeans company expect the institution to play? Explain why the institution is chosen specifically.
(b) More information about why and how the project is innovative and significant should be included.
(c) Try to highlight how it is honoured to work with the jeans company in such a meaningful project (information can be found but some in the second paragraph and some the third paragraph. Such information should be presented in a more structured way).
(d) Highlight how the partnership can benefit both parties (reputation of this particular department of this institution; university students, etc.).

The following shows an effective enquiry message. The need for the information requested is clear, and there is enough motivation for the recipient to reply.

Dear Dr Chan,

I am writing to find out more about the ABC organic series of massage oil that are claimed to significantly soothe menstrual pain for a course paper I am working on, which a representative at Choice informed me that your clinic is using.

I read Choice's article of this series of massage oil in the November 2018 issue of *Menstrual Forecast* and have become very interested in it. I wrote to the company and obtained much information about the product, and was recommended to approach users of the product as well.

I am working on a course paper related to this topic and I need help with the following questions:

1 How effective are the ABC organic series of massage oil compared to other devices or similar products your patients are using?
2 What do your patients think about using massage oil in soothing menstrual pain?
3 Are there any problems your patients experience with the products?

The Choice representative indicated that your clinic is one of the leaders in exploring innovative means for patients, and therefore I am eager to hear from you. In the report I will acknowledge your contributions, and will send you a copy of the completed report if you are interested.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.
Mary Tsang

Analysis

Background information

This writer is seeking information about a new series of organic massage oil. Note that the information she requests may not be obtained from other means such as through reading articles, brochures or advertisements about the products.

Introduction

- Concise and clear introduction.
- The writer politely states the purpose of the letter and refers to a contact that has pointed to the recipient as someone whom she can consult with.

Other sources

In an unsolicited letter, try to establish that you have looked at other readily available sources of information. The second paragraph conveys the idea that the writer has done her "homework."

Need

- The writer must establish why he/she needs the information. The writer does so in the third paragraph and outlines specific questions.
- The writer is asking very specific questions whose answers are probably not available from any source other than those who are actually using the products. The questions are numbered which should make it easier for the recipient to answer them.

Motivation

It is a good idea to indicate to the recipients why you chose them. It is also useful to indicate how you are going to use the information and why it might be in the recipient's best interest to answer your enquiries.

Invitation messages

An invitation is a directive and politeness behaviour intended to "commit the reader to some future course of action" (Searle, 1979, p. 14). A typical invitation message aims at inviting a reader to participate in a social-business activity (Yli-Jokipii, 1996) organised by the writer or the writer's company for social or business purposes (Chakorn, 2007). The typical moves for invitation, as advised by Chakorn (2002) are as follows: Move 1: Inviting;

Move 2: Establishing the context; Move 3: Detailing: (a) Structure of the event; (b) prominence of the event; (c) evaluation/indication of benefit; Move 4: Soliciting response/anticipating acceptance; Move 5: Statement of limitation; Move 6: Expressing thanks.

Zhu (2001), in her study on English and Chinese trade fair invitation letters, emphasises the persuasive orientation and divergent cultural preference in persuasion such as strong preference to logic appeals (reason and evidence) in English invitations, and Chinese invitations' emphasis on both logic and emotions in a formal and respectful manner so as to establish a host-guest relationship for long-term collaboration. Chakorn (2002, 2007) found that English and Thai invitations have similar move structures and common linguistic features. In line with Zhu's (2001)'s findings, English invitations tend to focus on rational appeals whilst Thai ones tend to use logos (reason and benefit), ethos (writer's claim, e.g. sincerity) and pathos (reader's emotion, e.g. being respected) for relationship-building purposes.

Move structure analysis

The following section describes the move structure of invitation messages using Bhatia (1993)'s model, and the language features involved as found in Chan (2019) based on a collection of 88 invitation messages. Regarding language features, both grammatical words and content words are used as persuasive appeals. Grammatical words express structural relationship with other words in a sentence. They provide more information about the nouns (e.g. using prepositions of place or time), give reasons or purposes (e.g. *to*-infinitive) or indicate the relationship between ideas or events (e.g. conjunctions). Content words carry specific meanings and they can be nouns, adjectives or verbs. For the analysis of persuasiveness, they are further grouped in semantic categories belonging to different meaning groups as shown in Table 6.1. Generally, meanings are related to perception (e.g. emotion, psychology), culture (e.g. social actions, relation), concept (e.g. time, quantity, quality) and life experience (e.g. money, country, world).

Table 6.1 Semantic categories

Meaning groups	*Semantic categories*
Perception	1 Emotion
	2 Psychological actions, states & processes
Culture	1 Arts & crafts
	2 Government & public
	3 Education
	4 Language & communication
	5 Social actions, states & processes
	6 Names & grammar
Concept	1 General & abstract terms
	2 Numbers & measurement
	3 Time
	4 Science & technology
Life experience	1 The body & the individual
	2 Food & farming
	3 Architecture, housing & home
	4 Money & commerce in industry
	5 Entertainment, sports & games
	6 Life & living things
	7 Movement, location, travel & transport
	8 Substances, materials, objects & equipment
	9 World & environment

Based on the move structure of Bhatia's study on sales messages, eight moves are identified in the invitation messages (i.e. Headline [96.5%], Establish credentials [27.2%], Introduce the event [100%], Offer incentives [18.1%], Enclose attachments [31.8%], Solicit response [87.5%], Use pressure tactics [27.2%], End politely [86.3%]). In these moves, either logical appeal or emotional appeal is used (Chakorn, 2007; Zhu, 2001). Logical appeal is to use reasons or evidence to persuade readers to participate in the event. For emotional appeal, the writer attempts to create a host-guest relationship to show respect and sincerity in making invitations. Together with some pressure tactics, the strategies used in invitation messages seem to be different.

Move 1: Headline

According to Chan (2019), grammatical words are more dominantly used in this move, specifically prepositions. Prepositions are commonly used in headlines to highlight the target audience or the promoted items. It ranks top in the grammatical word list.

e.g. Invitation to International Symposium **<u>on</u>** Cutting-Edge Molecules **<u>for</u>** Biological Materials and Imaging Applications
Free Talks **<u>on</u>** Child Development **<u>for</u>** Parents **<u>by</u>** Rehabilitation Clinic
An Introduction Workshop **<u>on</u>** Music **<u>with</u>** Movement Intervention **<u>for</u>** Health Professionals

Move 2: Establish credentials

Both grammatical words and content words share the same importance in this move. The preposition *in* is commonly used for the following purposes. It ranks top in the grammatical word list.

e.g. Our conferences **<u>in</u>** Florida have been very successful. (achievement in a particular place)
. . . an open recognition of organisation achievements **<u>in</u>** manpower development and training . . . (being recognised in a particular area)
As more and more new technological tools have been developed **<u>in</u>** recent years for corpus linguistics research, . . . (indicating the time)

To establish credentials, adjectives are also commonly used. They rank top in the content word list mainly used to describe the credibility of the company/organisation or the product/service as something recently introduced or developed:

e.g. We are pleased to inform you that a **<u>new</u>** Institutional Development Scheme . . .
Our association is a **<u>renowned</u>** organisation cooperating with the best academic institutions around the world.

Move 3: Introduce the event

All of the invitation messages collected have this move. In sub-move (1) *Offer the event*, content words and grammatical words are both dominant. The adverb *cordially* and the pronoun *you* are used to show respect. *To*-infinitive is used to specify the event one is being invited to. The adverb *cordially* ranks top in the content word list. Grammatical words *to* and *you* rank second and fourth respectively in the grammatical word list, only next to the article *the* and conjunction *and*.

e.g. **You** are **cordially** invited **to** attend a talk on . . .

This is then followed by logical appeals in sub-move (3) *Evaluate the value*, in which the event is highlighted as something worth joining. *To*-infinitive is used to invite (ranking third), and prepositions (ranking fourth, only next to the article *the* and conjunction *and*) to specify the theme of the events involved or introduce relevant expertise.

***To*-infinitive**

e.g. We are very pleased **to announce** that the Serving Islam Team (I-1K) and the Islamic Cultural Association (ICA) will participate in the 22nd Hong Kong Book Fair.
You are cordially invited **to participate** in this important event.

Prepositions

e.g. Hear from **leading world experts on** the key communication, assessment, management and technological issues facing the BPO industry.
Its products are **widely used in** computer, communication and consumer electronics systems and are **essential in** the timing, switching, bridging and conditioning of high-speed signals.

Move 4: Offer incentives

After using emotional and logical appeals, monetary or non-monetary benefit in terms of discount is offered to encourage readers' participation. Grammatical words are more dominantly used, specifically through the preposition *for* to indicate the intention to offer. Prepositions third in the grammatical word list, only next to the articles *the/a* and conjunction *and*.

e.g. We will be preparing **for** you a gift of well-wishes: a laptop
At the moment we offer a free tour **for** each paying participant
. . . you may be eligible **for** a 50% discount

Move 5: Enclose documents

This provides further persuasion out of the space constraint in an invitation email. Prepositions *to* and *for* are commonly used, which rank second and third respectively in the grammatical word list, only next to the article *the*. They are used in this language pattern: *verb + to . . . for + noun* or *for + noun . . . verb + to* as shown here:

e.g. You may refer **to** the below poster **for** workshop details.
For more information about the ITS, please refer **to** the attached poster.

Move 6: Solicit response

This is to provide contact details to make it easier for the readers to respond. The preposition *at* is commonly used. It ranks top in the grammatical word list.

e.g. Contact Mr Lemon Kwan (PDO) now **at** 3400 2809 for free tickets
. . . registration and payment are done online **at** http: **32;454

Move 7: Use pressure tactics

The preposition *on* is commonly used for the following purposes. It ranks third in the grammatical word list, only next to auxiliary verbs *is/are* and articles *the/a*.

e.g. They are allocated **on** a first-come-first-served basis.
Seats are available **on** a first-come-first-served basis.
Returning the Reply Slip **on** or before 30 October 2015.

Move 8: End politely

Around one-third of the invitation messages use emotional appeal in sub-move (1) *Situational ending* to describe the writer's intention of anticipating the readers' acceptance. The use of prepositions (ranking top in the grammatical word list) *to*, *in* and *at* in this language pattern is common: *verb* + *to* . . . *in*/*at*. This is to refer to a future act in a certain location or a particular year.

e.g. We look forward **to** seeing you **at** the event.
We look forward **to** serving you **in** 2015.

Semantic categories involved in the moves using emotional appeal

Emotional appeal (64.7%) is frequently used in the sub-move *Offer the event*. The semantic category of perception (e.g. emotion of liking) is commonly used as shown here:

e.g. I **would like** to invite . . .
I **have the pleasure** to invite . . .

Emotional appeal is also formed by the semantic category of culture, mainly in the aspects of social action (e.g. respect) and relation (e.g. pronouns *you/we*).

e.g. **You** are **cordially** invited . . .
We are **honoured** to invite . . .

The semantic categories of emotion and respect form a polite invitation altogether and the category of relation *we/you* creates solidarity between the writer and the readers.

e.g. It is **my great pleasure** to invite **you** and **your** students . . .

Finally, the invitation is closed in the sub-move *Situational ending* by another category of perception (e.g. psychology of expecting). This is to show that the writer is sincere in inviting the reader to join the function.

e.g. We **look forward** to seeing you.

Semantic categories involved in the moves using logical appeal

Logical appeal is realised by the semantic categories of concept (e.g. quality) and life experience (e.g. countries and world). In the moves of *Establish credentials* and *Evaluate the value*, credentials are developed through the concepts of "good quality" and life experience about geography such as "international."

e.g. . . . demonstrated **outstanding** accomplishments in manpower training and development as Manpower Developer
. . . scientific exchange between **internationally renowned** experts and young scientists

Similar to emotional appeal, different semantic categories are used together with the category of relation, i.e. the use of pronouns *we/you* as follows:

e.g. . . . the **achievements we** have made . . .
. . . applied to **improve** performance in **your** centre.

Semantic categories involved in other persuasive moves

The semantic categories commonly used in other persuasive moves are mainly related to the category of concept about time and quantity and that of life experience about money value. In the move of *Use pressure tactics*, the concept of limited time and quantity is used to show urgency. The purpose is to urge the readers to take action immediately.

e.g. This admission to the meeting is free, but seats are **limited**: do not miss this chance, complete the registration form and return to us **as soon as possible**.

In the move of *Offer incentives*, the semantic category of experience concerning favourable money value is used to encourage the readers to join the event.

e.g. Each outstanding team will be awarded a trophy and a **cash prize**.
To benefit train Advance Bookings, including ticket **discounts** of up to 15%.

Move structure comparison between sales correspondence and invitation messages

The moves used to persuade in sales correspondence and invitation messages are rather different. Sales messages have significant use of *Offer incentives* (57.9%) and *Attach document* (50%) that are not quite common in invitation messages (18.1% / 31.8%). These two specific moves are used because additional benefit and information about the promoted items can further stimulate the readers' desire to purchase.

Invitation messages, on the other hand, tend to focus on mutual business relationships. Physical appearance in social-business events is emphasised (Yli-Jokipii, 1996). This is not to explicitly promote sales to boost profits. Rather, the benefits are in the aspects of networking, sharing professional responsibilities and promoting a professional image of the company (Chakorn, 2007). Therefore, *End politely* is used very frequently (86.4%), which is not the case as in sales messages (34.3%). Polite ending is important in invitations to show the writer's sincerity and respect. In protecting the positive face of the target readers, the possibility or likelihood of participation may be higher.

Post-reading activities

I. Read the following scenario and write an enquiry letter.

Scenario: The five Starcraft players in Korea have been selected for the 2016 Starcraft World Cup held in Cairo. The best 50 players in the world will fight it out to determine which player (and therefore country) reigns supreme on the Starcraft battlefield. National pride is on the line, as a country's IT ability and infrastructure (broadband, hardware and software) are seen to be reflected in a country's video gaming industry.

All five members belong to a non-profit organisation called the Korean Starcraft Competitive Association, which was formed by the Department of IT at Korean National IT University in 1993 with the vision of enhancing Korea's IT industry. You work for the KSCA as an administrative liaison officer and are mainly responsible for coordinating national tournaments. Part of your job requirements specify that you are responsible for fundraising and/or applying for government grants for international events. As such, you are required to contact Dr Trent Robins, the Associate Head of the Department of Information Technology, who is responsible for administrating university subsidies and represent the five potential competitors in a grant submission.

After negotiating with the *Mum's For Hand Eye Coordination Association* (MFHECA) you have received their pledge of $10,000 US depending on your successful bid to receive a further $10,000 US grant from the Department of IT.

Your enquiry letter is extremely important as it will determine whether the five invitees will attend the World Cup with a total of $20,000 US in grants or if Korean national pride will be dealt a severe blow due to your inability to write a decent enquiry letter.

II. A persuasive message to your boss

You are studying an MA programme in the English Department. Taking the subject *Practicum*, which involves inviting speakers from different professions giving talks on issues relating to communication or language, you agreed with your classmates about inviting your boss to give a talk. How are you going to write this persuasive message? You could create information if you see fit.

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Chapter 7

Formal business reports/proposals

Questions for reflection

1 What are various reasons why companies and organisations need to write reports (and why more reports are being produced than ever before)? Define business reports in one sentence.

2a Business reports can be classified in a number of ways. Here is a common classification (i.e. according to **function**). In what ways do informational and analytical reports differ?

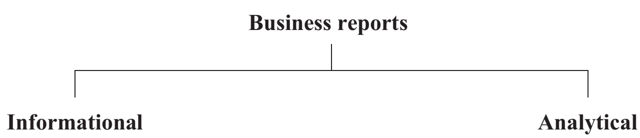


Figure 7.1 One way to classify business reports

2b What other classifications can you think of? Note down other ways of classifying business reports in the circles in Figure 7.2. Write in the various categories of report under each general heading (e.g. under the heading **function** we can include **informational** and **analytical**).

3 How is a business report different from a proposal?

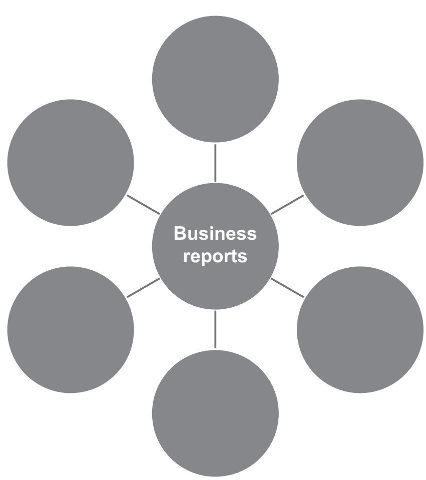


Figure 7.2 Different ways of classifying business reports

Introduction

A business report is an organised and objective presentation of facts needed to make decisions and solve problems. According to Yeung (2007, p. 159), it refers to "documents containing information and opinions as a result of careful investigation and consideration, with the purpose of furthering the business operations of an organisation in the private or public sector in fulfillment of its goals." Thomas Sant, consultant and author of over $11 billion worth of business reports and proposals, suggests that "today, more than ever, success in business requires knowing how to write powerful, persuasive proposals and reports. From large corporations to the smallest entrepreneurial operations, business people are demanding proposals so that they can compare apples to apples" (Guffey, 2001, p. 180). There is an increase in report writing for organisations because of (1) business expansion – need for reports in large organisations; (2) globalisation of business – reports written in an increasingly international environment; (3) government requirements – to comply with the law and regulations.

While business reports investigate a problem or need and report in a factual manner on what was found, proposals seek permission to undertake further studies, research or investigations into a problem or need. The purpose is to identify needs or problems with the intention of receiving permission from superiors/clients to implement suggested solutions or recommendations (e.g. IBM prepared a proposal for a leading tennis tournament in 2000 providing data management solutions).

Business reports are divided into different types according to function (informational/analytical); time (periodic/progress/special); formality (personal/impersonal); and format (memo/letter/form/report). This chapter focuses on formal analytical business reports including not just data or information collected as in informational reports, but conclusion and recommendations. The differences between business reports and proposals are also highlighted.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand how to write a formal business report;
- determine the differences between a business report and a proposal;
- apply the skills required in preparing business reports/proposals and also carrying out other communicative tasks in the workplace.

Overall structure of business reports

A comparison is made between the structure of business reports as commonly depicted in business communication textbooks and that of authentic business reports collected from the workplace (Yeung, 2007). While textbooks suggest six sections to be included in a business report, including *Executive Summary*; *Introduction*; *Methods*; *Findings*; *Conclusion*; and *Recommendations*, only *Introduction*, *Findings and Interpretations* and *Recommendations* seem compulsory in authentic business reports.

Many business reports essentially contain the following sections:

- Introduction (Why did you write the report?)
- Methodology (How did you gather the data?)
- Findings/discussion (What are the results?)
- Conclusions (An interpretation or summary of the results)
- Recommendations (What suggestions can you make?)

Introduction

The *Introduction* of a business report is to prepare readers for the main findings by putting the report into context. Necessary background information should be put here. For example, in an internal report prepared by an airline company concerning how to restructure the costing system, there is a general review in the *Introduction* of current principles and practices in comparable companies and industries before an examination of its own system and evaluation of which accounting method should be adopted in the company (Yeung, 2007). In another report prepared by a consulting company, information about the general principles of management was presented before reporting the findings and recommendations based on an internal investigation.

Methodology

This section is to discuss how secondary information was collected covering methods, justification or rationale of the methods, participants, procedure of data collection. The English simple past is normally used together with passive sentence structures. According to Yeung (2007) based on an analysis of 22 authentic business reports collected mainly from Hong Kong, also Singapore, Malaysia and the United Kingdom, the *Method* section seems to be optional in authentic reports. Even when they were mentioned, they were presented in a few sentences or a short paragraph. According to the interview data collected in the study, the methods used might be too technical for the readers as some may involve hiring experts to conduct the examination, which explains why the *Methods* section in authentic business reports tends to be very short. For example, the following is quite typical in the business reports examined:

e.g. The preliminary scoping study commenced in January 1995 and several imminent issues were then brought to the attention to the study team (from a consultancy report).

Findings/discussion

This is the most important part where all the facts and details are stated, and findings interpreted. Common business communication textbooks tend to miss the latter part about data interpretation. This section is divided into logical sub-sections to make reading easier. Tables, graphs and graphics related to factual information are also included in this section.

Conclusions

This section examines the factual information presented in the findings, in conjunction with the objectives of the report and states the logical implications or conclusions reached. New facts and personal opinions should not be included in this section. This section is used to state an objective interpretation of the facts. In some cases, conditional sentences can also be used to demonstrate that if something were to happen due to certain facts, it would cause a reaction.

Recommendations

This section is used to give advice, suggestions or recommendations. All recommendations should be based on facts from the findings section and logical conclusions reached in the conclusion section. As these suggestions refer to the future, the present simple can be used with prepositional phrases (e.g. *in three months*; *in a few months' time*) that suggest future time; present continuous can also be used. As the recommendations are hypothetical in nature (have not occurred yet), *would* and *should* can also be used in this section – the former if the author is less certain of the proposed suggestions and the latter if more certain.

After the report, two main components are appendices and references. Each appendix should be self-contained (does not need other information to explain it) and correctly labeled using either letters (e.g. Appendix A) or numbers (e.g. Appendix 1).

Examples: Three mini-reports

The following shows three mini-reports consisting of *Introduction*, *Methodology*, *Findings/discussion*, *Conclusion* and *Recommendations*.

1 The Board of Governors of *St Bruce's Secondary School for Boys and Young Women* commissioned us to conduct a preliminary investigation to ascertain the reasons for the high turnover rate of staff. All of the 40 staff who had left in the last 5 years were sent a questionnaire (Please see Appendix A.). The response rate was just 29%. The vast majority of the teachers who had left had resigned rather than being fired. The reasons for leaving were as follows: low pay (26%), poor prospects (17%), moving to new area (7%), long working hours (39%), students' quality (8%), and other reasons (3%). The fact that the teacher had to work a total of over 60 hours per week appears to be the main reasons of staff dissatisfaction. In view of the aforementioned points, we feel that more part-time tutors should be employed to reduce the teaching load of the current full-time staff.

2 In June 2018, the management of Hui and Chan Co Ltd wrote to us asking for a solution to the stock problem at their Tai Po warehouse. A full-scale inventory of all the branches was carried out from 19–29 August 2018. While the depot at Tai Po was indeed constantly understocked, the other depots at Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong and Lai Chi Kok were often overstocked with the result that much of the produce had to be destroyed. It seems obvious that this was a distribution problem rather than a stock problem. The best solution would be to set up a new department responsible for the stock levels of all depots.

3 The productivity of the sales assistants at the Tuen Mun branch of *Sports Today* footwear store has fallen off drastically over the past few years. It was decided to explore the feasibility of introducing a clocking on/off system to ensure that employees are not arriving late or leaving early. In addition, punctual staff were to be rewarded with bonus payments, while late staff would have their pay docked. A pilot study was carried out for a trial period of three months.

Time-keeping:	*Before*	*After*
On time	40%	65%
10 minutes late	20%	15%
10–20 minutes late	10%	5%
Over 20 minutes late	23%	17%
Sales (HK$/day)	40,350	37,589

The staff's time-keeping generally improved while sales still fell. As it seems apparent that the clocking on/off system does not work, management is urged to examine other ways of improving productivity.

Mini-reports analysis

As the three mini-reports show, the *Introduction* sets the scene by giving background information or telling the purpose of the study:

- The Board of Governors of *St Bruce's Secondary School for Boys and Young Women* commissioned us to conduct a preliminary investigation to ascertain the reasons for the high turnover rate of staff.
- In June 2018, the management of Hui & Chan Co Ltd wrote to us asking for a solution to the stock problem at their Tai Wo warehouse.
- The productivity of the sales assistants at the Yuen Long branch of *Sports Today* footwear store has fallen off drastically over the past few years. It was decided to look at the practicability of introducing a clocking on/off system to ensure that employees are not arriving late or leaving early. In addition, punctual staff were to be rewarded with bonus payments, while late staff would have their pay docked.

