

# A Contrastive Rhetoric Analysis of Professional Register in Internal Communication Electronic Mails

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## Abstract

This study employs a corpus-based approach to identify and examine professional register features and some cultural-rhetorical patterns from a corpus of 50 internal communication electronic mails (e-mails) randomly culled from one Filipino and two American companies. Using the ten linguistic parameters in register variation in professional communication, similarities and differences in professional register features, as well as fluctuation tendencies, have been accounted. The findings have revealed that both e-mail corpora from the two language communities contained features significantly marked by professional casual register. However, a close inspection of the individual parameter frequency results has revealed considerable differences including register fluctuation tendencies, conformities to genre norms and conventionalities, and some culture-related rhetorical peculiarities. Moreover, the study has provided explanations on the importance of understanding rhetorical differences across cultures, as well as suggestions for further research endeavors on the given genre and language research field.

**Keywords:** Genre analysis, Contrastive rhetoric, E-mail correspondence, Internal communication, Professional register

## 1. Introduction

The dynamic interplay among languages (L1 and L2), culture, and writing has been critically explored in contrastive rhetoric significantly after Kaplan's (1966) pioneering study on paragraph developments in ESL student essays, which reflected distinctive rhetorical tendencies across cultures. This groundwork in the field of applied linguistics has attracted much attention from language researchers leading to various studies which either refuted the initial findings of Kaplan, such that of studies made by Kong (1998) and Zhu (1997) on texts produced by oriental speakers that followed a linear development, and studies, such as those of Hatim (1997) and Koch (1983), that supported the claim on the typology of Arabic argumentation.

Following some more research findings and concurrent criticisms, contrastive rhetoric has found new directions and developments in acknowledging more genres with specific textual requirements, increasing awareness of the social contexts of writing, and in pursuing for an alternative conceptual framework that takes a more critical perspective of the field (Connor, Nagelhout, & Rozycki, 2008). The expanding foci resulting in new directions in contrastive rhetoric cover contrastive text linguistics, study of writing as a cultural activity, classroom-based contrastive study, genre analysis, and teaching of ideology (Connor, 1996). In addition, Connor (2002) argues that culture, a concept that has been a subject of a broader interrogation in the past few years and in which issues and perspectives have been clarified by Atkinson (1999) in terms of received and alternative views, should not be taken as the exclusive factor from which differences in written communication are stemming from; rather, these factors include the L1, national culture, L1 educational background, disciplinary culture, genre characteristics, and mismatched expectations between readers and writers.

Furthermore, recent studies in contrastive rhetoric have shifted the focus from the ESL and EFL classrooms to professional and business arenas. Genre analysis, from the expanding foci in new directions, has become one of the important approaches in contrastive rhetoric, providing more avenues for research possibilities. As Brylko (2002) in her study on cognitive structuring of criminal appeal cases in two different cultures mentioned, "rhetoricians have become interested in studying and analyzing cross-culturally other genres such as research reports, abstracts and articles, business letters, legal and medical writings" (p.39). For instance, Gonzales (2002) examined 45 letters to the editor written in Philippine, Singaporean, and American English in terms of organizational patterns, politeness strategies, politeness markers, and cultural influence, and emphasized what Bhatia (1993) had mentioned that genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings.

More obviously, contrastive rhetoric, in the most recent years, has also suggested great interest in the interplay among communication, business, and technology. Studies, such as those of Kameda (2009) on persuasive communication found in business e-mails written by Singaporean and Japanese students, and of Gimenez-Moreno and Skorczynska (2013) on structural and register features in e-mail responses to business requests from three representative European cultures, have been geared toward close examination of cultural and

communication habits at least as important as pure linguistic skills. Also, these have been directed toward the need to better adapt to the readers' cultural expectations, and shed light on possible cultural misunderstandings (Moreno & Skorzynska, 2013) and on how business communication style based on Western rhetoric affects business dealings with people in Asian communities (Kameda, 2009). It may be conclusive that with the advent of computer-mediated communication (CMC) channels, contrastive rhetoric has faced new challenges in treating unconventional forms of discourse. Perez-Sabater, et al (2008) (as cited in Gimenez-Moreno, & Skorzynska, 2013) stressed that analysis of CMC evidently proves the developing 'informalization' and heterogeneity of professional discourse. With regard to the impact of communication technology to language use, Woolever (n.d.) argues that:

While communication technology leaps ahead enabling global commerce that demands international conversations, the culturally based world of language is slower to accommodate to the Information Age: Electronic wizardry can provide the opportunities for communication, but only a thorough understanding of the rhetorical contrasts among cultures will allow that communication to be productive (p.49).

