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Where Lies the Difference: Comparing Chinese and English Business Writings

By

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Abstract

With the expansion of Sino-U.S business relationships as well as of the international exchange among college students, there is a greater need for understanding and applying effective business communication between the two countries.

This research paper examines the written format of business communication between China and United States. Particularly, this paper uses Hofstede's power distance and individualism theories (Hofstede, 1984) to analyze written business communication in both cultures. Furthermore, the analysis of different writing styles between American and Chinese business writing is provided. Apart from examining the books, journal articles and online examples, I explain the results of a survey I conducted on SPSU's campus and the case study of a grant proposal called Democracy Frontline of Chinese Burmese. This paper aims to provide readers guidelines on how to conduct effective business communication to Chinese and English audiences.

Where lies the difference: Comparing Chinese and English Business Writings

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

In the book *Concise Handbook of Management: A Practitioner's Approach*, Scott (2005) tells the story of a renowned novelist who sits down to write a note to his daughter's teacher explaining the child's absence due to a medical appointment. After more than twenty minutes and numerous rough drafts, his frustrated wife decides to write the note herself and it takes her less than fifteen seconds.

In contrast to that story, Ding (2005) explains the indirectness of writing a Chinese business letter from a younger brother to an elder brother. One can see the importance of different methods of composition, especially at the beginning and ending of the business note. The business letter starts:

Elder Brother Manager Wang:

It has been six months since we met last. How time flies! Now it is already late fall; west wind is blowing and leaves are falling. Younger Brother thirsts to see Elder Brother again.

The letter writer then concludes:

Younger Brother has always been lazy and has accomplished nothing, so Younger Brother will make a trip again to listen to Elder Brother's earnest teachings.

Respectfully and humbly,

Younger Brother

Lin Futian (Ding, 2005, p. 95)

These two examples are real excerpts from academic journal articles. By reading stories and examples like the above, I began to observe and think about the differences between Chinese and English writings. Are there reasons behind the differences? Is there a different writing standard in each culture? As we can see from the examples, fast and concise communication is appreciated in drafting American business letters, while the letter from Chinese business communication shows a polished and humble language, which takes more time to ponder and draft. Differences in business writings between two countries and the

related topics have deeply interested me and relate to me. As a Chinese student studying business and technical communication in an American university, I would like to explore and present what I have found.

In Chapter 1 of the research component, I provide general information on reasons why this research is related to me and the purpose of the project. In Chapter 2, I examine the differences of business writings between Chinese and English from a historical perspective, from the perspective of Hofstede's theories, specifically, his concepts of power distance and individualism, and finally from the perspective of writer-responsibility and reader-responsibility business writing styles. In Chapter 3, I discuss my own findings of the subject matter from surveys, online examples and a case study.

Background

I would like to examine the differences between written Business Communication in Chinese and English for three reasons. The first reason is my identity. I am a native Chinese speaker, and English is my most fluent second language. I figured out that these two languages, as well as the cultures behind the languages, have exciting differences and similarities. Secondly, studying business and technical communication fulfills my academic interests. I like to explore the influences that intercultural elements leave on business communication. These influences point out the differences and similarities among business communication, which promotes communicating effectively across cultures. Furthermore, I have discovered that there is an increasing need for both countries' business communicators to realize the differences and to apply intercultural communication skills to increase effective communication and decrease avoidable misunderstandings.

General purpose of the project

This thesis project compares the written format of business communication between Chinese and English texts. My research includes an analysis of how and why two of

Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1984), power distance and individualism, apply in written business communication; an examination of how different styles of intercultural writing is reflected in written business communication; a review of the importance of international business communication under the current context, and a case study of the proposal "The Northern Myanmar Youth Observation Program" (Hong, 2013). Through a survey I conducted and a business proposal I helped to revise, I explore how power distance theory influences business writing. The case study shows the indirect writing style implied in Chinese business writing. Furthermore, a brief history of Chinese and English business writing as well as suggestions on the awareness of different business communication styles will be provided to those interested in international business communication.