The use of the English simple past and passive is common in the *Methodology* section (e.g. were sent; was carried out):

- All of the 40 staff who had left in the last 5 years *were sent* a questionnaire (Please see Appendix A.). The response rate was disappointingly low at 29%.
- A full-scale inventory of all the branches *was carried out* from 19–29 August 2018.
- A pilot study *was carried out* for a trial period of two months.

Findings report objectively the data collected. They should also be discussed and interpreted as discussed later in the next section. For example, paragraph 1 is about the reasons of high turnover rate; in paragraph 2 stock problem at the warehouse; and in 3 the low productivity of sales assistants:

- The reasons for leaving were as follows: low pay (26%), poor prospects (17%), moving to new area (7%), long working hours (39%), students' quality (8%), and other reasons (3%).

- While the depot at Tai Po was indeed constantly understocked, the other depots at Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong and Lai Chi Kok were often overstocked with the result that much of the produce had to be destroyed.
- The staff's time-keeping generally improved while sales still fell.

Conclusion is to relate the data collected to the objectives of the report. It states the logical implications or conclusions reached:

- The fact that the teacher had to work a total of over 60 hours per week appears to be the main reasons of staff dissatisfaction.
- It seems obvious that this was a distribution problem rather than a stock problem.
- As it seems apparent that the clocking on/off system does not work, . . .

Recommendations are the proposed based on the conclusions reached.

- In view of the aforementioned points, we feel that more part-time tutors should be employed to reduce the teaching load of the current full-time staff.
- The best solution would be to set up a new department responsible for the stock levels of all depots.
- Management is urged to examine ways of improving productivity.

Writing up findings

Table 7.1 shows the moves of writing up the findings.

Table 7.1 Moves of writing up findings

Business reports: Writing up findings/discussions
In formal reports, writers often go through the following "moves" when writing up their findings:

Move 1: Introduce the theme of the section

↓

Move 2: Refer the reader to the table, chart, graph, etc.

↓

Move 3: Report the main/significant findings

↓

Move 4: Interpret the findings

↓

Move 5: Make claims about the findings

Move 1 is to introduce the theme of the section indicating what the section or paragraph is about (please see moves identified in the following example). Before reporting detailed findings, we first refer the reader to the table, chart or graph for details, which is Move 2. Move 3 reports core findings relevant to the aims of the business report, specifically in this example

Table 7.2 Five moves and the corresponding examples (examples extracted from Evans & Green, 2003)

Moves	*Examples*
Move 1: Introduce the theme of the section	This section examines the extent to which Chinese professionals working in the public and private sectors need to write, read and speak/listen in English at work.
Move 2: Refer the reader to the table, chart or graph for details	The findings relating to writing in English are presented in Table 7.2.
Move 3: Report the main/significant findings	As might be expected, the documents which the subjects write most frequently in English are emails, faxes, memos and letters. When we compare the use of written English in government, quasi-governmental organisations and private companies several interesting patterns emerge. First, . . . Second . . .
Move 4: Interpret the findings	The importance of English in external communication in the private sector can largely be explained by the fact that professionals working for local and international companies are often required to transact business with clients, partners and colleagues in Hong Kong and overseas, and English, as the principal language of international business, is the natural medium for such communications. The use of Chinese partly stems from the administration's public-sector language policy, but perhaps a more important determinant of language use in quasi-governmental organisations is the fact that practitioners in this area (e.g. health-care professionals, social workers) need to communicate with the public.
Move 5: Make claims about the findings	The findings indicate that written English continues to play an important role in the post-1997 workplace.

the use of English in public and private sectors. Move 4 is to interpret the findings which means explaining and accounting for them. Move 5 is what we do in the *Conclusion*, that is, making claims about the findings. Table 7.2 outlines examples for illustration.

Use of language in discussing findings

In discussing findings, the use of hedging devices is very common. Our interpretations or comments may not be 100% true and therefore we try not to be very definite in accounting for the findings. The following shows the different hedging devices that can be used, followed by a sample text demonstrating different uses.

Hedging techniques

1. Hedging verbs

The following hedging verbs are often used when we express what we think:

suggest indicate estimate assume

e.g. The findings **indicate** that written English continues to play an important role in the post-1997 workplace (Evans & Green, 2003).

The verbs *appear* and *seem* are used when a writer wishes to distance himself/herself from the findings (and therefore avoid making a strong claim).

e.g. On the evidence of the findings presented, it **appears** that the tertiary students in Hong Kong generally have less need to speak in English outside the classroom.

Note that the writer also "protects" himself/herself by using the phrase *on the evidence of*. These expressions are used in a similar way: *according to, on the basis of, based on*.

2. Modal verbs

Another way of appearing "confidently uncertain" is to use modal verbs such as *may, might, could* and *can*.

e.g. There **may** be various implications of the findings of this study for English language teachers (Rasool & Winke, 2019).

3. Adverbs

The following adverbs are often used when a writer wishes to express caution.

probably	**possibly**	**perhaps**	**maybe**
apparently	**seemingly**	**presumably**	**conceivably**

e.g. The use of Chinese partly stems from the administration's public-sector language policy, but **perhaps** a more important determinant of language use in quasi-governmental organisations is the fact that practitioners in this area (e.g. health-care professionals, social workers) need to communicate with the public (Evans & Green, 2003).

4. Adjectives

Another technique is to use an adjective.

probable **possible** **uncertain** **unlikely**

e.g. One **possible** factor is that their friends live in an English-speaking country.

5. Nouns

The following nouns can also be used:

probability **possibility** **assumption** **evidence** **likelihood** **claim**

e.g. The **evidence** suggests that undergraduates rarely communicate with their family members in English.

6. Generalisation

There are several ways in which you can qualify a generalisation.

a You can use the verb **tend** or the noun (have/be a) **tendency** (to).
e.g. As the data show, tertiary students **tend** not to speak English very frequently outside class.

b You can use an adverb such as:

generally	**largely**	**primarily**	**for the most part**
predominantly	**mainly**	**usually**	**to a great extent**

e.g. The importance of English in external communication in the private sector can **largely** be explained by the fact that professionals working for local and international companies are often required to transact business with clients, partners and colleagues in Hong Kong and overseas, and English, as the principal language of international business, is the natural medium for such communications.

c You can use a qualifying expression such as *most* or *the majority of*.
e.g. **The majority of** students in English-medium schools are likely to have received more training in communicating with native speakers of English.

d You can identify exceptions by using expressions such as **apart from, except for or with the exception of**.
e.g. Young people in Hong Kong understandably have little need to speak English, **apart from** in situations where they need to prepare for English language examinations.

Sample text: Use of hedging devices

This study was a mixed methods research study with a simple sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2014). The results <u>indicate</u> that Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System is valid in the English-language learning context of Pakistan. The participants <u>mostly</u> favoured English as the official language of Pakistan and as the medium of competitive examinations.

Another important scale that we want to discuss was the Ought-to L2 Self. According to Dörnyei (2005), the Ought-to L2 Self is associated with the desire of an individual to preempt any possible failure in the future by acquiring certain characteristics. The findings about this scale in this study <u>suggest</u> that Pakistani learners are well aware about where they ought to be, in terms of English use, in their future.

Native speakers of English have very little to do, <u>perhaps</u>, with this motivational context, as reported by participant S8, which prompts us to suggest that future researchers should tease apart, with a longer integrativeness survey, the various types of integrativeness that World Englishes contexts provide.

This study was conducted to find out if Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System is valid in the context of Pakistan and can be used to understand the L2 attitudes and motivation of Pakistani learners. We found the answer is <u>mostly</u> yes, with the caveat that Pakistani learners may not envision native speakers of English when they think of integrativeness or their attitude towards the L2. This finding is mostly in line with the findings of another study in the Pakistani context (Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013) in which the researchers found that this theoretical framework was valid in understanding the second language motivation of the participants in another part of the country.

There may be various implications of the findings of this study for English language teachers. According to Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2013), teachers can help their students in achieving the goal of clear future selves by using various activities and motivational strategies in their classes.

A comprehensive study on the issues of the official language of the country and the medium of instruction and examinations would be helpful in understanding the attitudes of the learners toward English in the present globalised era. Also, a thorough study in this area could be very useful considering the viewpoint that using English as the medium of instruction and examinations in multilingual settings may marginalize other local languages (Coleman, 2010; Coleman & Capstick, 2012).

(Adapted from Rasool & Winke, 2019)

Writing the conclusion

The main purpose of the conclusion is to summarise and highlight the significance of your main findings. Do not introduce any new material (e.g. results, analyses) in this section.

If you want to draw a clear conclusion about your findings, you can use these expressions:

- It can be concluded that . . .
- The findings clearly indicate that . . .
- It is clear that . . .
- The study has found/demonstrated/revealed/shown that . . .

If you want to express caution when drawing conclusions, you can use these expressions:

- The findings seem/appear to indicate that . . .
- The results suggest that . . .
- The evidence points to . . .

Conclusions often contain expressions of generality such as:

- The main . . .
- In general . . .
- Overall . . .
- Taken as a whole . . .
- On the whole . . .
- Generally speaking . . .

Here are three examples of conclusions from reports. The concluding remarks made by the writer are underlined in the following examples.

Example A

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the mandatory safety training course offered to Safety Officers selected from different departments of the University. Most of the participants found the course useful and practical. Female participants were generally more positive about the course than the male ones. The vast majority of the participants reported that they found the course content interesting and insightful. Findings of the study suggest that there is a correlation between accidents and employees' education level, drinking and smoking habits, working experience, overtime work, and attitude towards work safety.

Example B

This study of trends in graduate employment in 2018 has found that the majority of the participants were in full-time employment at the time the survey was conducted. The starting salaries received by most of the graduates ranged from $13,000 to $18,000 per month. The main factors which the participants considered when selecting their jobs were salary/remuneration package, career prospect and whether overtime work is involved. When asked about the difficulties they encountered in the job hunting process, most of the graduates surveyed felt that they had difficulty with the use of both spoken and written English in preparing for interviews, application letters and CV. Concerning their perception of their current job, most of the participants were satisfied to a large extent. Specifically, the most satisfying aspects of their jobs covered the following: "having a good relationship with colleagues and superior," "interesting and challenging work," and "no overtime work." As regards job motivation, the female participants believed that "good working relationship" was the most important factor, while the male participants opted for "career prospect."

Example C

This study has found that English continues to function as the main medium of written communication in the post-1997 professional workplace. As might be expected, there was some degree of variation in the use of English in the government, government-related and private sectors. English is apparently still the primary language of internal written communication in the civil service, which suggests that government initiatives to promote greater use of written Chinese have yet to be fully implemented. Although English was also found to be the main written language in quasi-governmental organisations, such bodies also appear to make use of Chinese in external communication for particular purposes. The findings indicate that Chinese professionals who work for foreign-owned companies make greater use of written English in external and internal communication than their counterparts in the Hong Kong–owned sector. Generally speaking, professionals who work for large Hong Kong–owned companies need to read or write in English slightly more than those who work for small local companies. The findings relating to spoken communication suggest that contextual factors play a greater role in determining language choice than is the case with written communication. Cantonese appears to be the unmarked language of intra-ethnic communication, particularly in informal, interpersonal business settings, while the use of English seems to be restricted to situations such as presentations and meetings where expatriates are present (Evans & Green, 2003).

Writing recommendations

Recommendations are actions or measures which a writer believes should be taken on the basis of the conclusion of the report. When you write recommendations, you will often want to demonstrate how your recommendation is derived from a particular conclusion. You can use these expressions to indicate the connection between your conclusion and recommendations:

- Given . . .
- In view of . . .
- In the light of . . .
- Taking into account/consideration . . .
- Considering . . .

Making recommendations is an important element in reports written in order to solve problems. Note the structures that are used with the following verbs, which are frequently used in recommendation sections.

- recommend
- suggest
- propose

When you make a recommendation, suggestion or proposal you can use a "that" clause with a modal (typically should).

Examples:

- It is recommended that the institute should form a working party to investigate the problem.
- It is recommended that a working party should be formed to investigate the problem.

It is quite common to omit the modal, particularly in formal writing. If you leave out the modal, you should use the base form of the verb (i.e. as if the modal were present).

Examples:

- It is recommended that the institute form a working party to investigate the problem.
- It is recommended that a working party be formed to investigate the problem.
- I suggest that the Director of Finance examine the records.
- It was proposed that Sally convene a meeting to review procedures.

Here are other ways of putting forward and evaluating solutions to problems in recommendation sections:

- I think/believe that the rent should be maintained at the present rate.
- The company should consider engaging a team of consultants.
- We could (introduce) . . .

- One way of addressing the problem would be to (introduce) . . .
  dealing with
  tackling
  approaching
  solving
  alleviating
  reducing
  minimising
  limiting
- One possible solution would be to (introduce) . . .
- What we should do is (introduce) . . .
- To solve the problem of . . . we should (introduce) . . .
- A short-term solution would be to (introduce) . . .
- In the long term, we should (introduce) . . .
- The problem of . . . could be alleviated if we (introduced) . . .
  minimised
  solved
- The main benefit/advantage of . . . is . . .
- One of the main disadvantages/drawbacks of . . . is . . .

According to Yeung (2007), out of the 22 authentic business reports in the corpus, 19 contain clearly stated recommendations. The different word forms of *recommendation* occur a total of 185 times in active or passive structures as verbs, adjectives, and nouns. At the same time, different word forms of *suggest* and *propose* together appear a total of 50 times. The tone of making recommendations varies. For example, the following recommendation is phrased as a modally hedged proposition. Third person reference is also used to politely urge honorary appointed members to contribute.

- In the interest of participants and to facilitate discussions with various ministries and government departments, it <u>would</u> be extremely useful if each participant <u>can</u> put forward a few specific questions (from a review report of a mission where members are honorary appointed members).

There are also recommendations which are extremely forceful using only imperatives:

- <u>Make</u> special arrangement to display Limoges Castel on a larger scale than other brands to create a dominant image (from a market report of a consultant to a client).

There are other examples showing the use of tone in between:

- Based on the above [initial findings], two principal courses of action for Kai Tak management <u>could be</u> to further exploit areas (from an internal report reviewing and evaluating the first phase of a project for further action).
- If effective use is to be made of distance learning with E and P, there <u>must be</u> a systematic approach (from a feasibility study).

Since recommendations are made based on the conclusions reached, there seems to be a 3-step move used by the business report writers (Yeung, 2007). In Toulmin's (2003) model of rational argument, the recommendation would be the claim, the findings would be the data and the interpretation of the data would depend on the warrant, which establishes the logical relationship between the claim and the data.

Please read the following example:

> Claim: The procurement department should be expanded. (recommendation)
> Data: The volume of work has increased almost 5,000 times more than personnel growth. (I call this the conclusion reached.)
> Warrant: If work volume increases, there should be a proportionate increase in manpower to handle it; otherwise excess capacity will result in problems (implicit general principle).

Essential skills required: (1) Describing trends

When preparing business reports, we may need to report data from trend graphs which describe changes over time (e.g. a year, a decade). When describing trends in a report you will need to pay careful attention to the use of prepositions, particularly the following:

- Sales in Thailand increased rapidly **between** 2016 **and** 2019.
- There was a sharp decline in sales in Korea **from** 2016 **to** 2019.

As the preceding examples indicate, we use the English simple past when describing trends in the past:

- Sales in the UK **increased** rapidly between 2016 and 2019.
- Sales **remained** stable in Hong Kong between 2016 and 2019.

Please note that the **active voice** is normally used:

- Sales in the UK **increased** [<u>not</u> **were increased**] rapidly between 2016 and 2019.

You can use the **present perfect tense** if the trend continues up to the present:

- Sales in Hong Kong **have** steadily **increased** in the past four years.

You will find the following expressions (adjectives/nouns) useful when you have to describe data in trend graphs:

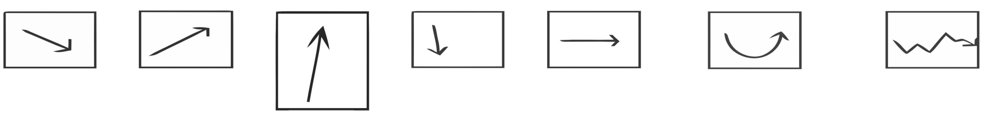
There was a	slight	rise	(in . . .)
	small	increase	
	gradual	decrease	
	steady	decline	
	significant	fall	
	dramatic	drop	
	sharp		
	rapid		
	steep		
	sudden		

These verbs and adverbs can be used to describe upward and downward movement:

(Sales)	rose	slightly	(in . . .)
	increased	gradually	
	decreased	steadily	
	declined	significantly	
	fell	dramatically	
	dropped	sharply	
		rapidly	

When describing movements on a graph, we can use **verbs** to talk about upward, downward or horizontal movements.

decline	rise	soar	crash	flatten out	bounce back	fluctuate
decrease	increase	rocket	collapse	hold steady	rally	seesaw
drop		climb	plummet	level off	recover	
fall		rise	plunge	stabilise		
slide		increase				



Most verbs also have **noun** forms. They are generally the same, for example:

to climb → a climb; to fall → a fall

However, there are some exceptions:

to flatten out → a flattening out;
to level off → a levelling off;
to recover → a recovery;
to stabilise → stabilisation
to fluctuate → a fluctuation
to hold steady → a steady hold

NOTE: The verb form is more frequently used.

Sometimes, we need to give more information about a trend, usually about the degree or speed of change. For example:

- The year started with a **steady** decline in sales and stabilised in September.
- Sales increased **slowly** during January and then declined **steadily** until the end of the financial year.

Adverbs and adjectives can be used to modify verbs and nouns of change. Adverbs can modify the verbs of change and usually end in *ly* (to increase substantially) and adjectives can modify nouns of change (a substantial increase).

Essential skills required: (2) Comparing and contrasting

When you present findings in a business report you will often need to compare and contrast the numerical data in tables and charts.

Table 7.3 presents the findings of a survey concerning students' satisfaction at schools in Hong Kong. As you can see, the table lists eight aspects of satisfaction and the responses of students of junior and senior levels.

When you describe data in tables or charts, you should use the language of approximation which refers to the description of numbers of statistics by using a fraction that is similar to the exact number (e.g. using one third instead of 34.76%; just under one million instead of 997,899). See the following examples:

1 **The vast majority of** senior-level students are satisfied with their workload.
2 **Most** members of students are satisfied with teachers' quality.
3 **Three quarters of** senior-level students feel that they receive satisfactory recognition for their school work.
4 **Two-thirds of** senior-level students are satisfied with the opportunities for all-round development offered in school.

Note from Table 7.3 that the responses of senior and junior students to the question about relationship with peers are more or less the same.

1 **Both** junior-level and senior-level students are fairly satisfied with their relationships with peers.
2 The views of senior and junior students on the question of peer relationships are **similar.**

Table 7.3 Satisfaction among junior and senior levels of students

Aspects of satisfaction	*% of satisfaction of senior-level students*	*% of satisfaction of junior-level students*
Teachers' quality	87%	83%
Workload	85%	47%
School facilities	29%	34%
Opportunities for all-round development	68%	36%
Opportunities for travelling overseas	72%	46%
Recognition for school work	74%	50%
Chance to have a say in school policies	85%	43%
Relationships with peers	62%	64%

Note the use of **similar** and **identical** in the following sentences:

1 The responses of senior and junior students to the question on peer relationships are **very similar**.
2 The responses of the male and female respondents are **identical**.

You can use the following expressions when you want to show similarities:

exactly	the same as . . .
virtually	
practically	
more or less	
approximately	
almost	
nearly	
about	

Note from Table 7.3 that in a number of cases the responses of the senior and junior students are different (in varying degrees). How could you express this in a report?

1 The findings indicate that senior-level students are **far more satisfied** with workload than their junior counterparts.
2 **Unlike** their junior counterparts, senior-level students are satisfied with the chance to have a say in school policies.
3 Senior students are quite satisfied with the opportunities offered for all-round development **while** junior-level students appear to be somewhat dissatisfied.

You can use the following expressions when you want to show differences:

much	cheaper/higher/lower, etc.	**than** . . .
considerably		
markedly		
noticeably		
significantly		
somewhat		
rather		
slightly		
marginally		

Proposals

A business proposal is to solve problems, provide services or sell equipment. Its purpose is to persuade the readers that some particular work should be done by a particular person or group of people. In doing so, the writer needs to identify needs or problems with the intention of receiving permission from superiors/clients to implement suggested solutions or recommendations. Compared with business reports, proposals should be more persuasive in both (a) need identification, and (b) feasibility of the solutions offered to address the problems.

Needs for a proposal

Both organisations and individuals need to write a proposal from time to time. The proposals can be solicited or unsolicited but both require persuasive ones in order to get funded for the proposed work to be done. When an organisation needs help, they will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and interested parties will then have to submit a proposal for evaluation. Here are some examples:

- The government seeks to fund academic institutions for specific programs to improve language education in Hong Kong. A request for proposals is needed as the government does not have the expertise to do so and it needs academia to offer help.
- FAA Technical Centre plans to solicit proposals from airlines and leasing companies to offer a Boeing 747 aircraft that serves as a test bed for fuel tank inerting investigations.
- A publisher solicit proposals from potential writers who can propose something novel and new in different subject areas for publication
- The Community Foundation for Southern Arizona seeks proposals to create a Centre for Nonprofits which will house the Foundation its partners, programs and affiliates and additional nonprofit organisations.

Content and structure of a proposal

A proposal generally has three major parts:

1. Preliminary section
   a. Title page
   b. Table of contents
   c. Executive summary/abstract
2. Body
   a. Introduction (statement of the problems; objectives/purposes)
   b. The proposed plan
   c. Budget/timeline/personnel
   d. Conclusion
3. Supplementary section
   a. References
   b. Appendices

To make a compelling proposal, the *Introduction* part is important. It is like a hook that arouses attention through promising extraordinary results, identifying key benefits and outcomes, which is highly related to the needs of the clients or customers.

> e.g. This proposal aims to develop an effective computer system that can improve your practice so that you can meet your patients' needs more effectively.

Unlike in business reports which emphasise the data collected, the proposed plan is the core part of a proposal where feasible suggestions are given to address the problems or needs outlined in the *Introduction*. Sufficient justifications need to be given and counter-arguments have to be refuted.

Adding to the persuasiveness of the proposal are other arrangement details such as the budget, timeline and personnel involved. The budget and timeline have to be feasible and the experience and expertise of the personnel involved are also key elements to make the entire proposal appealing.

Analysis of an authentic proposal

The following is an authentic proposal to implement a Monitoring and Control System into Virginia Tech's 2005 Solar House. See the analysis that follows to have a more thorough understanding of proposal writing and how this is different from report writing.

Please see the link below for an authentic proposal: http://writing.engr.psu.edu/design/sample_proposal.pdf

Summary/abstract

- Background information: Solar Decathlon and what it is about
- The performance of Virginia Tech and what it revealed
- The shortcomings of the existing system and the need for a new monitoring and control system
- What this proposal is about (i.e. proposes a new design) and its objectives

Statement of problems/introduction

First paragraph

- The first sentence citing reference to show the importance of using solar energy
- Introducing the competition and establishing its importance (i.e. Solar Decathlon)
- Details about the competition (i.e. designing a house to compete in the ten categories: architecture; curb appeal; after project development . . .)
- Significance of the competition (i.e. will demonstrate many thought-provoking ideas)

Second paragraph

- The performance of Virginia Tech Solar House (i.e. fifth place overall)
- Areas the Virginia Tech Solar House has to improve (i.e. the five areas with the lowest scores)

Third to seventh paragraphs

- Reason for the low scores in the category of refrigeration; energy balance category; comfort zone; home business and graphics and communication

Conclusion

- Overall goal of the new monitoring and control system (i.e. provide a solution to the problems of the house as outlined earlier)

Objectives

- Three main objectives to achieve through redesigning the monitoring and control for the 2005 Solar Decathlon House
- Explanation of the objectives using a table outlining the mission statement; the key business goals to be achieved, primary markets, etc.