With this, contrastive rhetoric studies assume a great role in transforming the rhetoric of the professionals working in business and industry to accommodate the multicultural traditions, expectations, and standards of people they may never speak to face-to-face.

While electronic mail or e-mail has been a subject of discussions and debates in genre analysis whether it is more like speech, the written word, or a hybrid of two; has been described as ambivalent, hybrid, multivalent or ambiguous (Yell, 2003); and based on the criteria of Daft and Lengel's (1984) information richness (IR) theory, has been established as a written and asynchronous medium that fails to meet the requirements for rich communication (Panteli, & Seeley (2004); it has also emerged as the most effective channel for communicators in internal communication followed by intranet, leadership communications, and line manager briefings (Moynihan & Hathi, 2014). The latter is one of the key findings in the 2014 Internal Communication and Technology Survey (ICTS) conducted by Newsweaver, an international software provider for internal communications, in partnership with Melcrum, an internal communication research company, among over five hundred respondents located around the world, and spread over twelve industries.

These foregoing literature and studies evince that e-mail correspondence in internal communication situations can very well work as an arresting subject of this contrastive rhetoric analysis. Although researches on culturally motivated register variation in e-mail exchanges among other language communities have already been framed, no study of corpus-based register variation particularly in Philippine and American internal communication e-mail writing has been conducted to the best of the knowledge of the researcher. Hence, the present study fills the existing research gap and furthers the knowledge about professional register variation in internal communication electronic mails.

This present study then aims to identify and examine the differences in the structural and professional register features evident in electronic mails in English language written by Filipinos and Americans in internal communication situations. Specifically, it seeks to answer

the following:

- (1) What professional register features are found in the Philippine and American internal communication electronic mail samples?
- (2) What cultural features are revealed by the significant similarities and differences in structural and register features in these e-mail samples?

### *1.1 E-mails in Internal Communication*

As cited in Gimenez-Moreno and Skorczynska (2013), “electronic mails operate on a multimodal medium: written, oral, and also ‘pictorial,’ using emoticons, and other visual techniques (Yus, 2010)” (p.83). Alongside inevitable innovations in the new information technology, e-mail has undergone continuous modifications in form and in style, from formal and extended texts (Hawisher & Moran, 1993) to instant and simplified messages similar to mobile texting formats (Baron, 2000) (as cited in Gimenez-Moreno, & Skorczynska, 2013). Leslie (1994) however, emphasizes that while there is a general agreement over the benefits of e-mail, for example, its ability to send information almost instantaneously to a large number of recipients, researchers disagree on the potential negative or unintended effects.

As opposed to the descriptions on e-mail communication given by language researchers such as Yell (2003), and Panteli and Seeley (2004), also aforementioned in this study, Danet (2002) describes digital communication, specifically e-mail correspondence as both doubly attenuated and doubly enhanced. First, it is doubly attenuated because it is less rich than either speech or writing. It is dynamic, interactive, and ephemeral like a conversation; while though is clearly a form of writing, is no longer a tangible physical object. Second, it is doubly enhanced, because unlike ordinary speech, it leaves marks and can be re-examined. Also, in its real-time interactive modes, the medium restores the presence of one’s interlocutor, long absent in the production of extensive texts. The descriptions on e-mail and e-mail correspondence, however, have led to investigations on salient features of the new genre.

In a study on linguistic features of electronic mails in the workplace, comparing them with those of memoranda, Cho (2010) found e-mail samples differ markedly from the memoranda in containing more structural reductions, expressive features, greeting and leave-taking formulas, and instances of linguistic innovation. He further argued that: linguistic economy in e-mail is tempered by the need to maintain social (phatic) contact between users; e-mail style tends to be less formal than other varieties of written workplace communications; and e-mail contains features traditionally considered oral.