As Bovee and Thill in their book *Excellence In Business Communication* state, "communication is the process of transferring information and meaning between senders and receivers, using one or more written, oral, visual, or electronic channels" (2011, p. 5). Business communication, which puts the communication process into a business context, has been undergoing changes influenced by various factors. My interest is in how cultural factors influence the effectiveness of business communication, such as business writings and business messages, among different cultures under the new globalized environment we are living in today. In the new environment, it is especially important for business communicators to establish cross-cultural awareness in business communication when facing the opportunities and competitions in the globalized product, service, and labor markets.

Two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, power distance and individualism, as well as the concepts of global writing styles, writer responsibility and reader responsibility discussed in McCool's *Writing Around The World* (2009) have given me insights into examining cultural factors on Chinese and English business writings. I have chosen to use Hofstede's theory because his intercultural theories are most referenced by scholarly reviewed articles, but his

theories bear some criticism of bias as well. The first of the four cultural dimensions by Hofstede is power distance. The concept of power distance was first explored by Mulder's theory on social structure. Mulder defines power distance as "the degree of inequality in power between a less powerful individual (I) and a more powerful Other (O), in which I and O belong to the same (loosely or tightly knit) social system" (1977, p. 71). Individualism is Hofstede's third cultural dimension and it describes "the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society" (1984, p. 148). My research shows how Hofstede's concepts of power distance and individualism as well as these other concepts such as writer responsibility and reader responsibility writing styles can help explain the differences between Chinese and English written business communication.

Differences are out there. According to Hofstede's Power Distance Index Differences, China is a high Power Distance Index (PDI) country while U.S. is a low PDI country. Based on the finding of Hofstede (2001), "verbal insult by a 'boss' in a simulated business meeting with male psychology undergraduates in Hong Kong (high PDI) and the United States (lower PDI) found Hong Kong students significantly less critical of insulter" (p. 105). Thus, evidence of each country's PDI level should be somewhat reflected in that country's written business communication. Moreover, according to Hofstede's theory of individualism, "individualism, as opposed to collectivism ... describes the relationship between the individual and collectivity that prevails in a given society" (2001, p. 209). "The highest individualism values were found for the United States (91)" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 214). The individualism values for China were around 25. Therefore, different priority of social norms such as individualism and collectivism should reflect in business writing in both countries. Another tool for understanding these differences is to use the concepts of writer responsible and reader responsible writings. The definitions for writer and reader responsibility writing styles in McCool's (2009) *Writing Around the World* are as follows:

Writer responsibility: Also known as parallel progression. Writer responsibility follows a pattern in which the topic of one sentence overlaps the next sentence. In symbolic form, parallel progression assumes an AB to BC to CD format. Writer responsibility is associated with less uncertainty avoidance, greater personal identity, direct forms of communication, universal application of rules, and linear concepts of time.

Reader responsibility: Also known as sequential progression. Reader responsibility follows a pattern in which the topic of one sentence is relinquished to the next sentence. In symbolic form, sequential progression assumes an AB to CD to EF format. Reader responsibility is associated with higher uncertainty avoidance, greater group identity, indirect forms of communication, specific application of rules, and nonlinear concepts of time.

Examining different writing styles will offer perceptions on the research of relationships between Hofstede's power distance, individualism, and business writing being applied in Chinese and English.

However, either differences or similarities discovered in this research should not be seen as stereotypes in Chinese and English business writings. Instead, the distinctions are explored in order to develop awareness of interpreting and applying effective business writing and messages based on different business contexts. As Beamer (1992) states, "stereotyped categories are constantly being formed and constantly being challenged, as long as the individual continues to accept new meanings attributed to familiar signs" (p. 293). As long as cultural differences are experienced, others are constantly discovering new similarities and differences. My research will reveal my observations, experiences, as well as the limitations of those observations and experiences when it comes to examining the differences and similarities in Chinese and English written business communication.