Plan of action

- Outlining the plan/suggestions of addressing the objectives
- As the plan follows the design process suggested in Ulrich and Eppinger (2000), they are divided into four steps/stages for discussion: (a) identifying customer needs; (b) identifying target specifications; (c) generating design concepts; (d) selecting design concept.

Management plan

- Personnel involved and their tasks (and their resumes)
- Budget and timeline
- Using a table format to make information clear

Conclusion

- Reiterating the importance of a well-functioning monitoring and control system
- The advantages of the new system (i.e. monitor conditions, diagnose problems and evaluate performance of the house)
- Outlining the plan/suggestions of addressing the objectives
- Emphasising that the team can help achieve the objectives of the proposal

References

- Acknowledging the sources of information consulted
- Sample survey used/survey results/resumes of the team members in Appendix

The proposal is effective as it is logical and persuasive. It is logical as it follows the standard structure of a proposal outlining information in the order expected by the readers. The needs are identified clearly and the recommendations are justified accordingly. Unlike in a business report, recommendations are outlined in a more detailed way in a proposal as this is a core part in proposals. Whether it is in the *Executive Summary* or the body of a proposal, you need to be able to follow the following four steps: (1) *needs*: showing that you understand the client's business needs and the key issues or challenges to be dealt with; (2) *outcomes*: focusing on the outcomes that need to be achieved in addressing the problems or issues; (3) *solution*: offering solutions accordingly once you are clear about points 1 and 2; and (4) *evidence*: substantiating your claims demonstrating how you can deliver the solutions on time and on budget.

Post-reading activities

I. Finish the *Conclusion* and *Recommendations* sections of the following mini-report.

In the aftermath of Lee Lai Shan's success in the 1996 Olympics, our consultancy firm, *B & M International*, was asked to prepare a series of options and recommendations for the board of *Parker and Sons* on the feasibility of introducing the new model of windsurfing board, the *ShanShan88*. In a four-week questionnaire survey carried out in three water sports equipment retailers, a total of 500 registered windsurfers were asked whether they are interested in this new model. Twenty percent said they would not buy it. Seventy percent said they would buy it if it was cheaper. Ten percent said they would buy it.

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II. Reporting and discussing findings
In the findings section of a business report (especially formal business reports), you will need to do the following things:

- Describe the most significant findings of your research (i.e. state what you found)
- Interpret your findings (i.e. account for what you found)
- Make claims about your findings (i.e. highlight the implications of what you found)

This gives you practice in selecting, summarising and interpreting numerical data. Please refer to the findings in tables 1–3 (in the form of "means") derived from a research project about the use of English by Chinese professionals in Hong Kong (see Evans & Green, 2003). The use of English by Chinese professionals in post-1997 Hong Kong (See *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *24*(5), 386–412).

Imagine that you were going to present the findings in your table in a report.

- Select the most important/interesting/surprising findings in the tables.
- Account for these findings.

III. Read the following findings section. This is taken from an informal report about students' satisfaction with their school/study. The findings are based on the data in Table 7.3. These data were derived from a questionnaire survey involving both senior- and junior-level students.
Read the findings section and then answer the questions on its content, organisation and language.

As you can see from the attached table, senior-level students are noticeably more satisfied with their school than the junior-level ones. The findings indicate that most students are broadly satisfied with the following areas: teachers' quality, relationship with peers and recognition for school work. On the basis of my findings, I have identified four areas that we need to address: school facilities, workload, opportunities for all-round development and opportunities for travelling overseas.

You will note from the findings that both junior and senior level of students are generally dissatisfied with school facilities. The main reason for their dissatisfaction seems to be related to our new school site. Since we moved to Mongkok there have been frequent complaints about the cramped school environment and the quality of the lighting, air-conditioning and décor. Students are also unhappy about the pollution, congestion and overcrowding in the district where the new school is located.

Another area that deserves careful attention concerns opportunities for all-round development. Around two-thirds of the junior-level students are disgruntled about the school's performance in this area. I think their discontent can perhaps be attributed to the cuts we have recently made in funding for extra-curricular activities related to languages and computer software. It may also be the case that they resent the fact that senior-level students have more choices for all-round development.

In marked contrast to the senior-level students, junior-level ones are dissatisfied with their workload. Their unhappiness in this area I think stems from the fact that they have much more take-home assignments compared with their senior counterparts who need to prepare for public examinations.

The last area of concern is opportunities for traveling overseas. Just under a half of junior students are discontented about the limited opportunities we provide for travelling overseas. As you know, we have been forced to make a number of cuts in the past two years because of the new government policies. Junior-level students are understandably frustrated that as a result of these cuts some avenues for international exposure have been blocked.

Questions

Content

1. Why has the writer chosen to focus on only four of the eight aspects of students' satisfaction?

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Organisation

1. What is the function of the first paragraph?

____

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____

2. Look at the organisation of paragraphs 2–5. Which sentence/sentences in these paragraphs describe the findings and which ones explain the findings? Do the four paragraphs have the same pattern?

Language

1. Which expressions tell us that this is an informal report rather than a formal one?

2. Give examples of the language of approximation.

3. Give examples of the language of comparison and contrast.

4. Give examples of the words/phrases the writer uses to explain his/her findings.

5. What are the various words/phrases the writer uses to express the idea of "dissatisfaction"?

IV. Give examples and tell how to apply Aristotle's three modes of persuasion or Professor Robert Cialdini's six weapons of influence in preparing for a proposal to make it persuasive.

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Chapter 8

Making oral presentations

Questions for reflection

1 Read the following list of micro skills of presentation taken from Evans (2013). How easy or difficult do you find the following skills when giving presentations in English at work?

	Very easy			*Very difficult*
1 Understanding the needs of the audience	1	2	3	4
2 Planning a presentation	1	2	3	4
3 Introducing a presentation	1	2	3	4
4 Developing ideas in the body of a presentation	1	2	3	4
5 Concluding a presentation	1	2	3	4
6 Handling the audience's question	1	2	3	4
7 Making smooth transition from points to points	1	2	3	4
8 Organising information/ideas logically	1	2	3	4
9 Presenting data in tables, charts, etc.	1	2	3	4
10 Putting your thoughts/ideas into speech	1	2	3	4
11 Speaking clearly (pronunciation)	1	2	3	4
12 Speaking in a very natural style	1	2	3	4
13 Using appropriate stress and intonation	1	2	3	4
14 Using appropriate body language	1	2	3	4
15 Maintaining eye contact	1	2	3	4
16 Presenting with the help of notes/prompts	1	2	3	4
17 Using visual aids effectively	1	2	3	4
18 Speaking at the right speed	1	2	3	4
19 Getting the timing right	1	2	3	4
20 Engaging the interest of the audience	1	2	3	4

2 What skills do you find particularly important to make your speech a success?
3 How do you appeal to the audience emotionally in workplace presentations?

Introduction

Presentation skills can be categorised into three groups: (a) planning; (b) organising and (c) delivering. According to Evans (2013) conducted with over 2,000 Chinese professionals in Hong Kong, the four most problematic presentation skills are (in order of difficulty): (1) engaging the interest of the audience; (2) handling the audience's questions; (3) speaking in a natural spoken style and (4) using appropriate stress and intonation. The least problematic aspects are as follows: (1) presenting data in tables and charts; (2) maintaining eye contact; (3) using visual aids effectively and (4) presenting with the help of notes/prompts. In order to make a winning presentation, preparation is the key: "A major factor in effective presentations is adequate preparation. Speakers must know their purpose, be well-informed about the topic, and have ample content to give additional information to the audience" (Lancaster, 1985, p. 31).

Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem, and Taqi (2015) also revealed the perception of EFL college students in Kuwait towards making oral presentations. Participants were 500 female EFL college students from different grade levels enrolled in a four-year pre-service teacher education program at the College of Basic Education (CBE). According to the questionnaire findings based on a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, students' difficulties in making presentations are related to three main areas: (a) audience and instructors (a mean of 3.41, with 1 indicating "always" and 5 "never"); (b) personal traits (3.06) and (c) oral presentation skills (2.93).

Regarding audience and instructors, the main difficulties concern the fear of (a) getting an unfair grade for the presentation (3.81); (b) lacking ideas when peers come to the classroom late to join their presentations (3.81); dealing with criticisms and the instructor's interruptions (3.65) and (d) having many people watching their presentation performance (3.61). Concerning personal traits, a large number of students (39.9%) said that they "sometimes" dislike oral presentations, followed by those who said "always" (22.5%) and those who said "often" (14.2%). Nearly half of the students (42.0%) reported that they "always" feel anxious before an oral presentation exam (3.85), followed by 20.8% who said they "often" do. There were also a large number of students who reported that they "sometimes" get embarrassed and feel worried during presentations, although they never skip an oral presentation class. Finally, for oral presentation skills, a large number of students (66.9%) find the need to read from notes during oral presentations. Other difficulties included keeping within the time limit of the oral presentation, and a number of them (23.7%) reported "sometimes" having difficulty with this. One interesting finding is that almost half of the participants (44.3%) reported the need to see others' presentations before having their own, suggesting the need to remodel this activity.

It takes much time to plan and prepare for a winning presentation. To make a winning speech, we need to understand how to (a) plan a presentation; (b) organise it and (c) deliver it.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to understand

- how to make a winning presentation in terms of planning it, organising it and delivering it;
- how to give a persuasive speech.

Planning your presentation

Planning a presentation is like planning other written messages: You have to first determine the purpose of your presentation and understand your audience before organising the information and content.

Knowing your purpose

The first most important step in preparing for your presentation is determining what you want to achieve. Most presentations have the same purposes as written messages: To inform or to persuade, through establishing goodwill, entertaining or other logical means. Many presentations reflect a combination of both purposes.

Informative presentations aim to pass on information for training or teaching purposes. In training sessions organised for staff (e.g. sales training), the primary purpose is to inform, and the secondary purpose is perhaps to persuade the staff why they need to follow organisational practices and culture.

Persuasive presentations influence the belief and action of the audience. According to Aristotle, this is usually achieved through three types of appeal: ethos (i.e. building the credibility of the speaker); pathos (i.e. emotional appeal) and logos (logical appeal). In the workplace, you make persuasive presentations to make your boss support your ideas or your clients/customers agree to buy your products or services. Celebrities or government officials make persuasive presentations to justify their policy and elicit the audience's support.

Your purpose statement is the guiding principle which can affect your content and strategy or appeal to be used in the presentation. Before you start your next step, outline the purpose and make it as specific as possible.

Knowing your audience

Adapting to your audience is the second key element before a presentation. Basic information, such as the size of the audience, age, gender, experience, attitude and expectations should all be taken into serious consideration. A large audience, for example, usually requires a more formal and impersonal approach. Other audience characteristics also determine the kind of content you are going to include and the strategies to be used. Ask yourself the following questions before you think about the content and presentation strategies:

1 What makes the audience attend the presentation? What do they want to get out of my presentation?
2 How much do they know about the topic?
3 Are they hostile? Sceptical? Indifferent?
4 How can I make the topic appealing to the audience?
5 How can I relate the information/content to their needs?
6 What else should I do to address their needs?
7 How can I establish my credibility and earn their respect?
8 Which appeals would be most effective in making my point? Facts and statistics? Examples? Analogies? Anecdotes? Empathy? Humor?
9 What measures should I take to reinforce their understanding?

Once you have determined the purpose of your presentation and identified the needs of the audience, it is time for you to collect data and organise the information logically. The structure of a presentation is as follows:

Step 1: Tell the audience what you are going to say
Step 2: Present the information
Step 3: Repeat what you have just said

Let's find out how to grab your audience's attention with an appealing introduction, hold their attention in the body and end with clarity and confidence.

Organising your presentation: Introduction

People come to listen to your presentation with a purpose. Grabbing the audience in the first few seconds of your presentation is important, and may even determine the success of your presentation. Most business speeches have one of these three broad objectives:

1. Appealing to the audience's interest
2. Making them think
3. Surprising them

To start with a captivating opening requires your clear understanding of the audience's needs and expectations, and what you think may work to achieve your goal.

Appealing to the audience's interest

These are three basic means to appeal to the needs and interests of the audience:

1. Initial benefit promise (IBP)
2. Maslow revisited
3. Only three points

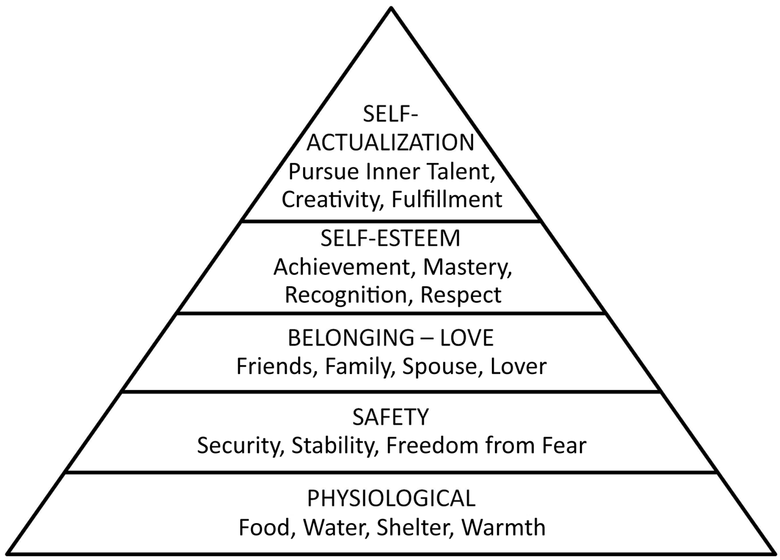
Initial benefit promise (IBP) is a classic technique to hook the audience. It emphasises what the audience can gain from the presentation.

1. "In the next 15 minutes you will learn three easy and surefire ways to increase your sales."
2. "More clients! More sales! Easy!"
3. "Would you like to know how to make a winning presentation? I'm Dr Mable Chan and I am going to share with you secrets that can help you 'click' with the audience."

Once you have indicated your promise in the hook, make sure that you offer what the audience wants in the course of the presentation.

According to **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**, there are different levels of needs humans need to satisfy. As a speaker, you need to motivate your audience based on their level of needs and then reward them. The chart here shows the five main levels of needs described in the hierarchy:

Security needs level: The need for shelter and job security (physiological and safety)
Social needs level: The need to belong, to be with others and to be accepted by them
Esteem/ego needs level: The need for respect from others
Self-actualisation needs level: The need to realise potential



Let's read the following examples:

- "You are looking for a purpose to your commitment. So are we. You want to safeguard your future. So do we."

  →→Security needs

- "It's great being part of this winning sales team. Isn't it?"

  →→Social needs

- "Let me announce proudly our Best Estate Agent of the Year today."

  →→Esteem/ego

Most speeches are long, and sometimes far too long than necessary. Use **only three points** to tell the audience what the speech is about and what they can get out of it. See the following examples:

- "There are just three things that matter in life: health, family, and hope."
- "Creativity consists of three main parts: Being original; being flexible and 'crazy.'"
- "There are only three points to consider if you want to expand your customer base: . . . That's it. Just three points."

Do remember that if you appeal to the interests of the audience in the hook, you must keep your promise and deliver what you promised in the presentation. Otherwise, this will affect your credibility and their interest in your presentation won't last long.

Making the audience think

This is most suitable for those presentations requiring the audience to think deeply into a subject for their support or actions. The following techniques can be used:

1 Excite, link and involve
2 Story or quotation
3 Question or riddle

Excite, link and involve (ELI) is a powerful variation of the only three points opening. The first remark aims to excite the audience with something interesting or unexpected. The second remark is to reinforce the first and link it to the third. The last one puts everything into context and involves the audience in the opening and also what follows in the body of the speech.

Example:

> The following was given by an African delegate at an international conference on Third World Aid (Bowden, 1998, p. 61):
>
> - "My mother-in-law does not like me because my father ate her father." *(Excite. Shocked silence followed by riotous laughter.)*
> - "You laughed just now when I said my father ate another man. Well, it's true, he did." *(Link)*
> - "You all come from countries which have centuries of civilisation and culture behind you." Yet – you will forgive me – you are all still making economic and political mistakes. My country is one generation removed from cannibalism. Is it surprising . . . ladies and gentlemen – we need your help." *(Involve)*

This opening worked very well in getting the audience take action and offer help. Try and see how you can use ELI in your own openings to "move" or "touch" your audience.

Story or quotation

An appropriate story or quotation encourages the audience to think and reflect on issues or questions related to the topic. If used effectively, these quotes and stories convince the audience how important the speaker's stance or topic is before they find out details in the body of the speech.

Example:

> Albert Einstein once said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." Well, I hope that you develop questions while listening to my presentation today, and don't hesitate to ask me questions in the Q&A session!

Question or riddle

A question can evoke memories and create fertile ground for communication by recalling a common experience.

Examples:

- "Do you remember what happened in 2003 in HK? That was SARS, a year forever etched in our collective memory."
- "Is training important? Is it not essential to have a highly skilled workforce? Should we not spend some time thinking about this?"

Perhaps the topic of the speech for the first opening is about medical system. By asking the first question, the speaker attempts to make the audience recall what happened in SARS and how important it is to avoid it from happening again. For the second one, the questions encourage serious thinking about the importance of having a highly skilled workforce and perhaps the consequences of not having one.

Surprising the audience

Sometimes we need to surprise the audience especially when dealing with difficult issues or trying to activate an apathetic audience. There are three techniques that can be used.

1 Shocking image
2 Striking fact
3 Provocative statement

Shocking image

A mental picture is worth a thousand words. This can be done using stories. A well-told one can stay in the audience's mind for years to come. For example, there is a TED talk presented by a 12-year old Masai boy from Kenya called Richard Turere. With his personal story about his experience of inventing a system of lights that protect his family livestock from lion attacks, he successfully helped create a picture of the problem he and his family faced.

Please see the following link: https://embed.ted.com/talks/richard_turere_a_peace_treaty_with_the_lions

Striking fact

- "Producing excellent products is no longer enough. Today people expect – deserve – excellent customer service. . . . Trust me, it's far more difficult to attract new customers than to take good care of existing ones. Yet even so, we have lost eight out of every ten loyal customers two years ago."

By using research findings showing the importance of having excellent customer service, the speaker successfully raises the awareness of the audience towards the subject. The frightening facts that we have lost six out of every ten customers and that it is hard to get new customers clearly conveys the key idea that we need to take good care of existing customers, which is what the speech is about.

Provocative statement

A provocative statement seeks the audience's attention as if the headline of a newspaper. Whether the audience agrees or disagrees, they must pay attention.

Example:

> You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, the sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic, you name it.
>
> (At a fundraiser on 9 September 2016 said by Clinton)

The audience must be eager to listen to the rest of the speech to figure out why this provocative statement is made.

Being off the wall

You can also try something different to make your opening memorable and grab attention. The following techniques can be used:

- Joke
- Topical reference
- Silence

Joke

It may not be common for a business speech to start with a **joke**. A short and amusing one, however, works well, especially when your purpose is to entertain or inform. In a sales presentation to a client, for example, the sales representative may communicate the product features (truth/set-up stage), use creativity and imaginative skills to articulate how product features satisfy a specific need (imagination stage), and impress the customer with humour, e.g. punch line (surprise stage) (Vitug & Kleiner, 2007).

Humour can best be used in the following sales stages (Bergeron & Vachon, 2008, pp. 377–378):

1 Pre-approach step of the sale to determine what types of humour will appeal to particular buyers;
2 Approach step to gain their interest and attention;
3 Presentation step to develop rapport;
4 Countering-objections step to diminish anxiety and hostility and to focus attention away from objections;
5 Follow-up visits to maintain rapport and interpersonal relationships that have already been established.

Let's see an example of a joke that can be used in a speech:

> The President just asked me, 'would you like to speak now, or should we let the audience enjoy themselves a bit longer?' '. . . I'd like to help the homeless but they're never home. If you want me to help you, . . .'
>
> (by Lenny Clarke)

Topical reference

You can also open with **reference to current news**, **event or interesting information**. By doing so, the audience will feel that the speech is prepared specifically for them as such an opening should not have been tried before.

- "*Times* has just broken the news that . . ."
- "In the *South China Morning Post* today it is reported that . . ."

The following are some examples from Obama's speeches where current news, events or facts were used to grab attention and indicate urgency:

> Let me begin by thanking the bipartisan group of U.S. Governors who convened this meeting. Few challenges facing America – and the world – are more urgent than combating climate change. The science is beyond dispute and the facts are clear. Sea levels are rising. Coastlines are shrinking. We've seen record drought, spreading famine, and storms that are growing stronger with each passing hurricane season.
>
> (Recorded Remarks to Global Climate Summit)

Remember not to rely on luck to have the right headline or news supplied to you in time. Understand the audience before the presentation and decide what news (or rather new/recent information is relevant to them) that can be used in the hook to make it personal and interesting.

Silence

How can we open in silence? There was a telecom advertisement in Britain which used silence to show how frustrated a customer is waiting for a call from the telecom company. Applying this to the opening of a speech, the speaker can use this to illustrate for example how long it means for a customer to wait on phone: "This is how long it seems to take for customers to wait for help on phone – and isn't this too long?"

There could be much variation you can try to make effective use of silence, perhaps together with visual aids or other props to convey your point or message effectively.

According to Zsubrinszky (2012), speakers want their feelings to be acknowledged, and that the audience can demonstrate an understanding of what they have said. For example, from the marketing manager:

> Silence is also golden if I ask my audience a rhetorical question, for instance, wouldn't it be good if every Hungarian could live up to their true potential? What I want my audience to do is basically internally agree with me. Some of them will even nod back at me. So the best thing I can do in a presentation is to pause just for a moment.

Another function of silence is to gain common ground. The following situation describes how a salesperson might find common ground with a potential customer by learning about what he likes, and what he does not like.

> If I ask a sales question, always a multiple choice question, e.g. 'Would you prefer the red or the green, sir?' and then shut up. As I see it now, this gives the customer a choice to choose from, which he appreciates a lot, and as a result, I tend to be more successful in my job. In other words, I came to realise that silence is often as important if not more so than sound.
>
> (Zsubrinszky, 2012, p. 3)

Organising your presentation: Conclusion

A good closing is as important as or more important than a good opening. People always remember what they hear last; this is the "serial position effect" coined by Hermann Ebbinghaus. While a bad ending can ruin the good opening, a good one can actually save a less satisfactory opening. Imagine the role of a conclusion as dessert after dinner, and consider how you can make good use of this opportunity to make your audience say "yes" or take action as desired. Do not simply summarise the main points in the speech or say anything new. The following list is not exhaustive:

Assigning a task to your audience

End on a positive and upbeat note. Challenge your audience and assign a task to them.

> Now that I have already shared tips with you about how to make winning presentations. I hope you can think deeply about how this can be applied to your workplace. Try them, practise them and feel their power and impact.

Summarise the main ideas in three main points

As in the opening, summarise in no more than three points the main messages of the speech.

> Let me leave you with this thought: a winning presentation is determined by (a) preparation; (b) organisation; and (c) a speaker's credibility.

Presenting facts or statistics

Don't bombard the audience with too many facts or statistics. One or two statistics or facts especially presented in the closing, however, can be very effective. One of the reasons why the late Steve Jobs was regarded as the most professional speaker is that he always simplified the numbers. When he wanted to report the progress of iTunes, for example, instead of saying that 25 billion songs have been downloaded from iTunes, he made it impressive and memorable by saying that 15,000 songs are downloaded from iTunes every minute. To build up the S.T.A.R. moment ("Something They'll Always Remember") in a talk appealing the audience to support eradicating malaria, Bill Gates presented some statistics in the closing to show how serious the problem was. He also opened a jar of mosquitoes and let the audience experience what the poor people experienced, saying that "There's no reason only poor people should have the experience."