Gimenez-Moreno and Skorczynska (2013), in their contrastive rhetoric paper, reported major findings in the studies of Nickerson (2002), and Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005). Nickerson (2002) analyzed electronic communication in English between Dutch and British in one division of a Dutch-owned multinational company. The research findings have revealed that the use of e-mails in English is strongly attached to the organizational culture where most of the managers and employees are Dutch-speaking. With regard to linguistic features, Dutch e-mails have exhibited a more frequent use of upgraders, emphatics, and the plural personal pronoun in the first person “we,” while, British e-mails

have been observed to have a more frequent use of “*if*” clauses. In conclusion, these distinctive features have been considered as culturally motivated variations. In another case, Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) focused on the use of English as a lingua franca in e-mail exchanges and in meetings between Swedish and Finnish members of a merged company (as cited in Gimenez-Moreno, & Skorczynska, 2013). The study, with reference to examined features, have reported similarities in the use of the message format, its content, and the use of three identified e-mail subgenres like dialog, postman, and notice board genres. Moreover, in relation to some culturally significant peculiarities, requests written by Finns have been found to be more direct, used imperative, and interrogative forms more frequently than those produced by Swedish writers. While Finnish writers have also included minimalist politeness expressions in their requests, the Swedish have used more deferential strategies.

In addition to e-mail linguistics (Collins, 1991), which is associated with the study of linguistic features in e-mail correspondence, Hewitt (2006) took into account several e-mail field studies that have employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate three major phenomena: how people use e-mail in the workplace and for which specific tasks they communicate through e-mails; whether e-mail is converging with, displacing, or adding to the diversity of communication channels used to transact business; and the impact of e-mail on internal communication or internal marketing. Focusing on the latter, internal communication has been defined by Welch and Jackson (2007) as the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders within organizations across a number of interrelated dimensions including line manager communication, internal team communication, internal peer project communication, and internal corporate communication. Internal communication has also been closely equated with internal marketing which according to Cahill (1996) is the philosophy of treating employees as customers.

Considering an in-depth study on the impact of e-mail on internal communication from a corporate communicators’ perspective and supplementing the initially published field studies, Hewitt (2006) underscored the prevalence of e-mail that ranked closely behind F2F communication as the most commonly used internal communications tool. Furthermore, the findings of his study revealed that while overall e-mail was regarded to be less influential than F2F communication, it was found to positively and specifically influence: the communication climate, where it provides a mechanism for staff to feed their views up the organization; shared objectives and goal alignment, where it helps staff to understand the overarching goals of the organization; and perceived external prestige, the construed external image of the organization, by helping the organization to share positive publicity, and its success, among staff.

### *1.2 Professional Register Variation in Electronic Correspondence*

Gimenez-Moreno (2010) admits the fact that there has been a certain confusion on the distinction between registers and other parameters of linguistic variation, such as communicative modes (e.g. written or sign language registers), genres (e.g. the register of letters), styles (e.g. creative register), and idiolects (e.g. the register of a famous politician or broadcaster). Also, there have been studies which identify registers with functions and other

grammatical features (e.g. the register of humor or the register of impersonal discourse), topics (e.g. the register of sports), and with disciplines (e.g. the register of economics or law). Most of these studies, according to Gimenez-Moreno (2006) relate the idea of register to the formality scale as its key distinguishing parameter.

A simple distinction among the three linguistic variations, genres, registers, and styles, as stated by Gimenez-Moreno (1997) (as cited in Gimenez-Moreno, 2011) is that “genres follow procedural and functional parameters, registers depend on the roles and contexts, and style variation changes according to the participants’ personal linguistic and communicative choices, often driven by individual peculiarities and fashion trends” (p.17). Halliday (1978), having the most established and well accepted approach to explain the concept of register, defines language registers based on three generally known parameters: field (what is happening or activities involved), tenor (participants’ status and roles), and mode (type of language and communication channels) (as cited in Gimenez-Moreno, 2011) .

Registers are verbal repertoires (Gimenez-Moreno, 2006) which depend to a large extent on the speaker’s language and community conventions; i.e. contextual, social, and cultural, not so much on individual habits and preferences; i.e. evidently setting registers apart from idiolects and styles. However, from this perspective, these verbal repertoires are seen as communicative feature groups which fluctuate in the speakers’ daily lives largely dependent on the situation within a scale fluctuating from the most intimate and informal parameters of human communication to the most ritual and formal ones. Shedding the light on these, it has been established that registers exist in two limits; an intimate register used in informal personal life situations, and a ritual register appropriate in formal public life situations.