Breakdown of each section

In the following sections of this thesis, I focus on discussing the histories of Chinese and English business communication, power distances and individualism theories, indirect and direct writing styles, survey, and examples and case study results.

In the history section, I examine the history of English business writing by using Thomas's English dissertation in University of Michigan, "Business Writing in History: What Caused the Dictamen's Demise" (Thomas, 1999). As for Chinese business writing, I consult "Cultural and Organizational Antecedents of Guanxi: The Chinese Cases" (Lin, 2011) and the journal article titled "Guanxi Competence as Intercultural Competence in Business Contexts-A Chinese perceptive" (Luo, 2013).

In the power distance section, I discuss the influences of power distance on business writing. For example, I explain why people who have less power choose to write respectfully to people who enjoy more power in business. Moreover, I explore why company writers when composing "bad news" messages to clients in business sales letters adopt a "buffer." I also examine how "buffer" writing between a company and its client reflects another influence of power distance.

In the individualism section, I explore the influences of social norms such as individualism and collectivism on the existence of certain kinds of business writing genres and writing styles. For example, one influence from collectivism is that writers create sentences that reflect their position in society.

In the writing-style section, I study two globally defined writing styles, writer responsibility and reader responsibility, their characteristics and how these two writing styles are reflected in American and Chinese business writings.

In the survey and case study section, I confirm the differences and influences of Chinese and English business writings from Hofstede's power distance and individualism theories

relate to writer responsibility and reader responsibility writing styles.

Chapter 2: Research Chapter

Comparison of Chinese and English Business Writings

Statement of Need

With increasing globalization and the expansion of multinational organizations, it is important for global businesses to understand cross-cultural etiquette and international workforce diversity management in order to sustain competitive advantages among multinational companies. According to Okoro (2012), “the success in global business ventures will be affected by the inability of international managers to understand appropriate business etiquette, customs, and values needed to conduct business among nations of the world” (p. 137). Thus, the importance of understanding international business communication under current contexts should be emphasized.

More importantly, there is a need for understanding the different writing styles in business communication between China and America. Woetzel (2004) states the following about China:

The country does have a gross domestic product of \$1 trillion and will probably continue to grow quickly. But it will remain a midsize economic power for the next decade. China now has a GDP roughly the size of the United Kingdom's. It may pass Germany in the next few years (para. 4).

More importantly, Gong (2011) finds, “With the rapid development of globalization and China’s prosperous economy day by day, especially with its success of holding the Olympic Games, China, the biggest developing country in the world, has become a major business partner of America” (p. 101).

China has been increasingly involved in the global economy after the 1980s. With the business ties drawing closer for both China and the United States, it is important for Chinese business communicators to realize the different communication styles of its major business

partner and vice versa for American business communicators. Beyond that, there is an increase in the enrollment of Chinese international students in American schools. According to *U.S. News and World Report*, “Chinese students accounted for a quarter of all international students studying in the United States in 2011-2012: 194,029 students from China studied in the United States, 23 percent more than the year before” (Hopkins, 2012). I have been working in the Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) International Program Office for 17 months. I wondered if the trend of Chinese students going overseas to study could be seen in the Chinese student population increase on the SPSU campus. I examined the statistics from the International Program Office myself. During this Fall 2013 semester, the new Chinese students accounted for around two-thirds of the International students at SPSU. More than half of the international students from the previous two years have been from Mainland China. Therefore, pointing out the differences in business writings can also give teachers at my school ideas on instructing American writing styles for Chinese or even Chinese speaking students.

Methodology

In order to conduct this research, I examined books and peer reviewed academic journal articles to give me a full understanding of the similarities and differences in Chinese and American business writing. I hoped this research could clear up the following questions: (1) How do power distances apply in written communications in both countries? (2) How will individuality and collectivity influence business writing in both countries? (3) What are the connections between the writing styles and power distance or individualism? (4) Are there any ideas I may offer for teachers who teach business communication courses in America?