Telling a story

According to the professional speaker Akash Karia, stories are irresistible to the human mind as they help us think, follow the mental images created and then apply. This is why stories are commonly used in speeches, especially in TED talks where we find most inspirational presenters. You can tell a story in the opening, in the body and also in the closing to make your speech memorable, each of which plays different roles in different stages of a speech.

Projecting the future

This is to show with confidence that something must be done in the near future.

> You have so far done a good job . . . your hard work . . . your sincerity . . . your perseverance. I have confidence that our sales record will increase drastically very soon. Thank you.

Remember that the conclusion is the highlight of your speech. Start your speech as well as when you end it and leave with your audience a good last impression.

Persuasive speech

Most speeches are persuasive. You may want to convince your customers that your goods and services are worth buying; or you need to persuade your boss to adopt your proposals/ideas. When preparing for a persuasive speech, consider the following steps:

1 Planning

- Anticipate the situation
- Anticipate the needs of the audience/hearers

2 Speaking

- Maintain a “you” attitude
- Use positive language
- Establish credibility
- Employ the AIDA plan (i.e. attention, interest, desire and action)
- Balance emotion (appealing to the audience’s happiness/sadness/patriotism) and logic (arguing with facts and statistics)
- Avoid faulty logic (i.e. fallacies)
- Anticipate objections and deal with resistance
- Reinforce your position (e.g. use of powerful words, figures of speech, highlight readers’ benefits, etc.).

3 Concluding

- Evaluate the content
- Revise for clarity and conciseness
- Proofread and edit the message

A **figure of speech** is a rhetorical device that achieves a special effect by using words in distinctive ways. Some common examples follow:

1 Alliteration
The repetition of an initial consonant sound
2 Anaphora
The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses
3 Hyperbole
An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect
4 Irony
The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning; a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea
5 Pun
A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words

Read the following examples:

Example 1

> It's *the hope of* slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs; *the hope of* immigrants setting out for distant shores; *the hope of* a young naval lieutenant bravely patrolling the Mekong Delta; *the hope of* a millworker's son who dares to defy the odds; *the hope of* a skinny kid with a funny name who believes that America has a place for him, too.
>
> (Obama, 2004)

Anaphora (i.e. repetition of the same word of phrases at the beginning of successive clauses or verses) is used in this example. The purpose is to emphasise "the hope."

Example 2

> So my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.
>
> (Inaugural Address by John F. Kennedy – January 20, 1961)

This is a well-known slogan which has been adapted by many. By presenting the negative in the first clause *ask not what your country can do for you*, the audience expected an affirmative to come, that is, *ask what you can do for your country*.

About 50 years later, Obama started his victory speech like this:

> If there is anyone out there *who still doubts* that America is a place where all things are possible; *who still wonders* if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; *who still questions* the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.

By repeating *who still*, the climax is built that led to last phrase: *tonight is your answer*.

Fallacies to be avoided

Fallacies mean errors in reasoning. In order to persuade effectively, we need to avoid using fallacies as a speaker. The following are some common examples of fallacies for your reference.

1. Either/or thinking

The error in either/or thinking is that it allows for only two answers to a problem when in fact there may be more.

Reason 1: I can study all night, every night of this weekend for my English exam, get no sleep, and be too tired to perform well in the examination.

Reason 2: Or I can go shopping with friends, watch movies on Saturday, and just relax on Sunday, and not study at all.

Conclusion: I am going to fail the exam.

It is not true that there are only two options. The speaker can still study and reserve time for good rest. The purpose of using this is to argue that "I don't have to study as I will fail in the examination anyway."

2. *Hasty generalisation*

When using hasty generalisation, writers make the error of using too few or weak reasons to support a broad or sweeping conclusion.

e.g. My neighbor is a Christian and he always donates money to charity. Carol, my colleague, is also a Christian and she always buys me lunch. All Christians are generous.

The conclusion that all Christians are generous is made based on only two examples, which may be too hasty.

3. *Red herring*

Writers use red herrings (irrelevant material) when they want to distract the readers' attention away from the important information that does not support the conclusion. An argument with this error leaves the original issue and moves to another one.

e.g. <u>Reason 1</u>: Men and women use the services of prostitutes.
<u>Reason 2</u>: Prostitutes earn enough money to support themselves and pay taxes.
<u>Conclusion</u>: Prostitutes should not be punished.

Whether prostitution is legal or not should be for the law to decide. How good the business is doing is actually irrelevant.

4. *False cause*

In a false cause argument, the writer states a conclusion and gives reasons for it, but fails to explain how the conclusion and reasons are connected to each other, or provides unclear or faulty connections between them.

e.g. <u>Reason 1</u>: Anna's window is broken.
<u>Reason 2</u>: My window is broken.
<u>Conclusion</u>: I'm sure Bob broke the windows; I saw him playing outside yesterday.

5. *Slippery slope*

The error in slippery slope reasoning is that the writers assume that one event will precipitously lead to another event, and so on. They provide a chain of improperly linked conclusions as reasons to support an unjustified main conclusion. Conclusions in this type of reasoning are often greatly exaggerated.

e.g. <u>Reason 1</u>: If you do not study hard, you will fail to find a good job.
<u>Reason 2</u>: Without a good job, you will not be able to get married.
<u>Reason 3</u>: Without a family, you will lead a miserable life.
<u>Conclusion</u>: Study hard or else you will be a loser.

This may be what your parents did most when you were small, claiming that if you do not do this or that, you might end up in a miserable situation in future.

6. Ad hominem

When writers commit an ad hominem error of reasoning, they avoid the true issue of an argument by attacking the person they disagree with.

e.g. Reason 1: I studied for the multiple-choice exam.
Reason 2: I read most of the assigned chapters.
Conclusion: But I failed because my professor is a woman who doesn't like female students and she is too strict in marking.

7. Circular reasoning

When writers use circular reasoning, instead of presenting an argument with a reason and a conclusion, they make two statements that essentially say the same thing.

e.g. Reason: Mary won her badminton game today.
Conclusion: Mary won because she scored the most points.

Scoring the most point means winning. It is not a reason in itself.

Delivering your presentation

According to Evans (2013), the top four most problematic presentation skills are (in order of difficulty): (1) engaging the interest of the audience; (2) handling the audience's questions; (3) speaking in a natural spoken style and (4) using appropriate stress and intonation. It seems easy to understand why it is challenging to engage the interest of the audience and handle the audience's questions as the audience's response or questions might be less predictable, though preparation helps a lot. Being conversational and natural is a key feature of spoken communication, which makes it different from written communication.

Engaging the interest of the audience

The following tips are offered by a former Vice President of her local Toastmasters Club to engage the interest of the audience and address their needs, including not just what we need to do when delivering the presentation but what we should do during preparation (Gilman, 2012). The key is to have the audience in mind as the presentation is not about you, the speaker but the audience. I also highlight the main ideas precisely in a bracket at the end of each point.

1 Approach a few members of the audience and understand what they would like to know, their frustrations with the subject and how they can be addressed. If this is not possible, get more such information from the event planner. (needs)
2 The questions/answers are then important for you to develop the main message of the presentation. Turn them into three strong points as the clear main message during the presentation. (clear main message)
3 Develop the three main points with examples, statistics, visuals and humor. Your presentation should have a strong opening, an informative middle and a strong conclusion. (structure)

4 Practise the presentation to help remember your points and then finish on time (time management)
5 Work on the title so that people are interested in coming to listen to you. The title should answer the question: “What’s in it for me?” (needs)
6 Dress nicer on the day of the presentation to familiarise yourself with the setting and equipment required. Conduct small talk with the audience and build rapport. (confidence)
7 Start the presentation with a strong opening that arouses curiosity in the audience. Introduce the three main points and promise a solution to problems (if any). Give an outline about what will be covered and in what way. (needs)
8 If using visual aids like *PowerPoint* or *Keynote* in your presentation, check with the organiser about the arrangement and their availability. Bring your own notebook or other equipment in case they are not available. (visual aids)
9 The slide presentation has to be clearly understood by the audience and relevant to your three points. Don’t read to the audience and maintain eye contact. (clarity)
10 The slides should be used as a starting point of dialogue or interaction. Include only four or five lines of text, and the font size of words should be large enough to be seen by the audience sitting at the back. Limit photographs to one or two in each slide. (clarity)
11 Encourage questions and let the audience know if they can ask questions during or after the presentation. (interaction)
12 Use humour appropriately and effectively. (humour)
13 End with a conclusion through means such as quotes or anecdotes to reinforce your message (compelling conclusion)

As seen from the tips given, considering the needs of the audience seems to be the key to engage their interest. During the presentation, we need to focus on the content and the structure of the presentation, and consider how the main message can be delivered clearly to the audience through our possible use of humour, visual aids and questions for interaction.

Two activities suggested for teachers: (1) Social judgment theory and (2) modeling the persona of Steve Jobs

(1) SOCIAL JUDGEMENT THEORY

In order to help understand diverse audience members who may come from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds having different belief systems and attitude, Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall (1965) developed social judgement theory to account for why some persuasive messages are accepted by the audience and some rejected. There are three unique forms of latitude associated with different individual listeners or an attitude that falls along the continuum: (a) latitude of rejection referring to a message that is rejected with skepticism; (b) latitude of non-commitment, where the message is received with neutrality or lack of commitment (Darity, 2008; Hovland & Sherif, 1980; Park, Levine, Westerman, Orfgen, & Foregger, 2007) and (c) latitude of acceptance, meaning that a message is received with positive regard. Research shows that it is important to understand how the latitudes are applied in order to strengthen one’s arguments in developing social campaign messages (Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen, & Hembroff, 2006), protecting integrity of organisations (Mishina, Block, & Mannor, 2012), evaluating occupational information (Unsworth, Harries, & Davies, 2015) and preparing credible messages (Park et al., 2007).

The following social judgement activity was developed by Mallard (2010) aiming to help students understand the social judgement theory and how the three latitudes are relevant to controversial issues such as whether students should bring guns to the campus or if employees should be allowed to pray in the workplace. Details follow, and teachers can consider trying this with their own class:

1 Divide the class into three groups and distribute to each a card indicating *latitude of rejection*, *latitude of non-commitment* and *latitude of acceptance*.
2 The card also indicates a specific audience attitude for the group to work on (e.g. online gambling should be legal).
3 The student's task is to prepare persuasive arguments with supporting examples to change the latitude specified on the card. For example, if the student gets the "latitude of rejection" card, then the student has to develop a convincing argument to change this latitude to one of neutrality. If getting the "latitude of non-commitment" card, then the student will then develop an argument to change the attitude to slight acceptance.
4 Each group is allowed 10 minutes to develop their arguments.
5 The teacher can help guide students to construct their arguments by producing key phrases or bullet points on a paper or at the back of the card.
6 Students are given the opportunities to present their arguments after the preparation. The teacher can also ask the students to share their own perspective which may be different from the one assigned.
7 Debrief after the presentation of arguments with the class by asking questions (e.g. How do the different anchor points of an audience affect the persuasiveness of your arguments? How to be more persuasive in shifting someone's anchor point more towards the latitude of acceptance? What challenges or difficulties are there in preparing persuasive arguments for attitudinal change? How can you apply the social judgement theory to convince resistant audience members in your next speech?).

(2) MODELING THE PERSONA OF STEVE JOBS

Persona is defined as the mask a performer puts on to play a role (Black, 1970; Jensen, Doss, Janssen, & Bower, 2010). The first persona is the role, identity or character that a speaker creates through his or her rhetoric to achieve the purpose of the speech. The first persona can help the audience adhere to the speaker's vision for a common future. The second persona, through the speaker's use of key phrases, slogans or gestures, brings the audience to the world created by the speaker. If the speaker is able to make use of his or her unique experiences and achievements to move the audience to act, then a "transcendent persona" is created (Jensen et al., 2010, p. 5): "A speaker takes on a transcendent persona when he or she tells the audience that he or she has overcome taken-for-granted sociocultural barriers to transform society" (Ivic & Green, 2012, p. 66).

To help students make a charismatic and transformational speech, the following activity requires students to take on the persona of the late Steve Jobs (Ivic & Green, 2012), the founder and CEO of Apple Inc., a charismatic speaker well-known for his presentation skill in his keynote addresses (Gallo, 2010):

1 Explain to the students what it means by persona and that they are going to take up the role of Steve Jobs in making a speech.

2 Show students a keynote video of Steve Jobs making keynote presentations in annual conferences where new products are introduced.
3 Play the video clips for around 5 to 10 minutes.
4 Ask students to discuss the good qualities found in Steve Job's presentations, including how his speeches are structured and his unique presentation skills (e.g. eye contact; use of voice).
5 Arrange an impromptu speaking task for students to pick any object and explain how it works. Students are required to do so making use of the exceptional qualities of Steve Jobs as a charismatic speaker.
6 Debrief after the presentation activity asking students to reflect on the presentation tactics. The discussion can cover issues like whether students were confident, what they have learned by taking up Steve Jobs' role and the importance of persona.

Speaking in a natural spoken style

Let's note the following features for each and how they are different.

Features of spoken communication

- Use of deixis (i.e. reference by means of an expression whose interpretation is relative to the extralinguistic context of the utterance)
- For example, in the sentence *I want her to come here now*, the words *I, here, her*, and *now* are deictic because the determination of their referents depends on who says that sentence, and where, when, and of whom it is said.
  e.g. Person deixis concerns the persons involved in an utterance (i.e. speaker, addressee), usually realised by pronouns.
  e.g. Place/spatial deixis concerns itself with the spatial locations relevant to an utterance, relative to the location of the speaker (i.e. here, there, this, that).
  e.g. Time deixis concerns itself with the various times involved in and referred to in an utterance (i.e. time adverbials like *now, then, soon*).
- High incidence of first and second personal pronouns (e.g. *you* and *we*)
- More frequent use of active voice
- Frequent occurrence of interrogatives and imperatives (e.g. so you're thinking of investing in China?)
- Use of phonological contractions (e.g. it's; they're; you'll)
- Spontaneity phenomena (e.g. repetitions, pauses, fillers, false starts, hesitations, incomplete sentences, overlap, interruptions)
- Use of informal diction (e.g. slang, jargon, colloquial phrases) (e.g. on the cards)
- Frequent occurrence of discourse markers at the beginning or end of tone groups (e.g. okay, now, so, right)
- Low lexical density (lexically spare)

$$\frac{\text{No of separate words}}{\text{Total number of words in the text}} \times 100$$

- Less frequent use of nominalisations
- References to the writer's mental process and statements that monitor the flow of information (e.g. I guess, I think, you know)
- Use of body language for non-verbal communication

Features of written communication

- Long length in average
- High lexical density (lexically dense)
- Wide range and more specific vocabulary
- More frequent use of the passive voice
- More frequent use of nominalisations
- Complex relations of coordination and subordination
- High incidence of attributive adjectives vs predicative adjectives: “happy person”; “hungry children” versus “He is happy”; “She is hungry”
- Longer information units
- Use of punctuation, layout/format

It is important not to think of spoken and written language as completely distinct. The differences listed earlier are generalisations and should be not seen as rules. Some spoken texts might have characteristics associated with written texts and vice versa. It is more useful to think of a language continuum with naturally occurring conversations at one end and very formally written genres at the other. In between these two extremes fall other discourse types.

Wrap-up: Importance of presentation skills

In a recent study (Clark, 2008) examining how entrepreneurs’ communication skills and personal attributes affect investors’ decisions, 24 business angels attending a UK investor forum completed questionnaires in evaluating the “presentational” and “non-presentational” aspects of three entrepreneurs that influence their decisions to invest or not. The following outlines mainly the factors related to presentation skills covering issues relating to (1) clarity/understandability of the structure; (2) presentational structure; (3) the type/level of information provided; (4) persuasiveness of the entrepreneurs’ presentation and (5) the entrepreneurs’ personal characteristics.

1 Clarity/understandability of the structure

Negative comments

- did not explain why competing products were not offering a network capability
- did not understand the entrepreneur’s business model
- incoherent explanations
- too much hesitation and repetition
- stuttering delivery and mumbled

Positive comments

- very clearly presented
- clear, concise and understandable
- clearly explained the product and management capability

2 Presentational structure

Negative comments

- disjointed
- unfocused
- lost momentum in the middle part

Positive comments

- well laid out presentation
- opening very measured and structured
- well-focused
- logical flow

3 Level/type of information provided

Negative comments

- needed to provide more information about the competition
- not enough about how they will achieve sales projections
- not much on sales pipeline
- didn't say how they would compete with larger competitors
- moving from one business model to another but did not explain how this was going to be done
- didn't say how the entrepreneur's product worked
- why is the entrepreneur's product important? I am at a loss
- why are they going to do a particular type of business strategy?
- leap in turnover in figures unsubstantiated
- didn't demonstrate any evidence of knowledge of distribution business
- no evidence of benefits to market of purchasing the product

4 Persuasiveness of the entrepreneurs' presentation

Negative comments

- didn't persuade me at all
- poor sales pitch
- not very good at selling the product

Positive comments

- warmth of the presenter
- the entrepreneur seemed genuine
- presenter was convincing

5 The entrepreneurs' personal characteristics

Negative comments

- there was a general lack of passion and commitment
- needed a bit more enthusiasm
- seemed to be a bit arrogant

Positive comments

- very good sales pitch
- presenter was convincing

Post-reading activities

I. Which of the items in the first column would you include in an introduction to the three types of oral presentation (OP) in the following table? Please tick accordingly.

Table 8.1 *Introduction* of three types of oral presentations

Items to include in the introduction	*Internal OP to colleagues*	*Internal OP to bosses*	*External OP to customers*
Your name and position			
The topic of your presentation			
The purpose of your presentation			
The duration of your presentation			
The main points you will cover			
The visual aids you will use			
When the audience can ask questions			
A reference to the audience: Human touch			

II. Read the following presentation script. The presenter talks to colleagues about an office move. How many of the items does he include?

STEVE PARKER: Hello everyone, erm, I think we should make a start and I'd like to begin by asking you a question.
How many of you have moved house in the last 15 years?
Can I have a show of hands?
Most of you, good.
Now, do any . . . of you know the last time our organisation moved?
Any guesses?
MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: About 20 years ago?
STEVE PARKER: That's right; 21 years ago.
Now, I know most of you already, but for those of you who I don't know and haven't had a chance to meet yet, I'm Steve Parker and I'm in charge of the office move and before moving here I was responsible for the setting up of our new branch in France.

> I'm here to tell you . . . explain about the office move and to answer any questions that you may have, so please do feel free to interrupt me at any point.
> My presentation will last about 20 minutes and I've some handouts here, that I've prepared, that I will distribute at the end.
> Right, well, I've divided my presentation into four parts: why, where, when, and who. And I hope to be able to clear away some of this cloud of smoke before the end of the presentation.
> First of all then – why? Why did you, why does anyone move house?
> (Goodale, 2006, p. 15)

III. Read excerpts from a presentation by Dr. Mable Chan. This is the background to the presentation:

The organisation	The Association of Management (AM) is holding its annual conference. The conference programme includes presentations on a wide variety of subjects.
The presenter	Dr. Mable Chan is well known for her publications in the field of management psychology. At the AM conference, she is presenting a paper on "leadership styles."
The audience	All members of the audience are involved in management (e.g. personnel management, training) and have chosen this presentation from the information in the programme.
The presentation	Dr. Mable Chan will report the results of recent surveys into leadership styles and career promotion prospects. These surveys are based on corporate interviews conducted worldwide.

Read the transcripts of the two versions of Dr. Mable Chan's presentation. Compare the language of the two versions. What are the main differences?

Version 1

The significance of these figures incorporating data from different corporate studies cannot be overlooked. Next slide. In the British part of the survey it was found that success in business can be correlated directly with leadership styles. An individualistic leadership style seems to be closely associated with rapid career advancement, whereas a group or participative leadership style, despite its evident attractiveness to all members of staff, is correlated with a relatively slow career progression. Next slide. This is further illustrated in my next slide, which shows the results of another study concerning senior management attitudes. Although lip service is paid to the idea of participative management, their real perceptions of leadership style completely contradict this view. This can be further seen that . . .

Version 2

We can't really afford to ignore these results. The study was one of the most extensive of its kind and covers a wide range of corporations. We can see in this next slide the results from the British part of the survey. This study was based on interviews carried out with senior managers in 200 corporations. You can see here, 25% of the group of managers classified as participative reached senior management positions. On the other hand, 75% of the more individualistic managers achieved senior management status. So, I think the conclusion is obvious. If you want to reach the top of British companies, you have a much better chance adopting a fairly autocratic, top-down approach. . . .

IV. Read the following speech made by Obama and note its structure and what makes it persuasive.

Improving economic security by strengthening and modernising the unemployment insurance system

> Say a hardworking American loses his job – we shouldn't just make sure he can get unemployment insurance; we should make sure that program encourages him to retrain for a business that's ready to hire him. If that new job doesn't pay as much, there should be a system of wage insurance in place so that he can still pay his bills.
>
> ***President Obama, State of the Union 2016***

Building on his remarks in his State of the Union, the President used his Weekly Address to announce new proposals to provide workers with wage insurance, stronger Unemployment Insurance protections, and support for retraining to get the next job. These proposals are part of the Administration's broader push to strengthen and modernise our Unemployment Insurance system by closing holes in coverage and strengthening connections to work.

After the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, the United States is in the midst of the longest streak of private-sector job growth in our history, with more than 14 million new jobs created during the past 70 months. Yet even as the unemployment rate has had its fastest two-year decline in 30 years – and has been cut in half overall – we have further work to do to strengthen our safety net and modernise it for a changing economy. Unfortunately, even as the economy has strengthened, fewer than one in three unemployed Americans receive unemployment insurance benefits today.

The President has always been committed to ensuring that if Americans work hard they are able to get ahead. Through his efforts to raise the minimum wage, modernise overtime rules and secure paid leave for American workers, the President has advanced the principle that a hard day's work should be rewarded by good pay, decent benefits, and the ability for workers to care for their loved ones. In this era of rapid change, we need to modernise our policies that offer workers opportunity and security through health care, retirement, and an opportunity to advance in their careers. The proposal the President announced in his Weekly Address today is designed to ensure that if a worker loses her job, she has essential protections against economic insecurity that also help her retool and find a new job.

The President's proposal contains three core elements:

1 Protecting workers with wage insurance: The President's plan would ensure workers have access to wage insurance that would replace half of lost wages, up to $10,000 over two years. Displaced workers making less than $50,000 who were with their prior employer for at least three years would be able to leverage these resources to help them get back on their feet and on the way to a new career.
2 Strengthening Unemployment Insurance (UI): The President's plan would address holes in our UI system – including by expanding coverage to part-time, many low-income, and intermittent workers, and workers who leave work for compelling family reasons. It would also ensure that states provide at minimum 26 weeks of coverage.
3 Making it easier for workers to retool and retrain: The President's plan would make it easier for companies to avoid lay-offs through work-sharing, while incentivising states to offer and allow retraining for workers on UI or to provide relocation vouchers or subsidised employment. In addition, it would expand intensive career counseling to the long-term unemployed, discouraged, and part-time workers.

More detail on these proposals – which are paid for and will be described further in the President's forthcoming budget – follows.

1. Protecting workers with wage insurance

The President has put forward an agenda that grows middle-class jobs, fights to lift the minimum wage, and invests in jobs-driven skills training to improve all Americans' ability to secure a well-paying job. But the challenge for experienced workers who lose their jobs is particularly stark, as they may struggle to find work that pays as much as their prior job – both making it harder to make ends meet and leading them to stay on the sidelines.

Experienced workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own can face lasting consequences – as many of the same skills and experience that may have earned them higher salaries and raises at their previous job may no longer count when they are required to look for work again. On average, experienced workers starting over find themselves earning wages 10% or more below what they took home in the jobs they lost, and workers with more than 20 years of experience in their prior job face wages that are nearly a quarter less than what they made before.

Under the President's proposal, a modern system of wage insurance would help experienced workers make ends meet as they transition into a new job and start moving back up the ladder.