Gimenez-Moreno (2011) provides that, the primary features of professional neutral register, which as well can be used in an in-depth analysis of electronic correspondence include: 1) the predominant function is informative; 2) tendency to use shorter sentences, bullet points and conventional abbreviations; 3) open use of direct speech (direct questions) but expressed in formal language; 4) use of modality, mitigation and hedging; 5) explanations carefully avoiding colloquialisms or slang; and, 6) avoidance of opinions, personal comments and subjective or emotive language. In reference to the three well known parameters, professional register fluctuates in such a way that it is sometimes raised, becoming more formal or detached for certain purposes, and at other times, becoming more casual and informal. Acknowledging the fluctuation tendencies, Gimenez-Moreno (2010) presented the ten linguistic parameters of register variation in professional communication, and which demonstrate how professional communication becomes informal or casual, and more formal or ritual.

Table 1. Ten Linguistic Parameters of Register Variation in Professional Communication (Adapted from Gimenez-Moreno, 2010: 302)

INFORMAL/CASUAL	FORMAL/RITUAL
Personal expressions	Impersonal expressions
Active verbs/expressions	Passive verbs/expressions

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Direct speech/direct questions	Indirect speech/indirect questions
Ordinary reporting verbs (“say”)	Specific reporting verbs (“mention”)
Ordinary connectors (“so”, “but”)	Elaborate connectors (“furthermore”)
General terms/expressions (“man”)	Precise terms/expressions (“technician”)
Emotive/subjective/attitudinal expressions	Neutral/objective terms
Phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions	Latin terms/standard formal expressions
Contractions/abbreviations/fast language	Detailed/concrete nominalization
Straight statements/direct commands	Politeness/ caution/mitigation markers

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The linguistic parameters suggested by Gimenez-Moreno (2010) differ from the broad elements from which previous studies on register fluctuation in e-mail writing concentrated on. These broad elements subject to analysis have included: headings, particularly on how senders present communication purposes either concisely or elaborately; openings or greetings, on how oscillations take place from conventional formal letter formula and addresses; functions, on how tones become requesting, informing, and directing, and on how politeness and face-threatening moves are demonstrated; medium, on how specific linguistic features coincide with the purpose of saving time and reducing work pressure; and lastly, closing, on how senders fill in an open area of somewhat personal expressions depending on the degree of formality.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 *The Corpus*

This study used a corpus-based approach to identify and examine the similarities and differences in the professional register in the internal communication electronic mail samples in English written by Filipinos and Americans. As Biber (2015) defines, corpus-based approach is one of the two major approaches in corpus linguistics, the other being corpus-driven, that assumes the validity of linguistic forms and structure derived from a linguistic theory. Its primary goal is to analyze the systematic patterns of variation and use for those pre-defined linguistic features.

The corpus analyzed in the study was composed of 50 e-mail samples: 25 e-mails randomly extracted from the researcher’s Microsoft Outlook Web Application connected to XXX Company’s internal communication network, representing e-mail writing in Philippine English (PE); and 25 e-mails communicated within Texas-based YYY Company and Washington-based ZZZ Company, for American e-mail writing (AE). Most of these e-mail samples were sent by department heads and employees for various purposes, including invitations for and confirmations to seminars and workshops, follow-up communications on requests, deliverables, and developments of programs, inquiries directed to specific personnel and department, delegations of tasks and responsibilities, announcements of holidays and promotions, advertisements on career opportunities, and others.

In order to compile the latter research corpus, the researcher asked the help of two fellow Filipinos working in the United States. To secure homogeneity of the corpus for contrastive

analysis, the research objectives and parameters were clearly communicated to the identified collaborators. Since internal communication has always been subject to confidentiality issues, the identities of the three companies, as well as the collaborators, were not revealed.

## 2.2 Coding and Analysis of Data

Initially, a physical analysis of the e-mail samples from the two language communities which consisted of a simple count of the number of words and sentences per e-mail to identify the mean figures was made. Subsequently, the general format or structure of these samples was examined; thus, focusing on the significant deviations from the conventional form. As for the notion of e-mails to be undergoing constant modifications in form and in style, it is noteworthy to account as well the structural features or moves distinctive in the e-mail samples. These focused features, also based on the analysis of Gains (1999) include: subject line, salutation, content (introduction, body, and conclusion), closing, and signature line.