I also started a survey to examine how power distance affects business writings. I conducted my survey on SPSU’s campus, and I went to the atrium building, library, student center, and D building and randomly asked 30 students -15 American students and 15

Chinese students - who were available at that time to answer my survey. I asked them the same questions on the survey, from demographic questions to business writing-related questions. Survey questions can be found in the appendix at the end of this thesis.

Furthermore, I conducted a case study with a grant proposal to the National Endowment for Democracy. I happened to be involved in the translation of the proposal from Chinese to English. While translating the proposal, I found that in the Chinese version of the proposal, the language was implicit, flowery and indirect. If I translated word by word, the proposal would not be considered effective by the American reviewers. I edited the proposal in an effort to make the proposal meet the standards of American business writing. For example, in order to be more persuasive, I used Aristotle's three appeals: "logos," "pathos" and "ethos" in writing; in order to be more concise, I changed the indirect metaphorical words to more explicit and straightforward expressions. Ms. Godfrey, who was my proposal writing class instructor, proofread the first draft of the translated proposal. When I examined the two proposals, I looked through the writing style of the original Chinese proposal and the final version of English proposal based on suggestions made by Ms. Godfrey. I also researched examples such as well-known search engine companies' websites in both countries, Google Incorporated and Baidu Incorporated, to look for similarities and differences in written business communication.

History

By starting the research, I studied the history of the field because history may bring breakthroughs for any research. I found the following sources, which not only gave me a brief overview of business writing history but also helped me connect Hofstede's theories to my research.

I found three journal articles that examined business-writing history in English and Chinese, which are "Business Writing in History: What Caused the Dictamen's Demise?"

(Thomas, 1999), “Cultural and Organizational Antecedents of Guanxi: The Chinese Cases” (Lin, 2011), and “Guanxi Competence as Intercultural Competence in Business Contexts-A Chinese Perceptive” (Luo, 2013).

Thomas analyzes the history of English business writing by elaborating his own English dissertation in 1994, which discusses the language of Cely letters and papers. The article argues that dictamen, the art of letter writing in the medieval period, was based on “rhetorical principles developed in ancient Greek and Rome” (p. 44). The form and style are the conventions of the dictamen. The form consists of “various sections of the message organized in a particular way” and style refers to the language whether it is used in “an appropriate manner for the message” and the word choices whether it is used for leading the reader to the change of ideas (p. 44).

The organization and style would follow patterns of “Address,” e.g. “right worshipful sir”; “Salutation,” e.g. “I greet you well”; “Notification,” e.g. “and let you know that...”, “Exposition,” “Disposition,” e.g. “a request or demand”; “Valediction,” e.g. “God have you in this keeping...”; “Attestation and Date” e.g. “written at...” (p. 45). The use of Dictamen gradually died out and its uses in public documents have discontinued. However, the dictamen has influenced the use of current English conventions of message opening salutations, such as “Dear...” and closing valediction such as “Take care.”

Luo (2013) and Lin (2011) discuss the concept of “Guanxi,” which refers to “a general form of social networks and has the implication of ‘gate/pass’ ” (p. 441), and they point out that the concept of Guanxi is deeply rooted in “Confucian social theory” (p. 73). Furthermore, it excludes and connects with other fundamental concepts in Chinese culture (p. 73). Guanxi outlines Chinese business culture as “a kind of collective” (p. 76) that contains “a vertical differential relation between inferior and superior” (p. 443). Since Guanxi is essential to Chinese tradition and business activities, there should be a connection between Guanxi and

business writing. However, these two articles have not shown the relationship between how Guanxi directly influences business writing. I assume “Guanxi” can apply to Hofstede’s power distance and individualism theories because of the “vertical status and relationship in a group” (p. 443) and the coverage of individual, economical and social factors all together. The purpose of using the “Guanxi” concept is to connect Hofstede’s power distance and individualism with Chinese business writing.