Providing wage insurance to help displaced workers get back in the game. The President's proposal would require states to provide wage insurance for workers displaced through no fault of their own from jobs they had held for at least three years. Wage insurance would encourage workers to put their skills back to work quickly so that experienced workers do not join the ranks of the long-term unemployed or leave the workforce entirely.

Replacing half of lost wages for experienced workers. Under the President's proposal, wage insurance would replace up to half of lost wages for workers who had worked three years or more at their previous employment and make less than $50,000 in their new job. Workers could receive up to $10,000 over two years to help make ends meet through a federally funded program administered directly through state unemployment insurance programs. This proposal would be fully paid for as part of the President's broader unemployment insurance package described next.

2. Strengthening Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Unemployment Insurance is one of our most important protections for workers for who fall on tough times – last year alone over seven million workers relied on UI to get by in tough times – and during the Great Recession, UI was one of the most important policies for combatting further economic downturn. But changing times have weakened these protections.

UI coverage is at its lowest levels in at least half a century. Today, fewer than one in three unemployed Americans receive UI benefits even though over 90% of employees have some taxes paid on their wages that support the UI system.

Our economy has changed since 1935 when UI was first introduced – for example, women today are twice as likely to work, new industries have emerged, and businesses have created new ways of organising work. As a result of all of these changes, many workers fall through cracks in our UI system. In addition, UI benefits now replace a smaller percentage of wages than before – making it harder for unemployed workers to make ends meet while looking for a new job.

The President's proposals would modernise the Unemployment Insurance System to protect more working families, restore system solvency and help the Nation weather future economic crises.

The President's proposals, which are paid for, would ensure Americans can rely on UI to provide basic support during difficult times by expanding coverage and ensuring states have the resources to provide benefits. In addition, the President's proposals would restore state UI program solvency, ensure each state has sufficient reserves to withstand future economic downturns, and provide a robust program that supports families and helps spur economic recovery in communities.

The President's proposals build on the track record of success from the $7 billion made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to encourage states to expand coverage. With those resources, more than 30 states have implemented and sustained important UI reforms. The proposals put forward below, paid for in the President's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget, would go further by making many of those reforms the national standard.

Expand coverage to protect low-income and vulnerable workers. The President's proposal would require that state UI programs cover workers that currently fall through the cracks, including part-time workers, newer labor market entrants, certain low-income and intermittent earners, and workers who leave work for compelling family reasons such as to move with a spouse, escape domestic violence, or care for an ill family member. States could receive incentives for improving benefit levels and extending coverage to workers in growing non-traditional forms of employment, like temporary employment services workers.

Restore standard UI maximum benefit duration to 26 weeks. For the first time in over 50 years, nine states have cut their maximum UI benefit duration to less than 26 weeks – some, such as North Carolina now provide only up to 13 weeks. Even during the current economic recovery, a historically high 38% of workers exhaust their state-provided UI benefits. The President's proposals would reverse this damaging erosion of state UI benefit duration by requiring that all state programs provide at least 26 weeks of coverage, consistent with the historic norm.

Automatically extend benefits in the face of economic recessions. Unemployment Insurance is one of the most effective tools to increase economic resilience. During the Great Recession, UI is credited with saving 1.75 million jobs and replacing one-fifth of the economy's lost demand. From 2008 to 2013, extended unemployment insurance benefits helped nearly 24 million workers, lifting 2.5 million people out of poverty in 2012 alone. However, Congress has to enact extended benefits each time a recession hits, and often fails to act quickly enough for first-hit states or to extend benefits long enough for those hardest hit. The President's proposal would create a permanent program of extended UI benefits that would automatically provide up to 52 additional weeks of federally funded benefits for states experiencing rapid job losses or high unemployment.

Restore solvency and ensure unemployment insurance for the long-term. Three out of five state UI programs are insolvent. Thirty-six states exited the Great Recession having relied on emergency federal loans. More than $7 billion in loans are outstanding today and even more is being borrowed through the private markets. Currently only 20 states have sufficient reserves to weather a single year of recession. Low state reserves remain a serious threat to unemployment insurance for working Americans. The President's proposal would put state unemployment insurance programs on a path to permanent solvency while insuring they have sufficient reserves to weather the next economic crisis. The proposal would modernise federal unemployment insurance taxes and hold states accountable for maintaining sufficient reserves to provide benefits for at least six months of an average economic recession.

3. Making it easier for workers to retool and retrain

Unemployment Insurance should be as much about facilitating re-employment as about providing support to make ends meet while looking for a new job. As our economy continues to change and evolve, getting that next job may require preparing for new opportunities in new industries and new fields. The President's proposals encourage states to make it easier for workers to retool and retrain and provide workers with the guidance and support they need to gain new, relevant skills. These proposals build on the successes of the President's job-driven training agenda, which has aligned over $1 billion in annual job training grants with job-driven training best practices and put the most new apprentices into training in nearly a decade, among other accomplishments.

The President's proposals would help employers avoid lay-offs in the first place and provide unemployed workers with more opportunities and advice to train for the skills that will land them their next job.

Prevent lay-offs before they happen. Work-sharing, also known as short-time compensation, can help employers hold onto their workers and avoid mass layoffs that can lead to long-term unemployment and hardship for working families and their communities. The President's proposal would provide implementation grants and additional incentives to states for work-sharing programs that help employers reduce hours instead of laying off workers while providing partial unemployment benefits to workers whose hours are cut.

Strategies to help unemployed workers reconnect to the workplace. The President's proposals would provide states with incentives to directly link jobseekers to work as a reemployment strategy by providing states with incentives to adopt work and training-related reforms. For example, states would receive incentives to create temporary work-based training programs to help workers get back on the job and to allow workers to continue receiving UI benefits while participating in an apprenticeship or on-the-job training. States could also receive funds for relocation assistance programs to help workers pursue new opportunities in a different community based coupled with expert guidance on there might be new possibilities.

Providing 21st Century Career Navigation. The President's Budget will propose to provide new resources to states for Career Navigators who instead will proactively reach out to every worker who is most at risk of not being able to reset their careers after being unemployed: (1) the long-term unemployed who have been unemployed for approximately six months or more; (2) discouraged workers who have dropped out of the labor force altogether and (3) people who are only able to find part time work. Career Navigators will help them find a job, match with an appropriate training program, and connect to federal support services. This proposal will expand intensive counseling services to more than one million people annually. The President is also proposing the expansion of in-person reemployment services to the one-third of UI beneficiaries most at risk of exhausting their benefits, as well as all returning veterans who are receiving UI.

Building on a track record of success

The President's proposals for strengthening and modernising the UI system build on the success of important reforms incentivised through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and additional modernisation efforts launched through the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012.

The Recovery Act provided states an opportunity to receive up to $7 billion in incentives for expanding coverage and improving benefits. With those resources, well over 30 states have implemented and sustained important UI reforms – from Maryland which introduced the alternative base period to cover workers with shorter work histories and provided benefits to part-time workers to Oklahoma which also reformed its system to protect workers who have to leave work for compelling family reasons. In addition, through the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, 28 states now have work-sharing programs, also known as short-time compensation, that conform with federal standards. In addition to the states that updated their laws to create model work-sharing programs, six of these states used incentives provided in the Act to create new programs within the past few years. From 2008 to 2013, extended unemployment insurance benefits helped nearly 24 million workers, lifting 2.5 million people out of poverty in 2012 alone. The experience of so many states with these reforms has helped lay the groundwork for making these policies the national standard.

(The White House, 2016)

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Chapter 9

Socialisation

Questions for reflection

1 How often do you conduct small talk in the workplace? What do you talk about?
2 What do you think are the communicative purposes of small talk?
3 Do you encounter any difficulties conducting small talk?
4 What is the role played by non-verbal communication?

Introduction

Small talk is regarded as trivial and non-important to some involving conversations about the weather, family and weekend (Koester, 2006). Yet changes in workplace cultures lead to the increasing recognition of the importance of informal exchange for knowledge sharing while building trust and team spirit (e.g. Campbell, White, & Johnson, 2003; Charles, 2007; Kalla, 2006). Chinese professionals in Chan (2014) expressed that there is a lack of formal training for informal use of language for chit chat and small talk in the workplace. Yet informal exchange has been regarded by graduates as the most popular form of communication essential to team work and relations building (Carnavale, Gainer, & Meltzer, 1990; Crossling & Ward, 2002; Guirdham, 1999; Palermo, 2002). Coupland (2000) suggested that "small talk . . . cannot be segregated from the 'mainstream' concerns of talk at work. It is an intrinsic part of the talk at work complex" (p. 13). Similarly, Holmes and Stubbe (2003, p. 89) note the importance of small talk in the workplace, suggesting that it is "a crucial function of talk with significant implications for ongoing and future interactions."

There are a number of corpus-based studies of workplace discourse mostly focusing on business talk. A few of them examined small talk: (a) the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project (WLP) in New Zealand; (b) one of the four sub-corpora of the HKCSE that consists "of naturally occurring conversations recorded in homes, restaurants, cafés, cars, etc." (Warren, 2004, p. 115) and (c) the Corpus of American and British Office Talk (henceforth ABOT), where Koester (2006, 2010) examined small talk exchanges. A recent breakthrough is a small talk-only subcorpora, the Small Talk at Work sub-corpus (STW) compiled from a larger workplace-based corpus, the ANAWC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Non-Augmentative and Alternative Communication) – AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) and non-AAC (Non-Augmentative and Alternative Communication) Workplace Corpus (Pickering & Bruce, 2009), which comprises 221 hours of recorded interactions. The STW comprises interactions recorded by two of the four AAC speakers, Sarah and Ron, and two of the Non-AAC speakers, Paula and Tony. It contains very different types of workplace discourse: Meeting interactions, actual group work, phone calls, service encounters, people who talk aloud to themselves while writing a work report, etc.

While the role of small talk cannot be ignored, how to make effective use of it to achieve different communicative purposes in the workplace is also important. This chapter first outlines what small talk can help achieve in workplace communication and what should be noted. Relevant quantitative and qualitative analyses of small talk in the subcorpora are then outlined, followed by examples of phrases/idiomatic expressions that can be used for small talk in different occasions. The role played by non-verbal communication is also covered.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- understand the analyses of small talk based on Small Talk at Work sub-corpus (STW);
- determine the most frequently used expressions in spoken discourse;
- master the use of informal expressions for conducting small talk in different contexts;
- appreciate the role played by both verbal and non-verbal means in conducting small talk.

Roles of small talk

Interaction in the workplace can be used to achieve different purposes. Holmes (2000) defines core business talk as “relevant, focused, often context-bound on-task talk, with high information content” (pp. 36–37). Work-related talk is related to work in general while social talk about cultural activities and phatic includes utterances like greetings. Small talk shifts along this continuum and is non-work related though it is multifunctional in the workplace.

In the workplace, people do not just rely on official talk but also on small talk which is crucial to getting the job done. Holmes (2000, pp. 48–49) suggests that small talk “typically serves to establish, maintain and renew social relationships, with the most common use of small talk being therefore to maintain solidarity and collegiality in the workplace.” People in higher positions may also use small talk to ask others to do something, and this is related to the positive face needs of both speakers and listeners (Laver, 1981). While a boss may use small talk to ask you to do something in a less authoritative way, a subordinate can also report an unachievable work goal or show disagreement through small talk. Thus, small talk allows one to present information in an indirect way. When silence occurs in a conversation, small talk can be used to fill the gap to avoid unpleasant feelings (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). It can be used at the beginning of a conversation as a transition to work-related talk. It can also be used in the final phase to finish a discussion on a positive note. According to Pullin (2010), the senior members of staff being interviewed expressed the following points concerning the need for face-to-face communication:

- building empathy/rapport;
- accepting others’ points of views without necessarily agreeing with them;
- including people in both business and social conversations;
- showing interest in staff as individuals and asking about their well-being such as personal interests and goals.

There are two examples of movie extracts discussed in Tsang (2008). The first extract from the movie *Working Girl* illustrates how small talk is used by a superior to establish a collegial relationship with subordinates. Katherine plays the role of a department manager in a bank and Tess is her new secretary. In this example, Katharine initiates social talk with her new subordinate, Tess, after the greeting exchanges (line 3). Through small talk talking about birthday and age, the social distance between Katherine and Tess is reduced, and a collegial relationship established, which may in turn enhance productivity (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

Katherine's subordinate Tess is a new staff member who does not know her boss Katherine well. As seen from the extract, she interacts rather passively with Katherine, reflected by her delayed response (in line 4), her hesitation (line 12/13) and her minimal responses (lines 2, 7 and 17). This may be because she has not yet developed a close relationship with Katherine. Katherine, on the other hand, continues to control the conversation which is a covert way of showing power (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Finally, Katherine enacts her power by shifting from small talk to a directive in lines 19 and 20 asking for coffee at the end of the conversation.

Another extract is from the movie *The Devil Wears Prada* which shows an effective small talk conducted between Andy and Emily. Its success demonstrates the "acknowledgement of the social relationship that exists between the participants" (Laver, 1981, p. 301) which is important in making small talk work.

Context: Assistant Andy wears a beautiful and fashionable gown to the company's annual party. "Paris" refers to the upcoming fashion show Emily is going to attend with her boss, Miranda, for business purpose (time in movie, *The Devil Wears Prada*, 1:01:32 to 1:01:54).

In this example, there is a shift from small talk to off-topic work-related talk and then back to small talk: From Emily's appearance to the business trip to Paris and then back to Emily's diet. After being praised by Emily, Andy compliments Emily on being thin. Andy chooses the right topic to talk about and Emily feels happy about it. Andy succeeds in building a collegial relationship with Emily through the conversation.

Analyses of the Small Talk at Work sub-corpus (STW)

The Small Talk at Work sub-corpus (henceforth STW) is a 48,755 word collection of samples of small talk in the workplace. There are 423 interactions involving 160 speakers talk; four of them wear the recorders through which those interactions are captured. As the interactions are spontaneous linguistic events, they are basically different from one another in length, number of participants, and number of turns.

It was found in Di Ferrante (2014) that most of the interactions involved both men and women (231) and only men talk (105) are 18 more compared with those where only women talk (87). Concerning the number of participants involved in the interactions, most interactions take place among two to three participants (specifically 238 and 118 cases out of 423 total interactions respectively) and they seldom happen among more than five people. The common topic of workplace small talk is (extended) greetings (33.94%), which is different from what the literature reported about weather being the most dominant topic. Extended greetings refer to small talk extended on other topics after passing greetings or during the farewell, which have a key role to play in building and maintaining relationships.

While many of the examples of small talk in the corpus are multi-functional, the most frequent function of small talk is chit chat for its own sake, and the second most frequent one is seeking/sharing information (e.g. sharing information about where to buy pizza). Data of the corpus also show that small talk interactions take place during the work day and that opening and closing small talk exchanges are less frequent than on-the-run talk. In just over 60% of the cases, small talk takes place while people are working. They do small talk while doing manual work or sitting at their desks, fixing a wheelchair or organising the merchandise of the thrift store.

In 68% of the interactions, no discourse marker is used to initiate or signal the small talk. The remaining 32% consists instead of those instances where a discourse marker is used to commence the small talk interaction. Some discourse markers such as *so*, *yeah*, *okay*, *well*, and *hey* are frequently used to signal the beginning of a small talk exchange. The markers used to signal the transition from small talk to task-oriented talk include *so*, *well*, *okay* and *yeah*.

Expressions used for small talk involving different topics

The following are examples of conversations with colleagues for different purposes.

1. How to introduce yourself in the workplace

A: Hi, I am Mable, nice to meet you.
B: Hi, I'm Mary. Great to meet you. So, it's your first day today?
A: Yes, I'm here for a 2-month placement programme.
B: How do you like our company so far?
A: I never imagined my colleagues would be this great and I'm very happy about it.
B: Cool, it's Christmas soon and we are organising a Christmas party for colleagues and their family. Would you be interested in joining us?
A: That sounds awesome. Could you let me have more information about it?
B: No problem. See you.

2. How to talk about what you want to do

A: Linda, what do you want to do this summer?
B: Well, I really don't want to work during the summer holidays.
A: Me neither. So what do you plan to do?
B: I want to bring my family to Dubai. Have you been there?
A: Of course. It's amazing. You should definitely go.

3. How to make a suggestion

A: I need some advice, Kate.
B: What's up?
A: Should I study a part-time postgraduate programme in *marketing*?
B: Hmm, you don't have to study *marketing* to do your job well.
A: True, but I really like studying and exchanging ideas with professors and students from different professions.
B: Well, you might as well just take one class and see how it goes.
A: Good call. I'll try that.

4. How to ask for clarification

A: Tim, where should I visit if I go to Dubai?
B: I was just back from there and I guess you're going to like it there.

A: What do you mean? How do you know I'll like it?
B: Well the lifestyle there is pretty relaxing and it's quite different from that in Hong Kong (saying it quietly and unclearly).
A: Huh? What did you say?
B: I said it's different from Hong Kong and you'll like it.

5. What to say when bumping into your colleague on the street

A: Hey George, what's up?
B: Hey Mable, I didn't expect to run into you.
A: Where are you headed?
B: I'm off to a yoga class.
A: Oh really, how's that going?
B: I've been taking the class for a long time and it's going great.

6. How to get help from your colleagues

A: Thanks for calling. How can I help you?
B: Hi, I'm calling about my computer. I had difficulty turning it on with the correct password, and I have no idea what's going on.
A: OK, can you turn off the computer and try again?
B: OK, let me try.
A: How's it working now?
B: Ummm nope, it's still not working.
A: OK, then our staff will come and help you. Are you available now?
B: Sure.
A: Great, see you then.

7. How to greet your colleague at the gym room

A: Hey, Peter, how's your workout going?
B: Not bad, thanks for asking. And yours?
A: Pretty well, have you tried that stretching class on Wednesday? It's great fun.
B: Oh great idea, I'll have to give it a try.
A: By the way, don't forget our progress meeting tomorrow morning.
B: Of course not, will report the findings tomorrow.
A: See you.
B: Bye.

8. How to greet your colleague on Sunday morning

A: Good morning Ron, how are you?
B: Great. And you?
A: What are you up to today?
B: Not much. I'm going to the local market. Wanna join me?
A: Sure, I'd love to. Let's do it.

9. How to talk about language learning

A: Hey, Kerry, how's everything?
B: Great, Kitty. How are you?
A: Good. I've been working on my Korean.
B: Oh really? How's it going?
A: Well, I need more time to work on it. Too occupied with my full-time job now.
B: Well, I am also learning Korean. Perhaps we can form a pair to practise our Korean?
A: That's a great idea.
B: Let's start next Tuesday at 6:30pm in my office after work?
A: Sure, see you there.

10. How to talk about a movie

A: Have you seen the new movie that came out this summer called *Lucy*?
B: Yeah, I saw it. I found it pretty good. It's innovative and exciting. What did you think?
A: It's wonderful. It's better than what I expected.
B: Yes, my demanding hubby enjoyed the movie too.
A: There are a lot of great movies coming out this summer.
B: Let's go and see one together sometime.

Use of slang and informal expressions

Slang is colloquial expressions in a language. A study (Namvar & Ibrahim, 2014) examining the use of slang by Malaysian youth involved the following 20 slang items administered to 60 students:

Slang No. 1 (yep/yup: meaning yes, a positive answer commonly found in conversations)
Slang No. 2 (baby: in slang meaning *sweetheart*, and *someone you love*)
Slang No. 3 (chicken: referring to *a coward person*)
Slang No. 4 (big mouth: *a talkative person*)
Slang No. 5 (cool: *excellent* or *great*)
Slang No. 6 (gonna: *going to*)
Slang No. 7 (gotta: *got to; must; need to*)
Slang No. 8 (wanna: the full form being *want to*)
Slang No. 9 (LOL: an abbreviation of *laugh out loud*)
Slang No. 10 (ASAP: an abbreviation of *as soon as possible*)
Slang No. 11 (BRB: an abbreviation for *be right back*)
Slang No. 12 (B4N: another abbreviation for *bye for now*)
Slang No. 13 (What's up: *what's going on? what's new? how do you feel?*)
Slang No. 14 (my bad: meaning *my mistake*)
Slang No. 15 (pic: popular internet slang meaning *picture*)
Slang No. 16 (dude: an American slang meaning *a cool guy*)
Slang No. 17 (Oh Jesus Christ: used to show surprise, media slang)
Slang No. 18 (Oh shit: *oh no* or *damn*, media slang)
Slang No. 19 (honey: *a friend* or a *buddy*)
Slang No. 20 (Oh my goodness: used to show surprise or shock)

Findings show that internet slang and abbreviations such as *gonna*, *gotta*, *B4N*, *BRB*, *LOL*, *ASAP* and *wanna* are used frequently by Malaysian youth. They also seem to be familiar with slang items like *Oh shit*; *Oh my goodness* and *Oh Jesus Christ*, probably because of their common use in movies. On the other hand, slang such as *baby*, *chicken*, *my bad* and *dude* are not commonly used. As most TV channels in Malaysia are American channels, the youngsters seem to be most familiar with media slang and movie slang.

Examples of common English idioms/slang/informal expressions

1. Different sources list their own top 50/100 most popular English idioms for effective communication with native speakers of English. Following is a compilation based on the common expressions found in different lists with examples given.

A drop in the ocean	A very small part or insignificant amount of something big or whole	It's just a drop in the ocean but at least it's a way to get started.
Actions speak louder than words	It's better to actually do something than just talk about it	That's certainly a good idea, but actions speak louder than words.
Add fuel to the fire	To do something that make a bad situation even worse than it is	To add fuel to the fire, numerous departments have cut their budgets.
All over the place	In or around many places, meaning "without focus"	The new story was all over the place.
Ball is in somebody's court	It is up to somebody to make the next decision or step	The ball is in your court once they approach you. Please decide what you plan to do.
Be a good catch	Be someone worth marrying/having	Be a doctor or lawyer and you will be a good catch for someone.
Beat around the bush	Avoid the main topic or not speak directly about the issue	Don't beat around the bush! I don't have a minute for you to waste.
Bend over backwards	Willing to do anything to help	We are bending over backwards to make sure we are doing the right things.
Blabber	To talk too much	Thank you, Peter, for listening to me blabber on.
Blow somebody away	Be extremely impressed by something	Her performance really blew me away.
Blotto	Extremely drunk	We need to call a taxi for Sam as he is looking pretty blotto.

Butterflies in my stomach	To be nervous	The day of the interview I wake up with butterflies in my stomach.
Catch up	To find out what's going on in someone's life.	I'll stay in Hong Kong for some more time, and I'll catch up with her.
Chill out	To relax instead of worrying about something	I am taking a week off to chill out and study French.
Come on	An exclamation used in different ways to express disbelief/frustration, or to encourage someone to do something	Oh come on, please don't worry about it.
Cry wolf	Call for help when you don't need it	His "cry wolf" strategy no longer works and we won't believe in him.
Crunch time	The period of time just before a project has to be completed and everyone has to work hard	And it really is crunch time now. There're less than 4 weeks away from the start of the conference.
Cut corners	Do something badly or cheaply	Don't try to cut corners by buying cheaper fruit or cutting them smaller.
Cut somebody some slack	Give somebody a break/not to judge somebody too harshly	This is my first week on the job here, and please cut me some slack.
Cut to the chase	Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point	Let's cut to the chase, Mary. What is actually troubling you these days?
Do without	Something is not necessary	Now I have to decide which one I can afford to do without.
Down to the wire	Something that ends at the last minute or last few seconds	It came down to the wire before he turned in the proposal.
Drive someone up the wall	To irritate or annoy very much	A few days on vacation with my classmates is enough to drive me up the wall.
Get out of hand	Lose control of things	If the function gets out of hand, we may need to call the police.
Give it a whirl	To try something	If you think you're qualified, give it a whirl, give it a try.