The analysis of the professional register based on the ten parameters provided by Gimenez-Moreno (2010) was carried out in three phases. The first phase was dedicated to the markings of individual e-mail samples. Following a systematic procedure, marked first were personal (A1) and impersonal expressions (B1), followed by active verbs/expressions (A2) and passive verbs/expressions (B2), direct speech (A3) and indirect speech (B3), and down to the tenth parameter, straight statements and direct commands (A10), and politeness, caution, and mitigation markers (B10). The second phase included the frequency count of the marked indicators of formal and casual professional registers. The results were presented in table to clearly show and report the similarities and differences between Filipino and American e-mail communicators in the use of words and expressions characteristic of casual and professional registers and the fluctuations from the professional neutral register. The final phase focused on the contextual and cultural influences on and differences in writing. To determine these, parts of the e-mails were extracted and related to (a) the identified or assumed relationships of the communicators, (b) the subject and the purpose of the e-mails, and (c) other factors including the possible need for immediate response, and the e-mail format used by the sender.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Physical Analysis

Table 2 shows the mean number of words and sentences per e-mail in the two speech communities. As can be seen, the total number of words and sentences in American English e-mail samples (104.09 and 7.32, respectively) is greater than in Philippine English e-mail samples (97.13 and 6.36, respectively). However, a simple t-test might reveal that there is no significant difference between the figures.

Table 2. Mean Number of Words and Sentences per E-mail.

	Philippine E-mails	American E-mails
Mean Number of Words per E-mail	97.13	104.09
Mean Number of Sentences per E-mail	6.36	7.32



It is important to note that the two corpora from these speech communities were physically examined in terms of mean number of words and sentences to predict possible implications of the physical differences to the data-treatment results. With the data presented (Table 1), it was assured that the physical features of the e-mail samples were not intervening factors in the succeeding analyses of structural moves and professional register variations.

### 3.2 Structural Move Analysis

The data on the use of structural moves in internal communication e-mails in the corpora (Table 3) show that in most cases, the e-mail communicators in the two language communities followed similar patterns of moves. However, some slight differences can be observed as other e-mail communicators tried to eliminate some moves to this basic genre structure.

Table 3. Structural Move Variation in Internal Communication E-mails

Structural Moves	Philippine E-mails		American E-mails	
	f	%	f	%
Subject Line	23	92	20	80
Salutation	24	96	17	68
Content				
Introduction	17	68	10	40
Body	25	100	25	100
Conclusion	20	80	20	80
Closing	21	84	10	40
Signature Line	25	100	25	100

As can be seen in the table, the use of subject lines, salutations, introductory sentences, and closing expressions was less frequent for the American e-mail communicators. Subject lines in American e-mail samples (sample 1) were more detailed and specific as compared to the Philippine e-mails (sample 2).

(1) *Subject: Wed., Nov. 8: 5-6pm-Workshop. 6-7pm-Performance of Gold. 7pm-Debrief, Teaching Artist, Lincoln Center Education* (American sample, AE9)

(2) *Subject: Annual Physical Examination for 2015* (Philippine sample, PE4).

With regard to the use of salutations, Philippine e-mail communicators preferred “Dear” plus the addressee such as in “Dear Fellow English Professors,” “Dear Ma’am JOS,” and “Dear All.” However, salutations observed from the American e-mail corpus were direct addressees’ names such as “Christy,” and “Paul,” and some other informal expressions like, “Hi Prof. Folsom,” and “Hi everyone.” Polite introductory sentences giving backgrounds or direct purposes of the messages such as, “We are pleased to announce...,” “Pleased be informed...,”

and “*We would like to inform...*,” were frequent in Philippine e-mail samples. In addition, closing expressions were most of the time, part of Philippine e-mail writing. These expressions ranged from simple “*Thank you,*” to more formal ones like “*Sincerely,*” and “*Respectfully yours,*” while in the other corpus, observed were less formal expressions such as “*Yours,*” and “*Best regards.*” Most of the American e-mail samples did not contain closing expressions.

Moreover, most e-mail samples contained structured signature lines. Others just had the senders’ names. These structured signature lines included the names of the senders, in most cases, in special fonts, either the positions held or the representing departments, and the identities of the companies.

### 3.3 Professional Register Analysis

Table 4 summarizes clearly how register variation fluctuates in the sample corpora produced in the two language communities within the professional register, from its casual to its formal tone. Significantly, it indicates the frequency counts of informal or casual and formal or ritual register markers, and serves to draw some groundwork conclusions for this contrastive analysis.