Power distance and business writings

Hofstede’s power distance theory is based on the observation of “human inequality” (p. 66), which is manifest in various ways, such as social status, wealth, and power. Hofstede gives the following definition of power distance:

The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is difference between the extent to which B can determine the behavior of S and the extent to which S can determine the behavior of B (1984, p. 72).

From my understanding, power distance shows that how people in a hierarchy react to each other is based on their level of inequality. Hofstede also states the accepted relationship between the boss and subordinate is supported by their social environment and, to a large extent, determined by their national culture. Therefore, cultural differentiations can determine “the level of power distance at which the tendency of the powerful to maintain” (p. 72). The power distance norm is not limited to only one sphere; it spreads over to other aspects in life, organizations and socialization. Since it is likely that power inequality is reflected in areas such as wealth, prestige, and social status, then it is also likely that the power distance norm is displayed in different styles of writing in a variety of contexts, such as at school between professors and students or in organizations between bosses and subordinates. These differences often come down to socio-cultural norms: individualistic/collectivist or high-context/low-context cultures influence written communication (see page 21).

Take the “buffer writing” in American business sales letters, for example. The writing between a company and its client reflects an influence from power distance. *Power Sales Writing* (Hershkowitz-Coore, 2003) suggests that using a buffer as a start in business sales letters is a good way to deal with composing “bad news” messages to clients by company writers. I believe the buffer writing indicates a concept of “power distance” (Hofstede, 1984). For the “bad news” message example, the author suggests that sellers should set a positive tone, and then start with an authentic and solution based buffer to communicate a negative message to customers. Since there is a power gap between the relationship of a seller and a buyer, how sellers communicate with buyers to make them satisfied and to not lose them for future business is critical in business communication.

In addition, according to Hofstede’s (1984) Power Distance Index (PDI) scores by occupation, which measures the power inequality in organizations from a subordinate to a boss, it indicates Hong Kong has a 68 PDI, ranked number 7 among the high PDI countries, while the United States has a 40 PDI. Roughly calculated by myself based on the PDI numbers from Hong Kong (68), Singapore (74), and Taiwan (58), which are Chinese speaking country and regions, the Mainland China’s PDI should be around 58 to 80. Compared with the United States, China should have a high power distance index. However, since China and the United States enjoys a large territory, in the future, I would like to know that if the PDI numbers among different provinces or states might vary based on geographic, economic, and cultural factors. From Hofstede’s current survey results, one of the characteristics of a high PDI is that “managers (are) seen as showing less consideration” which is different from low PDI countries where “managers (are) seen as showing more consideration” (p. 92). The imperial Chinese society was hierarchical and authority orientated. The concept of “paying respect to the powerful person” is emphasized by Chinese “Guanxi” relationship and the society.

To test this concept, in my survey, I asked all the participants the same statement as follows, “When you communicate with a professor who is of the same nationality as you, you will pay more attention and respect to him/her than professors of other nationalities?” The results indicated 15.4% of American students agreed with the statement while 46.2% of Chinese students agreed. Chinese students believe that their seniors - bosses, professors and managers - should deserve respect while American students tend to think the relationship should be equal.

Individualism and business writings

Hofstede’s third cultural dimension is called individualism, which describes “the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society” (1984, p. 148). According to Hofstede (1984), individualism is related to power distance and is negatively correlated with the Power Distance Index, but it does not mean it applies to all countries. According to Khorram, Vora, and Dakhli, (2010), “individualism and collectivism is in part based on type of self-construal and the corresponding emphasis on rationality versus relatedness” (p. 1). I wondered how would individualism and collectivism affect in the group culture. Then Khorram et al. go on to explain, “Literature on multicultural work groups is related to the use of cultural values as a predictor of group culture” (p. 6). The characteristics of cross-cultural groups can encourage or block communication. Individualism as a social norm will also expand to the relationship between people and the organization to which they belong. However, how will individualism affect business writings?