Give the benefit of the doubt	Believe someone's statement, without proof	I always try to understand others, give the benefit to the doubt, to forgive, to appreciate and to love others.
Go down in flames	End or fail suddenly and spectacularly	I feel painful to see my hubby's career to go down in flames like this.
Hang in there	To remain brave and determined when you are in a difficult situation	Hang in there, mom. There are just 10 more days to go.
Hit the books	Study very hard	I need to go home as soon as possible – I got to hit the books.
In the fast lane	an exciting way of life that involves dangerous and expensive activities	He always lived his life in the fast lane, and ended up dying at a very young age.
It slipped my mind	You forget about something	I meant to do that, but it slipped my mind.
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend or activity	There are always people ready to jump on the bandwagon and try to get 15 minutes of fame.
Kill two birds with one stone	Solve two problems at once /with one action	If we join the conference in Hawaii, we can also go and visit Aunt Mary. Let's kill two birds with one stone.
Lighten up	used to tell someone not to be so serious about something	The government should just say, "Lighten up. We don't care about the environment."
Lose your marbles	To start behaving in a crazy way	Her grandmother started losing her marbles having got a stroke.
Make a long story short	Come to the point	To make a long story short, the revised version of my paper was accepted and published in an A* journal.
Miss the boat	Miss the opportunity to do something	If you don't approach the employer now, you're going to miss the boat.
Once in a blue moon	When something rarely ever happens	Kelvin only joins our gathering once in a blue moon now that he has children.

Piece of cake	When something is extremely easy to do	"Don't worry about the exam. Baking is a piece of cake. I do it all the time."
Plain as day	Very plain and simple	Their plan is obvious, plain as day. They're going on a hunger strike.
Pull yourself together	Calm down and act normally	"Please don't get mad mom. Pull yourself together and take a nap."
Run on fumes	Continue to stay awake when feeling exhausted	I really have to stop. I haven't slept for 24 hours and I'm running on fumes.
Sell somebody out	Snitch on someone or let their secret out	This is an election year, and there must be someone who may want to sell us out.
Shoot from the hip	Speak directly	I am more emotional, more shoot from the hip.
Sit on the fence	Stay neutral and not take sides	I tend to sit on the fence on environmental and educational issues.
Skeleton crew	The minimum number of people needed to keep a service/office operating	Most of the employees had been fired. There was only a skeleton crew left to take care of the only branch left.
Step up your game	Start performing better	Then make sure you step up your game the next time.
When pigs fly	Something will never happen	I only intend to treat you meals when pigs fly.
Wrap something up	To finish a job, meeting, etc.	If we can stay a week longer, we'll have time to wrap up our work.
Your guess is as good as mine	Have no idea, do not know the answer to a question	Your guess is as good as mine. He didn't tell me anything at all.

Role of non-verbal communication

For any form of communication, including small talk, to be conducted successfully, effective use of both verbal and non-verbal communication means is essential. Non-verbal rules may differ as per the situation, ethnic cultural and gender groups. The following (Phutela, 2016) outlines different types of non-verbal communication covering body language, eye contact, facial expressions and gestures. When there seems to be conflict between verbal and non-verbal communication, people tend to rely on non-verbal means to find out what is actually intended.

1 Aesthetic communication (e.g. through creative expressions such as dance, music, art, painting and sculpture)
2 Physical communication (e.g. always used together with verbal communication such as smile, frown, touch, gesture and other bodily movements)
3 Signs (e.g. a more mechanical kind of non-verbal communication including signal flags or light, horns and sirens)
4 Symbols of communication (e.g. what can convey our social status including our dress code, clothing and jewelry)

Physical communication is the most common form of non-verbal communication. To understand thoroughly what a person intends to convey, we need to be not just aware of what one says, but the non-verbal cues given. Briefly speaking, non-verbal communication, especially body language, can

- reinforce your verbal message;
- contradict what is intended through verbal means;
- substitute your verbal message;
- supplement the verbal message.

Relationships can improve a lot if you can tactfully understand the emotions people have behind their words. How you address someone non-verbally can also show your understanding and care. According to Phutela (2016), what makes an impression does not rely on words only (only 7%) but how you speak (38%) and mainly your body language (55%). One type of non-verbal communication concerning distance and body motion is called kinesics, which covers posture, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact and body orientation. One can convey a variety of emotions and personality by using these means. For example, posture such as folding your arms (one is closed to information), crossing your legs (interpreted as defensiveness), or standing/sitting erect (showing interest) can communicate in a certain way. A person who is sitting in a rigid position is usually threatened by something or someone, while one sitting in a relaxed position tends to be comfortable with his/her surroundings. In addition, posture can also reflect one's status or perceived status. Generally speaking, lower status individuals are usually more rigid and tense in posture, while those of a higher status appear more relaxed.

There are many non-verbal cues that are used every day in the workplace (e.g. handshakes; dress code; eye contact) and some even stronger than the verbal message. For example, a handshake can leave a good first impression. Handshakes should be inviting but not too overpowering. Eye contact can be regarded as either positive or negative. It generally shows honesty, interest, and invites communication and feedback. Prolonged eye contact, however, may mean aggression or flirting; avoiding eye contact also signals distrust or lack of interest. In the workplace, dressing properly and professionally is essential to employees.

There are some tips for reading or interpreting body language and non-verbal communication provided by Phutela (2016). Please see the following examples of body language and questions you may have to ask yourself.

Eye contact	Any eye contact being made? Is there too much eye contact or just right?
Facial expression	What does the facial expression show? Is it unexpressive? Or does it show interest?
Tone of voice	Does the voice show interest, confidence or warmth? Or does it show a lack of interest or nervousness?
Posture and gesture	Are their bodies relaxed or immobile? How about shoulders? Are they raised? Or slightly sloped?
Touch	Is there any physical contact? Is it appropriate to the context? Do you feel comfortable about it?
Timing and pace	Is there an easy flow of information back and forth? Do non-verbal responses come too quickly or too slowly?
Sounds	Do they indicate care or concern?

Non-verbal cues that express power

We form our opinions about others not only based on what they say (i.e. verbal content cues), but also through visual and vocal cues (Sporer & Schwandt, 2006). The role of one's voice pitch has been examined in a number of different contexts. A decrease in voice pitch seems to be associated with a decrease in anxiety (Laukka et al., 2008) and a higher pitch level with a lower degree of emotional stability (Imhof, 2010). A meta-analysis reported that liars used a higher voice pitch than those who tell the truth (DePaulo et al., 2003). Finally, studies examining the impact of politicians' use of voice pitch found that the use of lower pitch signals leadership, honesty, intelligence and expertise (Tigue, Borak, O'Connor, Schandl, & Feinberg, 2012).

Studies in the literature have also found a correlation between the use of visual cues and power (Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998; Carney, Hall, & Lebeau, 2005; Cashdan, 1998). High-power individuals are considered more forthcoming, open and expressive in body movement than less powerful ones (Carney et al., 2005; Cashdan, 1998). Powerful non-verbal behaviours can help the organisational spokespersons to communicate more competently. In the area of politics, gazing directly into the camera can improve the impression of politicians (Nagel, Maurer, & Reinemann, 2012). Other studies show that people who interrupt others during an interpersonal conversation, another non-verbal expression of power, are also regarded as more competent (Farley, 2008).

There are two recent studies (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014) that examined how the use of non-verbal cues by spokespersons affects customers' perception during crises. In study 1, participants (121 Dutch-speaking Belgian men and women) were shown information about a crisis (in this case a food contamination crisis) faced by a fictitious company and then the voice recording of an organisational spokesperson. The use of a fictitious organisation was to avoid any existing knowledge that might have affected the participants' judgement.

Results show that the use of voice pitch of an organisational spokesperson can affect people's perception of the spokesperson. Specifically, a spokesperson who uses a lower-pitched voice is perceived as more competent and powerful than one with a high-pitched voice. Following the findings of study 1, study 2 examines the impact of a powerful body gesture as a non-verbal visual cue and how this affects post-crisis reputation of an organisation through the perceptions of the spokesperson. Participants were divided into four experimental groups receiving information about the crisis event the organisation was dealing with, followed by a video showing an interview conducted with the CEO of the organisation. Results of studies 1 and 2 are consistent as both vocal cues and visual non-verbal cues can affect the public's perception of the competence and power of an organisational spokesperson, including eye contact, expressive body movements and relaxed facial expression.

When communicating in the workplace, besides verbal cues we need to be aware of, the use of non-verbal cues is actually as important, and perhaps more important than verbal spoken messages.

Post-reading activities

I. Create three conversations where the following informal expressions are used. Use two to three of them in each conversation.

- once in a blue moon
- wrap up
- pull yourself together
- it slipped my mind
- come on
- all over the place
- hang in there
- hit the books

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II. Watch the following video and identify (a) the idiomatic expressions used; (b) the example sentences; and (c) their meaning. Fill in the following table:

Idiomatic expressions	*Meaning*	*Sentences from the video*

Video: Tokyo Travel Guide (www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC9m_id_Yds)

III. How are you going to send positive body language while having small talk with your boss? Note the non-verbal communication means that can help.

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Chapter 10

Business meetings and negotiations

Questions for reflection

1 Based on your experience of organising/attending meetings in the professional workplace, answer the following questions. Use the Likert scale of 1–4 (1 indicating very easy and 4 very difficult), tell your perception of participating in meetings:

a	presenting an effective argument	1	2	3	4
b	putting forward suggestions	1	2	3	4
c	expressing your opinions	1	2	3	4
d	brainstorming ideas	1	2	3	4
e	responding to others' ideas (e.g. disagreeing)	1	2	3	4
f	interrupting effectively	1	2	3	4
g	participating actively	1	2	3	4
h	understanding different English accents	1	2	3	4
i	identifying different views/ideas	1	2	3	4
j	following a discussion	1	2	3	4
k	taking notes	1	2	3	4

(a–k from Warren, 2014)

2 What are the difficulties/challenges you encountered when having meetings? How can these problems be addressed?
3 Have you had any experience of having negotiations? How would you define negotiation?
4 What are the keys to success in negotiations?

Introduction

According to Lehmann-Willenbrock, Rogelberg, Allen, and Kello (2018), workplace meetings take place for many reasons. Employees meet to talk about problems, develop solutions, generate ideas, reach consensus, and make decisions. In addition, meetings are also sites for many other organisational phenomena, including sensemaking, leadership influence, relationship building, team dynamics, conflict, and the shaping of employee attitudes. Meetings are essential to every effective organisation and can help "clarify issues, set direction, sharpen focus, and create alignment." (Axtell, 2016).

Based on a recent study examining the reflective essays produced by 120 Chinese professionals (Chan, 2018), meetings are the most dominant form of spoken communication (100%), followed by phone conversations (92%), and presentations (57%). Another recent study reported in Turmel (2017) involving about 1,300 employees in Canada considered meetings to be helpful and necessary, and that they have a positive impact on their projects (83%). There are different types of meetings which can be categorised into two main types: (1) information meetings and (2) decision-making meetings. While the former aim to inform participants of necessary information, the latter involve participants in resolving problems through discussions so as to make decisions. This may involve negotiations which is another important skill one has to master in order to communicate successfully in the workplace. This chapter outlines what makes effective meetings, what negotiation is about and how to negotiate effectively.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- determine how to be an effective leader in a meeting;
- understand how to be well-prepared as a participant;
- prepare effective minutes after meetings;
- find out what negotiation is and how to negotiate well.

Challenges and difficulties in having meetings

According to Warren (2014), there are 11 skills related to meetings. The five most difficult skills are: (1) understanding different English accents (54.4% found it difficult/very difficult); (2) interrupting effectively (52.1% found it difficult/very difficult); (3) presenting an effective argument (50.7% found it difficult/very difficult); (4) responding to others' ideas (e.g. disagreeing) (56.6% found it difficult/very difficult) and (5) brainstorming ideas (60.8%).

Interview data also revealed two main difficulties: (1) language difficulties and (2) cultural-related difficulties as illustrated next:

Language difficulties (personal)

a The difficulty in organising thoughts in real-time
From interview:

> The whole thing is in our mind, but the thing is we don't have much time to speak in English in our daily life, so I find it difficult to speak in a well-organised manner and so, part of the ideas that I want to deliver might be missed out in the process or might have been twisted.

b Unfamiliarity with social interaction/small talk in English
c The lack of practice of speaking English in everyday work

Language difficulties (other participants)

There are also difficulties arising from other meeting participants:

a Their low proficiency of English
b Unfamiliar accents
e.g.

> Their accents are really strong and they speak very fast. If you are not familiar with their style, it's hard to catch what they say. So I think it's up to us to spend time to get to know their accents and style to communicate and not be afraid to ask them to repeat or slow down.

(fast speakers: reportedly from the Indian subcontinent, Malaysia and Singapore; those with hard-to-understand accents from all over the world: Eastern Europe; Southern Europe; the Philippines; Thailand; India, mainland China, South America, Scotland)

Cultural-related difficulties

The cultural differences among the meeting participants, including:

a Different professional cultures
From a project manager designing electronic commodities for overseas clients:

> Sometimes we may present something they are not familiar with. Sometimes when I present new products, they may say that they do not understand. I think it is because we are from different professions but not related to English problems.

b Different national cultures (e.g. humour)

> Sometimes, their jokes are culturally-embedded and you don't know what they are talking about or you just don't think that it is humourous.

c The relative passivity of the Hong Kong Chinese compared to westerners

> Actually, Chinese seldom speak. It is one of our weaknesses. We do not like asking questions, we prefer to listen passively then to actively ask.

d The difference in interpreting implied meanings
From a team head of an IT department from a Hong Kong–owned multinational corporation who found the British harder to understand than their US counterparts:

> It is difficult to understand the underlying message of British professionals. They express things euphemistically. . . . Americans are a bit more straightforward.

To achieve effective and successful meeting communication, we need to do sufficient pre- and post-meeting preparation. For pre-meeting preparation, we need to share related information in advance. For post-meeting preparation, we need to confirm in written form to make sure there is no misunderstanding regarding the decisions taken in the meeting.

Role of the chair

The chair of a meeting can be realised in different ways: (a) empowering leadership styles and (b) authoritative leadership style. They can help facilitate group participation in making decisions or take a more authoritative role in controlling the behaviour of the participants.

Pomerantz and Denvir (2007) illustrate how an appointed chair in an upper-management meeting enacted the role as a facilitator. For example, he allowed the participants to guide the way how he chaired the meeting through presenting his directions as suggestions that required the participants' consent: "with a [sic] your agreement, I suggest we adjourn" (p. 37). He also acknowledged and appreciated the wishes of the participants by making the following remark: "If you want to turn this thing into (.) a >fish market gentlemen<, it's your meeting but . . ." (p. 41)

Holmes, Schnurr and Marra (2007) described how two managers in an IT section of a company enacted very different roles in chairing team meetings. One of them was a facilitator and encouraged team members to participate and raise topics of their own. She acknowledged the importance of developing interpersonal relations, for example, by allowing social talk and humouristic sequences to take place during the meeting. This type of chairing style is known as an empowering leadership style: "enacting and reinforcing team work as a matter of cooperation and consultation" (p. 447). Another chair had a more authoritative leadership style which enabled him to make the meeting more structured. He followed the agenda closely and took a more active role in allocating turns to the participants. The participants also acknowledged his key position during the meeting. Following are the key roles of the chair in managing the opening and closings of a meeting, and also turn taking.

Openings and closings

Meetings are bounded events, temporally, spatially and also interactionally (Boden, 1994). There are traditional interactional practices in meetings concerning openings and closings and transitions during meetings. Deppermann, Mondada and Schmitt (2010) studied how participants and the chair managed the openings/closings and transition of meetings based on a multi-modal approach taking into account their verbal and paraverbal part of their interaction and diverse modes of bodily expressions (e.g. gesture, gaze, body posture).

Before meetings start, people gathering in the meeting room always engage in small talk, either as a whole group or in small groups. The transition from small talk to the beginning of meetings is always initiated by the chair, usually using topic transition markers such as *okay* with loud volume. This can also be done explicitly through greeting and welcoming the participants, as well as commenting on the attendance (e.g. people present and missing). To move to the business of the meeting, the chair will then introduce the purpose of the meeting. In informal meetings, this can be done by the participants who indicated that they have other obligations and need to leave (e.g. *I've gotta run*). In more formal meetings, there are more explicit preclosing sequences introduced by the chair (e.g. *anybody else; got anything else?*). The closing can then be initiated by thanking, greeting and more formally adjourning.

Turn taking

Another role of the chair is to manage the interaction of the participants during meetings. According to Boden (1994), the chair will allocate turns and participants need to signal to the chair if they would like to get a turn. During discussions, the chair has to monitor turns, manage time spent on the discussion items and decide if there might be irrelevance in the topics or issues raised for discussion. Ford (2008) examined different types of meetings in an academic organisation and reported different non-verbal means used by participants in taking a turn, including leaning forward, gazing at the chair, and raising a hand. There were also cases when turns are taken without addressing the chair. This can be done by speakers producing extensions of a previous speaker's turn, or by speaking up at a transition relevance place. Again, non-verbal means are used such as eye contact with the current speaker and nodding.

Topic progression

The chair also has a key role to play in managing topic progression during the meeting. This is achieved by introducing items on the agenda and closing discussion topics through different summarising techniques. Having said that, the chair has the freedom to decide how much the agenda should be followed as there may be other closely related matters raised during the discussion. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) reported that "exploratory" meetings involving activities such as planning, brainstorming and creative problem solving may allow for more digressions.

Authentic language use in meetings

One of the unique features of CANBEC (Cambridge and Nottingham Spoken Business English) is the amount and range of internal and external data, allowing for comparisons between internal and external types of meetings at several levels. SOCINT is one of the largest corpus of social and intimate everyday conversation and CANBEC is a collection of spoken business English recorded in companies of all sizes, from big multinational companies to small partnerships. Formal and informal meetings, presentations, conversations on the phone/over lunch etc. were recorded and entered into the computer for analysis. CANBEC was specially developed for examinations of interpersonal language. There are nine meetings in total, covering a variety of meeting topics and contexts, and with at least two meetings for each of the four relationship categories: manager-subordinate, peer, external contractually bound and external non-contractually bound (Cambridge University Press and University of Nottingham Cambridge, 2007).

Discursive practices as indexed by common clusters in meetings

The following outlines the categorisation of common discursive practice of business meetings divided into two main categories: Discourse-marking practices and interactional practices. For discourse-marking practices in meetings, we focus, enumerate/sequence, link, mark cause and effect, and summarise/reformulate. The expressions used to achieve these purposes are shown in Table 10.1. Interactional practices cover clarifying one's position, checking/showing shared knowledge/understanding, hedging, signalling obligations, making decisions, hypothesising/speculating, evaluating, seeking clarification, explaining, being indirect, signalling (un)certainty, and marking/requesting future communication. The expressions used are shown in Table 10.2.

Table 10.1 Primarily discourse-marking practices

	Practice	*Cluster*
Primarily discourse-marking practices	Focusing	in terms of the fact that the problem is one of the things that
	Enumerating/ temporal sequencing	and then for the time being to begin with in the first place
	Linking	and then but at the same time
	Marking cause-effect	the reason why and that's why
	Summarising/ reformulating	so I think so I mean in other words

Table 10.2 Primarily interactional practices

	Practice	*Cluster*
Primarily interactional practices	Clarifying own position	I mean from my point of view from our point of view I guess for me what we're trying to do that's what I'm saying I'm not saying that but what I'm saying
	Checking/showing shared/knowledge /understanding	you know you know what I mean what you're saying is do you know what I mean
	Being vague	the other thing sort of thing kind of thing et cetera things like that a lot of and this that and the other and so forth or something like that a couple of and everything else all that sort of stuff that type of thing the rest of it
	Hedging	I think sort of a bit (of a) I don't know I don't think at the end of the day from my point of view from our point of view to be honest with you I'll be honest with you as far as I know I'll be straight up
	Signalling obligation	we can we need we need to we should we have to you need to you have to I need to know I think you should
	Focusing on decisions	so we can a problem with not a problem we might as well not an issue

Practice	*Cluster*
Hypothesising/ speculating	if you if I so if
Evaluating	but if it might if we can it may be right a waste of time one of those things a hell of a lot of that's the other thing
Seeking clarification	do you mean what do you think what do you mean
Explaining/ demonstration	if you look at I can tell you as you can see
Being indirect	but I think do you want (me)(to) I don't know if/whether I don't know what I don't know how what do you think I was just thinking
Signalling (un)certainty	we can you can you could we might we should be able to we might be able to we could do that
Marking/ requesting future communication	sit down and sit down with come back to me come back us

(Adapted from Handford, 2010)

As seen from the preceding, *if* seems to be commonly used for various discursive practices, for example, *if you* (1,309); *if I* (284) and *so if* (254) for hypothesising/speculating, *but if* (273) and *if we can* (128) for evaluating, and *if you look at* (45) for explaining/demonstrating. As modal verbs can be used to express epistemic (i.e. speaker's evaluation/judgement of, degree of confidence in, or belief of the knowledge upon which a proposition is based) and deontic modality (i.e. permission and obligation according to some systems of rules), there are two categories included, one signalling obligation and the other one (un)certainty. Though these categories may not be comprehensive in covering all discursive practices in meetings, they do cover many of the most common practice as evident from the clusters.

Expressions used for establishing interpersonal relationship in meetings

The following shows five main interpersonal language categories in meetings and the social (solidarity or power-related) dimensions and discursive practices invoked (Handford, 2010):

1 Pronouns: Signalling the social relationship
2 Backchannels: Signalling listener solidarity
3 Vague language: Signalling solidarity over knowledge
4 Hedges: Negotiating power over knowledge
5 Deontic modality: Negotiating power over actions

1. Pronouns

Pronouns are regarded as the main means used by speakers to signal social relationship. As noted in a number of empirical studies (e.g. Maynard, 1984; Drew & Heritage, 1992; Fairclough, 2000; Nelson, 2000; Poncini, 2002, 2004), the pronoun *we* is statistically the top keyword in CANBEC (twice as common in business meetings compared to everyday conversations), and its associated pronominal references *us* and *our* are also dominant. Rather, *you*, *I*, *she* and *he* are all significantly less likely to be found in meetings than in everyday conversations.

We can be inclusive or exclusive covering the following interpretations:

- inclusive personal, referring to all those present at time of speaking (internal and external)
- exclusive personal, referring to one in-group present (internal and external)
- inclusive corporate, referring to both (or more) companies or departments (external)
- exclusive corporate, referring only to the speaker's company or department (external)
- intra-organisational, referring to all employees within a company (internal)

Another use of *we* is what is referred to as *corporate we* representing the company and accounting for collective responsibility. Another related use of corporate *we* is more to lessen that of the individual speaker's responsibility for the action or decision made (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

2. Backchannels

Backchannels are "the short verbal responses made by listeners" which signal they are listening and do not want to take over the turn (McCarthy, 1998, p. 176), and are regarded as an important means to signal listener solidarity. There are both verbal (e.g. *I see*; *right*; *yes/yeah*; *absolutely*; *certainly*; *lovely*; *great*) and non-verbal means of backchanneling (e.g. facial expressions; laughter; leaning forwards or backwards; eye-glances) that can be used.

In terms of which backchannels are more typical of business meetings, *okay* and *hmm* seem to be significant. *Hmm* is used more than twice as frequently in internal meetings, and is approximately three times more dominantly used in manager-subordinate meetings than in peer meetings. In many of the manager-subordinate meetings in CANBEC, it is common for managers to use backchannel much more for this purpose. In external meetings, however, *hmm* is less common as the interlocutor's positive face is taken into consideration. Instead *sure* seems to be more common (Handford, 2007).

3. *Vague language*

One major purpose of using vague language in meetings is to address the face needs of the listener (O'Keeffe, 2003) which is another way to signal solidarity. Linguistically, this is realised through three types of vague language: vague nouns (such as *things*), vague approximators (*about*) and vague category markers (*and things like that*) (Koester, 2006). Vague category markers are used more frequently in external meetings than in internal ones, and they are used mainly to create the impression of shared knowledge and therefore convergence.