Table 4. Frequency Count of Casual and Formal Register Markers

Register Distinctive Features	Philippine E-mails	American E-mails
<b>Informal/casual</b>		
Personal expressions	80	115
Active verbs/expressions	103	146
Direct speech/direct questions	76	91
Ordinary reporting verbs (“say”)	107	150
Ordinary connectors (“so”, “but”)	101	98
General terms/expressions (“man”)	164	110
Emotive/subjective/attitudinal expressions	74	101
Phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions	29	30
Contractions/abbreviations/fast language	40	71
Straight statements/direct commands	29	50
Total frequency of informal register markers	803	962
<b>Formal/ritual</b>		
Impersonal expressions	102	67
Passive verbs/expressions	46	25
Indirect speech/indirect questions	81	70
Specific reporting verbs (“mention”)	87	68

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Elaborate connectors (“furthermore”)	8	11
Precise terms/expressions (“technician”)	134	239
Neutral/objective terms	98	81
Latin terms/standard formal expressions	23	17
Detailed/concrete nominalization	143	120
Politeness/ caution/mitigation markers	72	46
Total frequency of formal register markers	794	744

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With reference to the professional register of the combined e-mail corpora, both contained more informal or casual, than formal or ritual register features. Comparing the two, American e-mail samples had the higher number than the Philippine e-mail samples in terms of informal register features or markers. On the other hand, the former e-mail samples contained more formal register features or markers than the latter. With a very small difference, however, a careful examination of the individual parameters was required to make a concrete comparison between the two corpora.

The highest number of most distinctive register features attached to professional casual register was in the American e-mail corpus, and the most characteristic of these were in the use of personal expressions, active verbs, direct speech, ordinary reporting verbs, ordinary connectors, general terms and expressions, and emotive and subjective expressions. However, these were also marked in the Philippine e-mail corpus to a lesser extent except for the use of ordinary connectors and general terms and expressions which were more marked in the corpus. These differences can be observed in the following e-mail extracts:

- (3) *As for where, whatever is best for you. Where do you live? Can we work there uninterrupted? If we did it at my place, my 6 year old would want to know what we were doing! Or we could meet at LCE. Let me know what is best for you* (American sample, AE9).
- (4) *We are requesting for your invaluable cooperation for the success of TNT, just like what we’ve achieved when we staged the Language Week 2015. This could be another outstanding year for our school with your support* (Philippine sample, PE1).

Interestingly, American e-mail communicators preferred direct and straight statements and questions, characteristic of oral communication. The language appeared to be very conversational and casual particularly in communication situations where e-mail senders of the same social and professional status requested for information and called the other interlocutor to action. In another way, although Philippine e-mail communicators were required by the same communication situations, still the language was evidently detached from the conversational mode. Another important features marked were the presence of contractions, abbreviations, and fast language. Although these were evident in both corpora, the highest frequency was found in American e-mail corpus. Most of the contractions appeared in the negations of helping verbs such as in “*haven’t*,” and “*can’t*,” while

abbreviations were mostly on the expressions pertaining to time and dates, identities of institutions, and professional titles.

Although the prevailing features in the American e-mail corpus as per frequency count suggested a professional casual register, there was a high rate of fluctuation with the other professional registers. This fluctuation tendency throughout the course of the corpus as other factors intervened including the relationships of the communicators and other contextual factors can be well illustrated in the following extracts from American e-mail samples:

- (5) *Did you get my correction— that the workshop & performance is on Wed. Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>? I look forward to planning the workshop together* (casual, American sample, AE6).
- (6) *Your responses are confidential. No one from Texas Tech Physicians will be provided with or will have access to your individual results* (neutral, American sample, AE3).
- (7) *Per Superintendent Dr. XXX, please be advised that due to the widespread severe flooding and continuing rainfall in the XXX area, all XXX and administrative offices will be closed tomorrow, Monday, October 5, 2015* (formal, American sample, AE12).

The professional formal register especially marked by the frequent appearance of impersonal expressions, precise terms and expressions, and detailed and concrete expressions using nominalizations and evaluative modifiers was found in Philippine e-mail corpus. In conjunction, strict adherence to standards regarding lexical formula, and mitigation and politeness markers was higher. However, although of high frequency in the given corpus, precise terms and expressions were observed more in American e-mail corpus. This might be attributed to the command of the native speakers of English and the assumption that American e-mail communicators would write in a concise and straightforward manner. With reference to the consistency in tone perceived, Philippine e-mail communicators seemed to be inclined to use more relaxed registers towards the end of the message. The aforementioned evidences of professional formal register, particularly the frequent use of impersonal expressions (samples 8 and 9) and detailed and concrete expressions using nominalizations and evaluative modifiers (samples 10 and 11) are shown in the following:

- (8) *There will be another set of pest control activities on December 12, 2015 from 6:00 pm onward* (Philippine sample, PE3).
- (9) *This is to inform everyone that our new courier provider is XXX effective today November 2, 2015 as we are having problems with XXX* (Philippine sample, PE8).
- (10) *Please email me for any feedback. Thank you for your unwavering guidance and trust* (Philippine sample, PE2).
- (11) *Thank you and rest assured that we are currently exerting efforts to ensure that similar incidents will be minimized or, at best, be avoided* (Philippine sample, PE10).