Yunxia Zhu, a senior lecturer at UNITEC in Auckland, examined the development of sales genres in Mainland China from 1949 to present. Zhu states, “Chinese written discourse is composed of literary genres and Yingyong wen (practical writing)” (2000b, p. 158). Yingyong wen consists of daily writings on behalf of individuals (Riyong wen) and official

letters on behalf of organizations (Gongwen). Furthermore, Zhu discusses the history of the three Gongwen genres and Chinese sales genres influenced by the economic changes.

Hofstede (1984) uses Mao Tse-tung as an example. Mao was the founder of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Mao was anti-individualism and believed that individualism meant evil. Mao's collectivism was from Chinese tradition and it largely influenced society. During 1949 to 1978, China was under the planned economy regime in which the business of commodity exchange was practiced and controlled by public ownership. As a result, business practices were restricted and products were sold and distributed under a top-down network from a central government department to provincial bureaus and to the public. During the planned economy period in 1949-1978, the business context was under the bureaucratic, collective and planned economy. There are fewer business practices and "no sales letters were actually written" (Zhu, 2000b, p. 162). Sales documents were restricted to sales requests, sales official replies and sales circulars. After 1978, with the development of economic reform, private and state-owned enterprises coexisted in practice, and more written sales communication such as sales letters, sales invitations and sales circulars were used.

These examples show that social norms such as individualism and collectivism influence the existence of certain kinds of business writing genres. Furthermore, the form of writing changes as well. Take sales tongzhi (circulars), for example. Between 1949 and 1978, sales tongzhi (circulars) were written in an official tone and were used to "give instructions related to sales policies" (p. 164). However, after 1978, sales tongzhi (circulars) were used less frequently. The official tone and the content were changing, which were influenced by the writing style of sales letters. Sales letters began to be used more frequently since the economy shifted from the planned economy to the market economy. Writers had to write in order to compete in the market and to attract customers to buy their products, rather than writing in a superior-subordinate style. Formatting and content of sales writing changed with

the social and economic change. The chart below is compiled from the source, *Rhetorical Moves in Chinese Sales Genres, 1949 to the Present* (2000b).

Compare the format of Sales Tongzhi between 1949-1978 and after 1978	
Between 1949-1978	After 1978
Heading	Heading
Salutation	Salutation
Background	Introducing
Decision	Product details
Order	Positive appraisal
Signature and date	Pressure tactics
/	Implicit order
/	Requirements
/	Closing
/	Signature and date

Figure 1. The format of Sales Tongzhi between 1949 and 1978 and after 1978

Furthermore, in Chan's (2007) book review, the author discusses how greater levels of business practice resulted in the evolution of the genres of Chinese business writing. China has been allowed to access World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, from 2001 to 2004, "foreign direct investment (FDI) in China increased every year" (p. 1331). Chinese business genres are the result of the growing business practices in China such as "the increasing presence of foreign invested enterprises", "multinational corporations", and "the associated knowledge transfer from foreign parent enterprises to local subsidiaries" (p. 1331).

A social norm such as collectivism influences the "appropriate linguistic forms" in business writing. Zhu (2000a) states that Chinese politeness behavior of showing respect through "appropriate linguistic forms" may be related to China's collectivistic culture (p. 53).

The author would “create a linguistic distance to indicate respect for the reader” by for example, conferring on the reader an honorific title to serve as a way of relationship building (p. 53). Moreover, according to Zhu (2000a), “this may have an impact on a preferred formal register in writing Chinese sales letters, while business letters in English tend to stress an informal atmosphere and [to] prefer a conversational style” (p. 54).

Writing styles

According to McCool (2009), global writing styles are generally divided into two large groups, writer responsibility and reader responsibility. Writer responsible writing follows characteristics such as “less uncertainty avoidance, greater personal identity, direct form of communication, universal application of rules, and linear concepts of time” (p. 59). The introduction of the article “The Modern Denial of Human Nature” cited in McCool’s book is a good example. The article starts with a clear introductory sentence, “human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture.” The rest of the paragraph followed by “a brief summary of the problem, an implicit question, and hint of a solution” (p. 62).