4. *Hedges*

While the preceding three interpersonal categories are mainly about establishing solidarity, the subsequent two are more about the negotiation of power, and the associated issue of addressing potential face-threats. As discussed in Chapter 7, hedging devices are used to lessen the degree of certainty and assertiveness of utterances, which is also a common feature in business meetings. For example, the word *just* is found in every 200 words in CANBEC. Other common forms of hedges, according to O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter (2007, p. 175), include modal verbs and verbs with modal meaning (*I think, we should, I guess, it would be, I'd like to*), nouns (*things*), adverbs of degree (*certainly, probably, possibly*), restrictive adverbs (*just*), stance adverbs (*kind of*), and features of "onlineness" (that is, the cognitive processing requirements of real-time speech) such as repetitions (*of the of the*) and fillers (*er, erm, you know*).

One of the factors determining the choice of modal items is the relative status of the participant in a conversation. The higher the status, the stronger the modal form chosen (He, 1993). This is evident from the data in CANBEC that deontic modals such as *need to*, *have to* and *should* are often found in collaborative, decision-focused communication in both internal and external meetings. In strategy meetings where decisions are made for the benefit of the company or department, *need to* is most dominant. The three most common deontic modal forms, *need to, have to* and *should* are most frequently used in strategy, technical, logistics and procedure meetings, but least frequently in sales and marketing meetings.

Hedges are frequently used in several discursive practices including evaluations, excuses, disagreements and other potential threats to positive face. In terms of negative face-threats, hedges are needed when for example speakers are suggesting a change to work procedures.

5. *Deontic modality*

A number of deontic modal verbs and expressions are found to be dominant in the corpus and this section examines how obligation is realised through certain deontic modal and semi-modal verbs covering *need* (to), *should*, *have to* and *must* which are regarded as "strong" modals of obligation (He, 1993; Koester, 2010).

Deontic modal forms are more widely used in the core management practices of directing and instructing colleagues (both subordinate and peer), and of dealing with problems and decisions. The top three modal forms (i.e. *need to, have to and should*) are all more frequent in manager-subordinate meetings where managers direct and instruct staff. In meetings between peers from different departments, there is also a high degree of deontic modal forms being employed. In such meetings, peers may want to make the most appropriate decision for their own department and thus persuasion and claims of necessity are essential.

Minutes writing

Minutes are not a record of what was said, but what was discussed.
Your minutes must show:

- who are present and who are not (apologies/absent);
- that the previous minutes were approved (and amendments if necessary);
- the status of actions from previous meetings;
- the decisions that were made (be explicit about what should be done by whom and by when);
- the actions resulted from the decisions.

Format of the minutes

Welcome and introductions

List the participants who attended the meeting, including their affiliation/organisation, department or job title. Such information is put under the heading of *attended* or *present*. There should also be information about apologies (if any).

Purpose

This is about the purpose of the meeting as given by the chair.

The meeting

Summarise the relevant points but not prepare a transcript of what was said. See the following example:

Good practice: Susan admitted that she is regularly late in the morning and after lunch time, and explained that this is mainly because of her need to take care of her sick mom before she could leave home for work.

Panel discussion

The key points made should be minuted but not everything according to the order of discussion. Note the following example:

Summary of discussion

The chair considered Susan's case and agreed that they would like her to continue staying in the Finance Office.

Decision/outcome

Note the decision and any actions that arise from it.

Date of next meeting/review

Note the date of the next meeting (if any). If there is any follow-up action or review needed, include the information with an appropriate heading.

Common questions about minutes writing (Gutmann, 2013)

1. Is background information necessary?

At the beginning of a meeting, there may be someone giving background information of an issue. This should only be minuted when most participants are not aware of the information.

Make sure that such information is not for those participants who are not able to join the meeting.

2. *Should names be named?*

There is no need to do so as minutes are not a record of who said what but what was discussed. If you name names, then there may be (a) people who want to speak in order for their names to occur more often in the minutes or (b) some others who do not want to contribute to avoid their stance being known. Different people may also make the same point making the minutes difficult to understand. Writing subject-based minutes is therefore essential.

> <u>Subject-based</u>: The group discussed staffing for the department in the new academic year. It was agreed that teaching staff are required to take up most of the teaching. It was then decided that we continue hiring *Instructors* and *Teaching Fellows* but they are mainly contract-based positions.

3. *What "person" should be used?*

Minutes must always be written in the third person (i.e. without using *I*, *we* or *you*, etc.). The main reason is that the referent of *we* or *our* may be confusing. See the following examples.

> Our problems stem from the introduction of the new flexitime policy.
> Our concerns are mainly about the recent merger rumour.

Not clear what *our* refers to, whether it is the staff members being referred to or the company as well.

4. *What should be the tone used in minutes?*

The tone used in minutes must be neutral. The writer should record what was discussed but not the style or manner of discussion. Do not use subjective words used in the meeting and avoid being biased. Listen to the points of view and record using your own words. Minuting requires your interpretation skill but not just fast writing.

5. *What are some useful words for minutes?*

What follows are some verbs/nouns/adjectives which can be used when reporting discussions in a meeting. Decide on the most appropriate ones to be used:

- discussed/debated/deliberated/considered/examined/analysed
- said/stated/reported/established/confirmed/verified/declared
- pointed out/explained/suggested/drew attention to/raised/informed/understood
- were reminded that/recalled/clarified/illustrated/defined/demonstrated/emphasised
- agreed/concurred
- disagreed/disputed/not the case
- planned/intended/meant/hoped/proposed

- existence of/issue of/reality of/topic of/problem of/question of
- benefits of/merits of/advantages of/worth/value of
- problems/drawbacks/dangers/uncertainty/disadvantages
- chose/opted/selected/picked/named/preferred
- potential/possibility/likelihood/prospect/chance/probability
- options/alternatives/choice/preference/opportunity
- decided/resolved/approved/concluded/determined
- worried/concerned/troubled/uneasy/anxious/apprehensive

If something is *decided*, we could use alternatives like *confirmed*, *approved*, *verified*, *resolved* and so on. To refer to the end of a meeting, we can use verbs like *ended*, *concluded*, *terminated* or *finished* (Talbot, 2009). Knowing the correct verbs to be used is important as this is also related to clarity and conciseness. For example:

- The director said the review would take six months and he concurred with a request that he would report back regarding this in due course.
- A more concise version with the choice of a precise verb: The review would take six months and the director agreed to report further to the next scheduled meeting after this. (this version contains six fewer words and it is also clear when the director will report back).

6. What if there is no agreement reached?

If the group agreed no action should be taken, note *No action necessary* using the same layout as the action points. This will usually follow items for discussion only (but this may sometimes result in an action). If the group did not get as far as taking an action (when one was required), put down *No decision taken* or *No decision made*. If the group were arguing and could not agree on a decision, use *No consensus reached*. If it was agreed to discuss the item at a future meeting, indicate so using *Deferred to next meeting* or *Deferred to meeting on [date]*. If the item has to be passed to another group, the action point should be replaced with *Referred to* . . . and the reason can also be specified (e.g. *Referred to XXX Committee for advice* or *Referred to Board for approval*).

7. How to convert notes to minutes?

Use the standard template and format for the minutes. It is also important to use clear and informative headings and paragraphs for people to locate information easily. For example, *Completed launch of Project 1/2018* may be more effective than *Project 1/2018 launch*. Your superior who may want to check the status of the project may thank you for highlighting the status in this way.

Negotiations

According to Collins English Dictionary, a negotiation is “a conversation set up or intended to produce a settlement or agreement. It is a form of social interaction, and a process by which two or more parties try to resolve perceived incompatible goals” (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Persuasion is also as it is conceived by Casse (1981, p. 152) as

> a process in which at least one individual tries to persuade another individual to change his or her ideas or behaviour and it often involves one person attempting to get another

to sign a particular contract or make a particular decision. Thus negotiation is a process in which at least two partners with different needs and viewpoints need to reach an agreement on matters of mutual interest.

Negotiation outcome

There are two negotiation outcomes: Distributive and integrative. Views on the expected outcomes of the negotiation may also be culturally based. Specifically the expected outcomes of any negotiation may be either integrative or distributive. Integrative outcomes, or win-win situations produce mutual benefits to both the parties. Integrative negotiations result in great benefit for both parties and stable relationship (Bazerman & Neal, 1982; Fatehi, 1996). Distributive outcomes are the result of competition among the negotiators. Distributive negotiation is a win-lose scenario in which the negotiators believe that they have opposing interest and incompatible alternative choices (Phatak, 1997). Americans tend to have a short-term distributive way of negotiation, as they are concerned with their own interests and view negotiations competitively, often arriving at distributive outcomes. In contrast, most Asians view negotiation as a long-term relationship and a cooperative task (Lewicki & Litterer, 1985).

Distributive bargaining (e.g. Americans)

Bargaining characteristics

Available resources: Fixed amount of resources to be divided
Primary motivation: I win, you lose
Primary interest: Opposed to each other
Focus of relationship: Short-term view
e.g. If you feel that you got a good deal, you won; if you walk away feeling that you paid too much money, you lost.

Integrative bargaining (e.g. Japanese, Chinese, South Americans)

Bargaining characteristics

Available resources: Variable amount of resources to be divided
Primary motivation: I win, you win
Primary interest: Compatible with each other
Focus of relationship: Long-term view
e.g. Trade Union negotiating with employers for a 3% rise in salary. The employer proposed a 2% increase in salary every two years, and bonus given to staff willing to work for one hour more each day.

How to negotiate effectively

1. Active listening

Ulijn and Strother (1995) refer to active listening as a factor distinguishing between skilled and average negotiators. This includes the ability to give verbal and non-verbal feedback, for example, by using verbal signals like *Oh yes* and non-verbal strategies like smiling, making intensive eye contact and nodding, in addition to asking questions and summarising during the negotiation process. Active listening is thus a part of an interactive process, where the interlocutors make explicit that they are paying attention and contributing towards a common understanding of the topics being debated. One way to show that one is listening actively is the use of backchanneling which refers to verbal and non-verbal listener feedback in spoken interaction that does not involve a speaker shift. Non-verbal backchanneling includes facial expressions, laughter, leaning forwards or backward, eye glances. Examples of verbal backchanneling are *I see; right*; *yes/yeah; absolutely; certainly; lovely; great*. Findings of this study show that non-verbal backchanneling in the form of head nods was found to be the most frequent form, while verbal backchanneling was mainly restricted to *yes/yeah* and to items not exclusive to English, such as *okay* and *mhm*.

There are other ways to show that one is listening actively. In a negotiation, the following should be demonstrated:

Paraphrase: Recap what the speaker said to show that you've understood the speaker
e.g. "If I understand correctly, you want us to assure you that we can manage the large orders that come in. You're also concerned about the price and our desire to continue working closely with you. Have I captured your main points?"

Inquire: Solicit more information via asking questions and show your interest
e.g. "You mentioned that you find our proposed price unacceptable. Please help us understand why you believe so. Let's also discuss how we can proceed by developing a pricing structure that can satisfy you."

Acknowledge: Demonstrate that you have heard and understood what the others said
e.g. "It sounds as if you're quite unhappy about a number of points in the proposal, so much so that you have serious concerns about whether we'll be able to work together over the long run."

2. Power strategies

There are three types of power strategies. *Legitimacy* makes reference to one's company, status, or competitors to persuade. In hierarchical cultures, company status and negotiator role are sources of legitimate power that have implications for negotiator behaviour (Brett et al., 1998; Leung, 1997). For example, in Japan, it is normative for a low-status company to defer to a high-status company and a seller to defer to a buyer (Graham, Johnston, & Kamins, 1997). *Informational persuasion*, such as positive and negative substantiation, is a fact-oriented form of argument. *Informational persuasion with sanctions* adds the element of a threat, for example, a reference to BATNA (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) that conveys a party's alternatives or power to walk away from the table.

Informational persuasion with sanctions

e.g. I need you to be more flexible on price. Otherwise I have other offers to consider.

Legitimacy

e.g. None of our competitors can offer a show this strong to fit your market needs.

Informational persuasion

e.g. This show is worth $80,000 per episode. It has a strong and proven history of . . .

3. Body language

Low context communicators (people preferring to communicate directly; information is explicit and relatively context-free; English, Dutch; German; United States; New Zealand) interacting with high context communicators (people preferring to communicate indirectly; meaning embedded in the context of the message and must be inferred to be understood; Chinese; Indian; Japanese; Korean) should be mindful that

- non-verbal messages and gestures may be as important as what is said;
- status and identity may be communicated non-verbally and require appropriate acknowledgement;
- building a good relationship can contribute to effectiveness over time;
- indirect routes and creative thinking are important alternatives to problem solving when blocks are encountered.

For example, collectivists are very much reluctant to express disagreement openly. Consequently, non-verbal and indirect communication cues play an important role in negotiation with collectivists. To succeed in business in Korea, for example, a person needs an extraordinary skill to read *nunchi* which means the look in a person's eyes, the non-verbal reaction of a person to a question (De Mente, 1991; Fatehi, 1996).

The same gestures have different meanings in different cultures.

e.g. Head movements: "In Bulgaria, for example, people may nod their heads to signify no and shake their heads to signify yes. So gestures can be very confusing interculturally" (Zhou & Zhang, 2008, p. 93).

Posture offers insight into a culture's deep structure. Generally,

> standing erect, shoulders back, head held high display confidence, energy, and self-assurance, which gains more attention from the audience. And a relaxed posture, a comfortable seating position, uncrossed arms, and lack of stiffness indicate openness with no communication obstacles. On the other hand, abrupt movements, shifting seating positions, crossed arms or legs may signal defiance, disinterest or an unwillingness to listen.
> (Zhou & Zhang, 2008, p. 93)

It is thus important for us to be able to read the body language (Goman, 2012). For example,

1. Engagement behaviour suggesting interest, receptivity, agreement

   e.g. eye contact, head nods, smiles, forward leans
2. Disengagement behaviour suggesting a person feels bored/angry/defensive

   e.g. looking away, leaning back, narrowed eyes, frowns
3. Stress signals showing discomfort

   e.g. higher vocal tone, face touching, tightly crossed ankles

Five phases of negotiation

There are several basic steps involved in managing the negotiation process. The first phase typically begins with planning.

Planning

It starts with negotiators identifying those objectives they would like to attain. Next consideration **is given** to areas of common ground between the parties. Other major areas include:

- objectives setting;
- dividing issues between short term and long term considerations;
- determining the sequence in which to discuss various issues (Chaney & Martin, 1995).

Interpersonal relationship building

The second phase of the negotiation process involves getting to know the people on the other side. This feeling out period is characterised by the desire to identify those who are reasonable and those who are not. This is particularly important for collectivist culture, as the essence of any negotiation is primarily based on how much there is trust in interpersonal relationship between partners involved in a negotiation.

Exchanging task-related information

In this part of the process, each group sets forth its position on the critical issues. At this point the participants are trying to find out what the other party wants to attain and what it is ready to give up.

Persuasion/bargaining

This is the most important step. The success of the persuasion often depends on:

- how well the parties understand each other's position;
- the ability of each to identify the areas of similarity and differences;
- the ability to create new options;
- the willingness to work towards a solution.

Agreement/settling and concluding

The final phase is the granting of concessions and hammering out a final agreement. To negotiate effectively in the international areas, it is necessary to understand how cultural differences between the parties affect the process.

How to negotiate? Tips for negotiation

According to Fisher and Ury (1981), the essence of effective negotiation can be achieved by following these steps:

- Research your opponent: Acquire as much information as you can about your opponent's interests and goal for the purpose of understanding opponent's behaviour, predicting their responses to your options and to frame solutions;

- Begin with a positive overture;
- Address problems not personalities;
- Pay little attention to initial offers: Treat an initial offer as merely a point of departure as they tend to be extreme and idealistic;
- Emphasise a win-win solution if conditions are supportive, look for an integrative solution.

Craver (1983) has pointed out the following 14 common techniques of negotiation:

- Argument (legal and non-legal);
- Rational or emotional appeals;
- Challenges to opponents' various contentions;
- Ridicule of opponent or of his/her position;
- Control of agenda (its content and order of items);
- Intransigence;
- Straight-forwardness;
- Flattery (including real or feigned respect);
- Manipulation of contextual factors (time, location, etc. of negotiations);
- Humour can be used by many people to ridicule unreasonable positions being taken by opponents or to reduce built-up bargaining tension;
- Silence (don't inadvertently disclose information to fill the silence);
- Patience (powerful weapon since many negotiators make concessions simply to end the process as soon as possible) – time pressure can be effectively used against opponents who have time constraint;
- Creation of guilt or embarrassment, since such feelings often precipitate concessions.

Acuff (1993) suggests the following 10 negotiation strategies that will work anywhere in the world:

- Plan the negotiation;
- Adopt a win-win approach;
- Maintain high aspirations;
- Use language that is simple and accessible;
- Ask a lot of questions then listen with your eyes and ears;
- Build solid relationship;
- Maintain personal integrity;
- Conserve concessions;
- Be patient;
- Be culturally literate and adopt the negotiating strategies of the host country environment.

Kirkbride and Tang (1995) suggest the following rules for negotiators to succeed in their negotiations:

- Always set explicit limits or ranges for the negotiation process;
- Always seek to establish general principles early in the negotiation;
- Always focus on potential areas of agreement and seek to expand them;
- Avoid excessive hostility, confrontation and emotion;
- Always prepare to negotiate as a team.

Qualitative data reported in Zhu and Gao (2013) revealed the following factors considered to be instrument leading to failures in negotiations as reported by Chinese negotiators:

- Not equipped with enough information about the other party
- Not taking the initiative in negotiations
- Revealing one's bottom line too early
- No alternative plans or emergency measures
- Being impatient
- Not being familiar with the other party's strategies or styles
- Lack of flexibility
- Being biased toward the other party
- Being too aggressive and not willing to compromise
- Failure to understand the other party's non-verbal messages
- Not paying attention to the other party's "face"
- Not placing the other party on an equal footing
- Language barrier
- Neglecting the other party's religion or taboos

According to Thompson (2015), there are some tools for the overly cooperative negotiators and others for competitive negotiators:

For overly cooperative negotiators

- Avoid concentrating too much on your bottom line. Instead, spend time preparing your goals and developing high aspirations.
- Develop your *Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement* (BATNA). Know your options to negotiating.
- Get an agent and delegate the negotiation task if you find a more suitable person who can act more assertively than you yourself.
- Create an audience. People negotiate more assertively when they have an audience. Tell someone about your negotiation, make promises and then report results.
- Cooperative people tend to say yes to almost anything. Rehearse not saying yes to everything proposed.
- Insist on commitments, not just agreements. An agreement puts too much trust in the other party; instead, insist upon commitments and specific promises from the other party, with consequences if they are not followed.

For competitive negotiators

- Think about pie-expansion, not just pie-slicing. Remember that you can increase your slice of the pie by creating a bigger pie.
- Ask more questions to understand the other party's objectives and needs.
- Establish standards to rely on. People may respond well to arguments based on standards of fairness and objectivity.
- Hire a relationship manager to manage the "people side" of negotiations.
- Do not view the negotiation as a contest of wills on every trivial issue. Remember that trade-offs may be necessary as losing on some issues may bring you big gains on other issues.
- Always acknowledge the other party and protect others' self-esteem. Do show respect.

Post-reading activities

I. How to behave in a meeting?
How should a chair and participants behave in a meeting? Note down in the spaces provided what a successful chair and an effective participant should do.

A successful chair should

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________
5. ____________________
6. ____________________
7. ____________________

An effective participant should

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________

II. Procedure of a meeting
So how should a chair start a meeting? Is there any procedure he/she should follow? Note down in the spaces provided the procedure.

Moving to a vote	Consensus
The minutes	Postponing discussion
Finishing a point	Voting
Proposing	Giving the floor
Taking the floor	The subject
Moving to a new point	Keeping order
Any other business	Directing
Closing	The agenda

<u>Opening</u>
Ladies and gentlemen, I declare the meeting open.
Right, shall we get started?

____

Can we take the minutes as read?
Would someone move that the minutes of the last meeting be accepted?

____

Has everybody received a copy of the agenda?
The first item on the agenda today is . . .

____

The purpose of today's meeting is . . .
Perhaps we should first look at . . .

____

What are your views on this, Peter?
Mr. Ng, would you like to say something about this?

____

Excuse me Mr. Chairman, may I say something please?
Could I make a point about . . .

____

Has anyone anything further to add?
Has anyone anything further they wish to add before we move on to the next item on the agenda?

____

Could you stick to the subject please?
This isn't really relevant to our discussion. What we're trying to do is . . .

____

We can't all speak once, Mrs. Chan, would you like to speak first?
I shall have to call you to order, Mr. Baker.

____

Now, I'd like to turn to . . .
Could we move to item 3 on the agenda?

____

Perhaps we could leave this for the time being. We can come back to it later.
If no one has any objections, I suggest that we leave this matter until our next meeting.

____

I would like to propose the motion that . . .
Would anyone like to second the motion?

____

Can I ask for a show of hands?
Let's put it to the vote.

____

Those for the motion, please?
Those against?
Any abstentions?
The motion is carried unanimously.
The motion has been rejected by 6 votes to 5.

____

It seems that we have a consensus.
Are we all agreed on that?

____

Is there any other business?
Is there anything else to discuss?

____

I declare the meeting closed. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.
That's all for today. Thank you.

____

III. Preparing to be successful
What follows are the building blocks of successful negotiations. Fill in the blanks to show your understanding of what makes negotiations successful.

The building blocks of successful negotiations:

Interests/needs
- Behind conflicting positions lie s_ _ _ _ _ interests.
- Focus on interests not p_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.
- Ask yourself what you care about.
- Determine what the opposite number cares about.

Options
- Widen your h_ _ _ _ _ _ _ before you negotiate.
- Try not to assume that there is only one s_ _ _ _ _ _ _.

Walk-away alternative
- Decide what to do if you can't reach a_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.
- Prepare to walk away from the negotiation with c_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

People
- How we handle the p_ _ _ _ _ in a negotiation can determine the results we obtain.
- Demonstrate effective i_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ skills when negotiating.

(Adapted from Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011)

IV. Meeting topics
Make use of the language expressions and discuss the following topics which may require your negotiation skills as well.
1. You are working for a high-performance motorcycle company. The design engineers and marketing strategists keep arguing about which should be a higher priority, performance or aesthetics. As a management trainee, the senior manager would like to hear your viewpoint on this issue.

2. You and your partner disagree about whether employees should be encouraged to create online profiles on LinkedIn and other business-oriented social networking websites. You say these connections can be valuable to employees by helping them meet their peers throughout the industry and valuable to the company by identifying potential sales leads and business partners. Your partner says that encouraging employees to become better known in the industry will only make it easier for competitors to lure them away with enticing job offers.

3. The new management trainee constantly tests the limit of your company's dress and grooming standards in the past few days. You are responsible for explaining the dress code to the new trainee.

V. Meeting minutes

Prepare two paragraphs making use of verbs commonly used in minutes to report discussions and decisions made. Note the correct use of tense too.

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Chapter 11

Employment and appraisal interviews

Questions for reflection

1 Think of how jobs are commonly advertised and sought in your particular field. How would you describe the standard application and interview process? Would you change anything about this process?
2 If you were arranging an interview for a role in your particular field, what would be the key considerations when designing questions?
3 What are the challenges for both the interviewer and the interviewee when it comes to conducting interviews in your field?

Introduction

This chapter focuses on two main types of interviews commonly found in the workplace: Employment interviews and appraisal interviews. Both require collection of information to make decisions though the purpose varies. Employment interview is a "personally interactive process of one or more people asking questions orally to another person and evaluating the answers for the purpose of determining the qualifications of that person in order to make employment decisions" (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014, p. 234) while appraisal interviews "provide the basis for decisions about promotions and salary raises and set important developmental goals and performance targets" (Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Kauffeld, 2017). As an interviewer, understanding how to structure an employment interview and effective questioning skill is crucial. As an interviewee, understanding of what to prepare and the assessment criteria is also critical.

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- determine what makes effective interviews;
- understand how to be a successful interviewer.