Lastly, the frequency count of politeness, caution, and mitigation markers was notably higher in the Philippine e-mail corpus. These markers include modal auxiliaries in the past, tone-mitigating expressions like “*I think*,” “*maybe*,” and “*perhaps*,” and universal expressions like “*Thank you*,” “*kindly*,” and “*please*.” In the analysis of both corpora, prevailing markers were the mentioned modals, the universal expressions “*Thank you*,” and “*please*,” and the closing statement “*I am looking forward to...*” The following extracts from the e-mail samples provide a clearer picture of the difference in two language communities (samples 12 and 13 show politeness, while samples 14 and 15 face-threatening acts or FTAs):

- (12) *Should you have questions or clarifications, please call me* (Philippine sample, PE9).
- (13) *Thank you. Your contribution to this important project is much appreciated* (American sample, AE3).
- (14) *We expect that all items for dispatch are properly turned-over to our courier on or before the cut-off for our weekly dispatch every Wednesdays at 3:00PM* (Philippine sample, PE8).
- (15) *The SP position is an enjoyable position but it is not for everybody. After the tour you will know if it is the right position for you* (American sample, AE4).

In general, the findings of the analyses confirmed that professional register in internal communication e-mails is marked by non-strict conformities to established formats or structural moves of the genre and by a combination of casual and formal register features. Thus, this study supported the initial claims of Hawisher and Moran (1993) that e-mail has been undergoing constant modifications in form and in style, from formal and extended texts to short messages, and of Yell (2003) that it can be a hybrid of spoken and written communication. In addition, the professional register in internal communication e-mails is not static, rather it is dynamically fluctuating from neutral to casual or formal tones depending on some intervening factors like relationships of the communicators, subject and purpose of the message, the need for immediate response, and the introduced format of the sender prior to the response. The fluctuation tendency though evidently present in both Philippine and American e-mail writing might be higher in American e-mail writing than the Philippine e-mail writing due to the higher frequency of casual register features and the observed language capacity of the e-mail communicators to shift professional register in clear recognition of rhetorical context, whereas the latter was observed to be more consistent with the lexical standards and to be more adhering to the traditional norms of e-mail writing.

#### **4. Discussion**

The present study underscores genre analysis within the area of contrastive rhetoric as it provides a more concrete ground and understanding of internal communication through e-mails in culturally situated and context-dependent communication processes. Despite a limited number of e-mails examined, the analyses yielded significant results that strengthened the initial findings of the foregoing studies, and that could draw attention to future language researchers in considering this dynamic type of discourse in various linguistic perspectives.

In this regard, e-mail samples written in English for internal communication purposes by Filipinos, also described as ESL users and Americans, the native speakers of English, showed similarities and differences in professional register. Apparently, these results might be attributed to the writers' command of English, general rhetorical tendencies between the two language communities, emerging trends in computer-mediated communication (CMC), and conformity to requisites of internal communication and of e-mail writing in a particular organizational culture.

As has been noted in this study and in existing literature about electronic correspondence (Danet, 2002; Cho, 2010, & Yus, 2010), there has been an existing typified e-mail discourse that is marked by an interfuse of oral and written linguistic features that causes seemingly inevitable fluctuations from the professional neutral register. In the analyses of internal communication e-mail samples, these fluctuations as indicated by casual and formal register features were detected in both language communities. It was found that fluctuations were more inclined toward the professional casual register. For instance, both Philippine and American e-mail samples were marked by the frequent use of personal expressions, active and ordinary reporting verbs, and general terms. However a closer frequency inspection of the counterpart features in the professional formal register would entail some significant differences including the almost equal frequencies of most formal and casual features in the Philippine e-mail corpus, in contrast to those in the American e-mail corpus. Hence, as initially affirmed in the preceding section, fluctuation tendency from the professional neutral to professional casual register was higher in American e-mail writing.

Moreover, this typified e-mail discourse in internal communication, to some extent, is also marked by uniformity in physical characteristics, (i.e., in terms of mean number of words and sentences contained in each e-mail sample) and in some structural moves. However, the two corpora showed a marked difference in the oscillations of the identified structural moves. As Gains (1999) observed, structural moves particularly salutation and closing might oscillate from the conventional formula in formal e-mails to very casual options which might include no greeting, just the recipient's name or other unconventional ways of addressing and saying goodbye to the recipient. In addition, these elements of oscillation depend on the span of register variation of a specific genre and to a higher or lesser extent influenced by the cultural parameters of the writers. Underscoring the oscillations in the structural moves found in both corpora, American e-mail samples contained more casual and unconventional markers. On the other hand, Philippine e-mail samples were observed to have strictly been adhering to the conventionalities of the communication genre. As indicated in the results section, these ascertained in the Philippine e-mail writing ranged from conventionally formal subject lines and salutations to polite introductory and closing statements.

Nevertheless, as Kong (1998) put ahead for further substantiations that differences reported in the occurrence and sequencing of the moves in texts produced by ESL and native speakers of English are attributed to different face relationships involved in business transactions rather than to inherent rhetorical patterns of the languages, the notion of politeness and face systems can somehow be more linked to cultural and rhetorical tendencies of the writers than the situational or contextual requirements. As examined, despite the fact that the same

expectations of the roles of the writer and reader were established in the internal communication situations, it is irrefutable that the e-mail communicators in the two language communities demonstrated contrast in the use of politeness and face-threatening moves. Supporting Kaplan's (1996) claim to a not so great extent that Anglo-European rhetoric is developed linearly whereas Orientals prefer indirect approach, there were evidences of the American e-mail communicators to put greater emphasis on the ideational content, to be more direct in the use of fast language and direct expressions, and to make more face-threatening moves in the use of straight statements and direct commands. In contrast, the Philippine e-mail communicators employed deference system in the absence of face-threatening moves, in the use of polite and mitigating expressions, and in the indirectness of commands and requests.

In another view of the general cultural differences attached to rhetoric as evidenced in the e-mail writing found in the two language communities, the present study supports the individualism-collectivism intercultural variable. As Thatcher (2004) contrasts, individualism exists when people tend to define themselves, view the world, and negotiate through life based on individual identities and efforts, whereas collectivism is based on social and familial groups. Furthermore, the predominant communication characteristics of individualism are expressiveness and directness, while communication patterns in collective cultures tend to be indirect with complex and subtle invocations of social networks, interpersonal relationships, and personal intentions. Americans, having individualistic culture tend to be more free-flowing in the use of language in e-mail communication. The Filipinos, on the other hand, having collectivist orientation, follow certain conventionalities in the given type of communication genre.

Inarguably, although most business companies and institutions around the globe have been adopting electronic mail systems for internal communication, it might be impossible to standardize e-mail correspondence. Nonetheless, examining professional register variations in internal communication e-mails across language communities entails an understanding of rhetorical and cultural tendencies of e-mail communicators as opportunities for intercultural and external communication through the genre come. In a sense, as Gimenez-Moreno and Skorcynska (2013) stressed, possible misunderstandings resulting from the culturally-based differences might be avoided by raising awareness about how writers from different national and corporate cultures approach business communication tasks in their workplace. In the same manner, Danet (2001) supposed that many specialists are emphasizing the importance of writing correct e-mails, following adequate etiquette rules to avoid damaging professional image and liability risk. Meeting the rhetorical expectations of another culture, according to Woolever (n.d.), requires more than just attention to language.

It is also worthwhile pointing out the limitations of the present study. With a limited amount of e-mail corpus from the two language communities, it might have been assumed that there were some insufficient evidences for some parameters to be totally captured. As suggested, future research should aim at a higher comprehensiveness by considering larger amounts of corpora. Moreover, it might be proven fruitful to use other methodologies that would allow for a more accurate count of features that mark the professional casual and formal registers.

In addition to the two registers, other e-mail writing registers such as social and amicable registers might also be explored. Comparisons across English varieties or e-mail writing in English across different language communities would also be desirable. Finally, parallel to what Connor (2002) proposed, because cultures and genres are viewed as dynamic and fluid, it would also be a good advice to study e-mail genre diachronically to identify the evolution of patterns and norms. Hence, a study on the changing professional registers and structural moves across periods of time might be worth-pursuing. After all, as mentioned in this study, e-mail structure and language features have been evolving along with the new information technology innovations.

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