Employment interviews

There are two main types of employment interviews: Structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are defined in different ways in the literature. According to Campion, Palmer, and Campion (1997), for example, structure is "any enhancement of the interview that is intended to increase psychometric properties by increasing standardisation or otherwise assisting the interviewer in determining what questions to ask or how to evaluate responses" (p. 656). Huffcutt and Arthur (1994) defined structure as "the degree of discretion that an interviewer is allowed in conducting the interview" (p. 186) and proposed two dimensions: (a) Standardisation of interview questions and (b) standardisation of response scoring. No matter how structure is defined, it is clear that a structured interview has pre-determined rules for the interviewer in terms of the questions to be asked, and how the evaluation has to be done.

Based on expert judgement and a meta-analysis of 103 research articles involving 104 interviews, interviews are usually structured with seven components which are: (a) basing questions on a job analysis; (b) asking the same questions of each applicant; (c) using better question types; (d) using anchored rating scales; (e) rating each question; (f) using multiple interviewers and (g) providing training. Research shows that structured interviews are more reliable and effective than unstructured interviews in different ways. First, the use of structure in interviews greatly reduces group differences. Second, the effect of applicants using impression tactics on interview ratings is reduced through the use of structured interviews. Third, there is little saturation of structured interview ratings by personality factors unless the interview is designed to measure personality.

Structured behavioural employment interviews

While traditional employment interviews are the most common form of interview in small and medium-sized organisations, questions asked are often vague, unfocused and theoretical. Candidates are allowed to theorise and generalise about their background and experience. There are very few follow-up questions to obtain specific information. As a result, candidates who are good at interviewing often gain control of the interview and tend to redirect attention to areas of their choice.

Structured behavioural interviews or the sometimes called the experience-based interviews are based on a simple premise: The most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. This form of interview focuses on real-life job-related work experience/behaviour, knowledge, skills and abilities. It allows the interviewer to get "behind" the resume and explore the depth and breadth of a candidate's experience and training (Harolds, 2013). Table 11.1 shows the STAR technique used in structured behavioural interviews.

The following are examples of the STAR technique used to determine if the candidate possesses the skill and experience required in customer services and team work.

Customer services

e.g. Behavioural question: "Tell us about the most difficult customer service experience you have ever had to handle." (ST: Situation or task)
Follow-up probes:

- "How were you made aware of the problem?" (A: Action)
- "What steps did you take to solve the situation?" (A: Action)
- "What could you have done better?" (R: Result)
- "What happened as a result of your intervention?" (R: Result)

Table 11.1 STAR technique

S and T = situation or task A candidate should talk about a specific situation or task in which they had to use certain skills and abilities to deal with a real problem or concern. According to Whitacre (2007), situational/task questions concern: What circumstances surrounded one's decision? Why did one come to such a conclusion? e.g. Can you describe a situation in which you had to make a difficult decision?
A = action Find out what actions the candidate took to resolve the situation or perform the task. Actions are important because they reveal the extent of the candidate's ability to use many of the skills required. This area requires thorough exploration through the use of follow-up probes. e.g. Can you describe your role in the budget-cut initiative you highlighted in your application?
R = results Don't forget to find out the result of the candidate's actions. Were the results those that are intended? What could the candidate have done differently or better? e.g. What feedback did you obtain from the project? What difficulties did you encounter? What were your accomplishments?

Teamwork

e.g. Behavioural question: "Tell us about a time when you used a team approach to problem-solving." (ST: Situation or task)
Follow-up probes:

- "How did the team work?" (A: Action)
- "What solutions did you attempt before involving the team?" (A: Action)
- "What were your responsibilities on the team?" (A: Action)
- What specific actions did the team take?" (A: Action)
- "What obstacles needed to be overcome by the team in solving the problem?" (A: Action)
- "What results did the team achieve?" (R: Results)

In probing details concerning actions and results, the following can be used:

- Tell me about . . .
- Describe a time when . . .
- Give me an example of a time in which . . .
- Describe a situation in which you . . .
- Narrate a situation in . . .

Appraisal interviews

To make an appraisal interview work, an opportunity for interaction between the appraiser and the appraisee is required. Instead of using a top-down, one-way feedback process, effective appraisal interviews should allow employees to express what they feel, and to plan for follow-up actions after the interview. Generally speaking, appraisal interviews are "dialogical interactions between equal partners" (Asmuß, 2013, p. 555).

There are two main types of supervisor's behaviour which may have an impact on the employee's behaviour and thus the effectiveness of an appraisal interview. Task-oriented behaviour is about the extent to which a leader defines and organises the roles of his or her followers and his or her own leadership role (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). This is divided into a few categories: (a) short-term planning; (b) clarifying task objectives and responsibilities and (c) monitoring operations and performance (Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2002). Relation-oriented behaviour concerns how much a leader shows concern and respect for his or her followers and develop mutual trust (Fleishman, 1953; Judge et al., 2004). Such behaviour includes: (a) providing support; (b) developing follower skills and confidence; (c) providing recognition; (d) consulting when making decisions and (e) empowering followers to take initiative in problem-solving (Yukl et al., 2002).

An analysis of 48 dyadic appraisal interviews conducted in a large German production company reveals a close relationship between a supervisor's behaviour and the engagement of an employee in the appraisal interview. Task-oriented supervisor statements lead to passive employee agreement while relation-oriented supervisor behaviour is followed by active employee contributions (Meinecke et al., 2017).

The following shows authentic examples of task-oriented behaviour and relation-oriented behaviour used in the German company being examined (Meinecke et al., 2017, p. 7).

Examples of task-oriented behaviour and relation-oriented behaviour

Task-oriented behaviour:

Performance evaluation (providing performance evaluation [on a scale])

e.g. "Here, I see you at a 2."
"There you are often too cautious."
"The goal has been reached to 90%."

Development planning (direction of development)

e.g. "You should stay at your current job."
"A vertical development might fit you."
"That training could promote your communication skills."

Knowledge management (sharing organisation information, questions about knowledge)

e.g. "We have these reviews every year."
"We need to do it this way because . . ."
"What quality measures do we use here?"

Problem-solving behaviours (identifying a [partial] problem and solution)

e.g. "This may also be due to sales."
"The turnout was very bad."
"We could ask for further help."

Relation-oriented behaviour:

Positive-relation-oriented behaviour (encouraging participation, providing support, offering praise, expressing feelings)

e.g. "I agree with that."
"I really appreciate that about you."
"That would make me happy."

Neutral relation-oriented behaviours (i.e. listening)

e.g. "Uh-huh"
"Yes"

Negative relation-oriented behaviours (i.e. criticising, interrupting and self-promotion)

e.g. "But that does not change my opinion of your performance."
"I don't know who else could do this besides me."

The following shows a transcript of an appraisal interview conducted between a supervisor and an employee. It shows how the use of relation-oriented behaviour might shape the way how the employee reacts in an appraisal interview (Meinecke et al., 2017, p. 19).

Transcript between a supervisor and an employee in an authentic appraisal interview (S: supervisor; E: employee)

Example 1: Focusing on task-oriented behaviour

S: Is organised and meets deadlines . . . (supervisor reads out rating criteria)
(Code: Positive procedural)
(Description: Introduction to the next topic)
S: Yes you do meet deadlines
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Initial assessment)
E: Uh-huh
(Code: Passive agreement)
S: But with some things I would have liked a bit more.
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Refinement of assessment)
S: With the topic stock status, we have looked good at the beginning of the year and then you have, in my opinion, let this slide for a while.
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Describing assessment, providing examples)
E: Uh-huh
(Code: Passive agreement)
S: After repeated requests, it then came back and uh I thought that was not so good.
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Describing assessment, providing examples)
S: So well organised, yes, but meeting deadlines not so much.
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Weighing assessment)

S: For me this is a 3 for this point.
(Code: Performance evaluation)
(Description: Conclusion, final assessment)

It is quite obvious that task-oriented statements lead to passive agreement and involvement of the employee. See example 2 to determine how a focus on relation-oriented approach might change the situation.

Example 2 – Focusing on relation-oriented behaviour

S: This attitude is absolutely fine.
(Code: Positive relation-oriented)
(Description: Praise)
E: Good, because I do see that I do that.
(Code: Active contribution)
(Description: Stating opinions)
E: And I'm willing or things that just sort of went wrong and I noted that they went wrong. . . . So this goes against the grain for me and I don't see myself that way.
(Code: Active behaviour)
(Description: Reflecting own behaviour)
E: So I think that I then react and in case that it is necessary I do get your support. Your support or support from someone else.
(Code: Active contribution)
(Description: Reflecting own behaviour)
S: I think that is good. That approach is really impeccable there.
(Code: Positive relation-oriented)
(Description: Praise, reinforcement)

With the use of positive relation-oriented statements, the employee was contributing actively giving opinions and reflecting on his/her own behaviour in the appraisal interview.

Techniques required in interviews

1. Questioning technique: effective and ineffective questions

One important component of an interview is to ask questions. Asking the right questions plays a very important role in making interviews. It determines whether the interview is effective or not. We first ask open-ended questions to get the information we want. Then we ask probing questions to get details, closed questions for one- or two-word answers and then verify the veracity of the results.

A pyramid structure should be used if you believe your interviewee needs to warm up to the topic. Using a pyramid structure for question sequencing is also useful when you want an ending determination about the topic. Such is the case in the general question, "In general, how do you feel about the security of data versus the importance of internet access?"

<u>Open questions</u> are used to elicit long answers, usually beginning with *wh* words such as *what*, *why* and *how*. An open question asks the respondent to tell his or her opinions, knowledge or feelings. According to Granot, Brashear, and Motta (2012, p. 552), "an open-ended question establishes the area to be explored while allowing

participants to take any direction they want. It does not suppose an answer." Here are some examples:

e.g. Tell me how you developed this system.
Describe how you contacted the supplier and got the contract finally.
What happened in the meeting?
Why did you act like that?
What do you think of the changes?

One point to note is that when asking open questions, you still need to specify what you want to know, and avoid making the questions too open as shown in the following example:

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about yourself.
INTERVIEWEE: Well I was born in New York and lived there till I was 6 when my parents were posted to the UK. We lived in London and I went to the local school till I was 13 and then went to Cambridge. I really enjoyed it there – you got very individual attention. I played cricket for the school. I went on to Oxford where I read history and was secretary of the History Society.

There are two main types of open-ended questions suggested. The first one being what Spradley, a Professor of Anthropology calls the "grand tour" question (Spardley, 1979, pp. 86–87), in which the interviewer asks the participant to reconstruct a significant part of an experience. For example, in interviewing a teacher, an interviewer might say "Take me through a day in your job." It can also be a mini-tour, in which the interviewer asks the participant to reconstruct the details of a specific experience. For example, asking the participant to talk about a particular experience of offering help to students. Another type of open-ended question focuses more on the subjective experience of the participant. A participant might start to share her experience in dealing with difficult students. After asking her what happened, the interviewer might ask her to share what the experience was like for her: "What was that like for you?" When interviewers ask what something was like for participants, they are offering them the opportunity to "reconstruct their experience according to their own sense of what was important, unguided by the interviewer." (Granot et al., 2012, p. 552).

It is essential to start asking open questions to get the subject talking and get as much information you need. <u>Closed questions</u> which are used to get one or two word answers are not preferred at this stage.

e.g. Are you unhappy working in the company?
How many years have you been working in this company?
How old are you?

The last two questions are not necessary. The answers can easily be found in the applicant's resume.

The next stage is to ask <u>probing questions</u> to probe for details. Sometimes, you probe to ask the respondent to help you understand what they have said. At other times, you may need information for clarification. Or you want to examine if there is proof for what the respondent said.

e.g. What exactly is the problem with the system?
What do you mean by your boss not appreciating your effort?
How do you know that the marketing team has not done a good job?

The following are examples of open questions and the probe questions that follow:

Open questions (e.g. What do you enjoy most about your present job? Tell me about the best boss you have ever had. Tell me about the most difficult customer you have ever had. Have you ever had to do something at work that you disagreed with?)
Probes/probing (e.g. What do they do to make your job enjoyable? What takes up most of your time in your job? What's the dullest part of your job? How do you plan your days? So what did you do?)

By asking probing questions, you are able to understand what is said more thoroughly and draw information out of people who may want to avoid telling you something. Probing requires good listening skills. The first step to good listening is to focus on the objective, i.e. the information you seek and why you seek it. One way to help you focus is to "flag up" what you are going to ask about. Read the following example:

> "I'm really interested in your present job, so I'm going to ask you a few questions about that, OK?"

Summarising is an important part of listening. It indicates to those being questioned that you are taking them seriously and are interested in what they are saying. In showing that the speaker is being taken seriously, summarising can also be helpful in calming confrontational situations, where the speaker may be hostile or reluctant to answer. Another function is to stop someone speaking at length, as the summariser can then move on to another area. Let's look at the following example:

> "I've phoned Human Resources Office and given them a reminder about next month's figures. I really feel disappointed. Do you know what they did last week? They paid Karen twice! Anyway, glad that there's someone who knows what they're doing. The new manager Kelvin promised that the figures will be ready by the 15th."

<u>Summary</u>: "So, you've reminded Human Resources Office about next month's figures and they'll have them by next Wed?"

> "I have a very good mom. She always listens to what I want to express and ask me what I think about things. She never gives commands telling me what to do, or get mad when I make mistakes; she has the patience and time to explain things."

<u>Summary</u>: "So, your mom listens to you and consults you; she explains things?"

Reflecting is similar to summarising, but instead of simply repeating the facts, it reflects the listener's interpretation of the speaker's feelings, attitudes and values. For example:

> "I've phoned Human Resources Office and given them a reminder about next month's figures. I really feel disappointed. Do you know what they did last week? They paid Karen twice! Anyway, glad that there's someone who knows what they're doing. The new manager Kelvin promised that the figures will be ready by the 15th."

Reflection: "So, you think Human Resources Office is disorganised?"

> "I have a very good mom. She always listens to what I want to express and ask me what I think about things. She never gives commands telling me what to do, or get mad when I make mistakes; she has the patience and time to explain things."

Reflection: "You feel listening/consultation/patience is important as a mom?"

Closed questions can now be used when you obtain enough information and details. Questions like *how many*, *how much*, *where* or *when* can be asked. This will lead to the last stage of the whole interviewing process when you want to check if the information obtained is accurate.

Ineffective questions

There are other questions that need to be avoided in order for the interviewer to obtain the information required. In a recruitment interview specifically, avoid asking the following type of questions:

1. Hypothetical questions (e.g. *If you could be a prime minister one day, what would you change?*)
   Hypothetical questions will only give you a hypothetical answer. If you want to determine the ability or competence of the applicant, ask behavioural questions which can tell you their experience of doing something.
2. Private/sensitive questions (e.g. *What about your parents? Where are they from?*)
   Avoid private or sensitive questions which may not be related to the purpose of the interview.
3. Closed questions (e.g. *Do you like a good challenge?*)
   Closed questions only give you a yes/no reply or one-or two-word answers. If you want details or elaboration, ask open-ended questions.
4. Clichés (e.g. *What do you see yourself in the next five years?* Or *What makes a good leader*?)
   These questions have been asked for so many times in traditional interviews. Applicants can prepare for a perfect answer though it does not necessarily mean that they can be what they want themselves to be or they are a good leader. These questions are weak indicators of the ability or competence of applicants, which is what a recruitment interview aims to examine.
5. Leading questions (e.g. *Your boss is an effective leader, don't you think?*)
   Leading questions lead the respondent to give the answer you want, which is not necessarily the true answer.

2. From standardisation to interaction (e.g. language use and non-verbal communication)

A standard question can elicit different answers depending on how the question is delivered by the interviewer/manager according to Nyroos and Sandlund (2014). In an appraisal interview for example, this question is commonly asked: *How do you think that you are contributing to the bank reaching the long-term goals*. This target question put under *Current Work Situation* was examined and the way how the Manager introduced or refined this standard question seems to produce different subsequent responses.

Target Question (TQ): How do you think that you are contributing to the bank reaching the long-term goals?

The following situations demonstrate how the Manager refined and modified a pre-formulated question into interaction, which elicited different responses from the employee.

Situation 1

Question: The question is modified: *How do you think that you are contributing to the bank's long-term goals?* While the original question focuses on how the employee's contribution helps the organisation "reach" the goals, this modified version demonstrates a more direct relationship between the employee's work and the goals in general.

Employee's response:
The employee first told how she works on the customers so that they will stay (i.e. *I try and work on the customers so that they hope hopefully will stay)*. The Manager then commented that the answer is good (*that one is really good*), and then the employee kept elaborating on the answer by emphasising the need to secure customers (i.e. *I feel like I have to secure those I have talked to so far . . . because it is a long-term goal*). The interaction continues when the employee reiterates that her contribution is not just limited to a particular situation (i.e. *that does in fact apply to general also*). The Manager understands and agreed by saying that *It is how you performed that makes it possible for you to get them to keep their money here*.

Overall, the answer given is specific and the employee understands clearly that he/she needs to give examples to illustrate how her current work is relevant to the long-term goals of the company.

In situation 2, the question is also re-formulated and delivered using a smile voice.

Situation 2

Question: *How do you feel that you today contribute with your work so that we reach our four long-term goals?*

First, *how do you think* is replaced by *how do you feel. Think* and *feel* require different accounts. Feel-based accounts make relevant knowables less accessible to the evaluators (Pomerantz, 1980; cf. Nyroos, 2012). A temporary time-frame is also added using the word *today*. In other words, the employee does not need to talk about his/her contributions on a long-term basis. Instead of using the *bank's long-term goals*, the goals become shared ones (using the personal pronoun *our*).

Employee's response:
The question is rephrased to focus on how the employee feels about his/her own work now and how that can help achieve shared goals. The employee said that he contacted more employees now and develop more business deals (i.e. *I do contact more customers now . . . it is something that comes with experience . . . I become a more experienced negotiator . . . in this way we reach the long-term goals*). The Manager responded by saying *yeah* and *yes*.

3. Leadership activity as a gatekeeper

In addition to knowing the right questions to ask, the importance of decontextualising standard questions through language use and the facilitating role of non-verbal communication, it is also important for a leader to be able to rephrase the interviewee's answer in institutional terms (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2014).

Rephrasing the interviewee's answer in institutional terms

The two questions raised in this appraisal interview are: (1) In what way does your involvement in patient's issues show itself?; (2) How could you further increase that?

Interviewee's response

I have here so (now and then) the willingness to work longer hours, carefully try to deal with and act in the interest of the patient. And at other workplaces, helping, picking up the telephone, pricking. . . .

Interviewer's reformulation

What I have written down, if necessary the willingness to work longer, flexibility with regard to help to others . . .

In this example, the interviewer encouraged the interviewee to construct the meaning together. The interviewer reformulated the interviewee's answer in many ways. First, the interviewee uses *now and then* to tell her willingness to work longer. This is reformulated into *if necessary*. This substitutes the random nature of the interviewee's willingness to work longer hours with a more purposeful approach in line with the institutional agenda. The interviewer also rephrased what she said to make the answer more related to the institution's subcompetencies, for example, *flexibility*.

4. Three levels of listening/critical listening

Besides understanding what questions should or should not be asked, there are other points to note as an interviewer. During the process of asking questions in an interview, listening is the key to success in getting the subject talking and eliciting the information required. According to Granot et al. (2012), interviewers should be able to listen on at least three levels. First, they must listen to what the participant is saying. They must listen to the content carefully and ensure that they understand the information given and how that is useful. On a second level, interviewers must listen for what George Steiner (1978) calls "inner voice," which can be revealed by the interviewer taking the participants' responses seriously: "By taking participants' language seriously, without making them feel defensive about it, interviewers can promote a level of contemplation more characteristic of the inner voice" (Granot et al., 2012, p. 551). On a third level, interviewers must listen while remaining aware of the time and the flow of the interview. They must also pay close attention to the participant's use of non-verbal cues before deciding how the interview can proceed.

Edge (1992, 2002) introduced something called Cooperative Development to facilitate non-judgemental communication between teachers for ideas sharing, and the critical listening model also seems relevant to the interaction between an appraiser and an appraisee.

1. Attending

For active, careful and deep listening, the understander's attention is focused on the speaker but not his or her own thoughts or feelings. This is prerequisite to all the other skills, and this can affect the quality of the entire interaction.

2. Reflecting

The understander interprets what the speaker says and then reflects it back to him or her.

e.g. Let's recap. The message I am getting is . . .

In this way, the speaker hears how the understander interprets his or her own thoughts, and can check if that is what is intended to convey. If the ideas presented are accurate, the speaker will acknowledge the accuracy of the reflection. If not, the speaker can pause, explain the discrepancy and then offer another version. Through this process, ideas are clarified and a clear sense of direction is thus established.

3. Focusing

Once the general direction is established, the understander can invite more specific processes through saying the following:

e.g. From what I see, we have two issues here, A & B; would you like to focus on one of these?

Focusing on specific areas allows deeper reflection, clearer goals and then more specific follow-up work.

4. Thematising

During the listening process, the understander can always connect different similar ideas for different purposes. For example, the understander may say:

e.g. You just mentioned A, and earlier you mentioned B. Are these two ideas at all related?

The speaker can then consider if that is the case or not.

5. Challenging

In case there may be contradictions in the speaker's statements, the understander can point them out. This is not about challenging the speaker in a subjective way but rather demonstrating one's active listening skill to determine the presence of contradictions that should be clarified. For example, the understander can say:

e.g. Earlier you said how important A is, and now you are very positive about B. Can you tell me how those two fit together?

6. Goal-setting

The role of the understander is to question the speaker in a way that can inspire the speaker or clarify things with him or her. See the following example:

e.g. Based on what you have said in this session, do you see a specific goal for yourself emerging here?

The speaker can then decide if it is a good idea to set a goal.

7. Trialling

This is to help the speaker identify steps to achieve the goal set. For example:

e.g. Now that you have identified a goal for yourself, would you like to consider the necessary steps to achieve it?

In conclusion, to determine the effectiveness of a job interview, there are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration:

1 Job-relatedness – Design the interview in a way that can help measure the knowledge, skills and abilities of the candidates in relation to the job requirements.
2 Question design – Use experience-based questions which are found to be more effective than hypothetical questions (Campion, Campion, & Hudson, 1994; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995; Taylor & Small, 2002).
3 Questioning techniques – Avoid asking pre-planned questions; ask follow-up questions and allow room for interaction and free expression of ideas.
4 Choice of appropriate media – Use appropriate means to interview candidates. The lack of non-verbal cues in telephone interviews possibly reduces the accuracy of personality judgement compared to face-to-face interviews (Chapman & Webster, 2001).
5 Note-taking – Take notes as research shows the benefits of taking notes during the interview (Biesanz, Neuberg, Judice, & Smith, 1999; Burnett, Fan, Motowidlo, & DeGroot, 1998; Middendorf & Macan, 2002).
6 Consistent use of a decision model – Consistent rules must be applied to all candidates to measure their knowledge, skills and abilities, and suitability to the position applied.

Post-reading activities

I. Discuss the effectiveness of the following questions. Rephrase them if necessary to make them more effective in obtaining more reliable information.

1. Can you work under pressure?

___

2. Do you like working in a team?

___

3. I want to know how you came to lose that contract?

4. I don't expect you'll make the same mistake again?

5. Did you check out the details fully?

6. How would you handle a really angry customer?

7. Would you stay with us if we found you a place in retail marketing?

8. Most people seem to like the new procedure. What's your feeling about it?

II. Using the STAR technique, prepare questions to be asked in a structured behavioural interview to examine if the candidates possess the following attributes required for the Marketing Manager position in your company:

- Leadership
- Creativity
- Team spirit
- Communication skill

Leadership
ST

A

R

Creativity

ST

A

R

Team spirit

ST

A

R

Communication skill

ST

A

R

III. Try using the critical listening model developed by Edge and work out an interaction between an appraiser and an appraisee where the appraiser helps the appraisee understand his/her weaknesses in a certain area and develop a career goal.

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