Reader responsible writing is considered writing with “higher uncertainty avoidance, greater group identity, indirect forms of communication, specific application of rules, and nonlinear concepts of time” (2009, p. 60). For example, in an article cited by McCool, titled “Crows Everywhere are Equally Black,” (p. 65) the author’s argument is not presented directly for readers from the very beginning of the article. The introductory sentence is more than five lines long and contains six parallel phrases within the sentence. Readers are expected to surmise the author’s ideas from the words.

Indirect style and formal style in Chinese business writings

Ding (2005) cited Stewart and Bennett in his article, indicates that non-western countries and regions such as Mainland China prefer an indirect writing style. Ding believes that Confucianism inspired the indirectness of Chinese society and writing. Proper human

relationships are a basis of a harmonious society held by Confucianism. Furthermore, he mentioned “in written communication, they establish personal relationship with their readers before they address business issues” (2005, p. 87). In written communication, this emphasis usually appears “at the beginning and ending” of writings. For example, writers create “a modest image of themselves” by “addressing themselves as reader’s inferiors” (Ding, 2005, p. 96). Furthermore, in Chinese business communication, individuals may tend to stress the importance of “long-term cordial relationships” more than just “pure business profits” (p. 94). Therefore, some business people use stories and personal hobbies to demonstrate to their partners that they are not merely interested in making profits, but they also want to build a friendly relationship (Ding, 2005). The indirect business style “as a rhetorical strategy” for business communicators creates a “strong bond between individuals” and builds a “harmonious social structure;” thus the author encourages the use of indirect style communication when writing to audiences who are from a collective society which “values self-denial” (p. 97).

Lin and Jones (2005) are professors in the department of management and human resources in California State Polytechnic University. They created a survey for American and Chinese participants. The survey included demographic questions and questions on written communications, communication technologies, and verbal and non-verbal communication. According to their findings, the majority of surveyed Chinese participants suggest when they write letters, reports and other business messages, that they write in a formal style. In addition, more American participants than Chinese participants indicate that when starting a business letter that they first start writing the main reason by going directly to the point.

However, a recent study (Wang, 2010), explores recruiting college students from a Chinese university and an American university. In particular, the author looked at writing claim letters to test whether students from two different cultures applied similar direct or

indirect request strategies in writing claim letters. Wang found that directness and indirectness are not only influenced by culture, but also shaped by contextual factors as well.

Wang (2010) stated:

As business English communication scholars or instructors in China have noted the changes happening in the large social context of the business world, they have enacted genre changes and recommended direct communication styles in response to genre users' contextual needs (p. 114).

However, indirect and formal styles in Chinese business writings are preferred, but can also be changed due to different social contexts, and user contextual needs. Therefore, we should not only bear directness and indirectness in mind when discussing writing styles in business communication.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Surveys, Examples and Case Study

Survey results

Wong, and Lai (2000) examine Hofstede's cultural dimensions in job interviews in Singapore. Inspired by them, I chose to conduct a survey on SPSU's campus to collect first-hand data and analyze it myself. According to the power distance theory, in business contexts, people who have less power write respectfully to people who enjoy more power. Thirty people completed my survey, of whom half were American students and the other half, Chinese international students. Every respondent answered the same questions on the survey.

The survey results show that 93.3% of all respondents strongly agreed that when writing emails to professors, they would write in a respectful manner. 92.3% of respondents agreed when they write emails to supervisor/director/manager, they would write in a respectful manner. Moreover, in regards to writing reports, sixteen out of seventeen believe they will write respectfully to their supervisor/director/manager. Most people explain they should address properly to the person "above" them, use proper English sentences than slangs, consider the tone, and depending on the situation write formally or informally. Chinese students indicated that they would use a complimentary closing to address the person, and keep the writing in a mild tone. Therefore, according to survey results, writing respectfully by choosing the right tone, words and form of address were appreciated and considered necessary by respondents when writing subordinates to people considered to be above them.

As an influence of collectivity, writers in Chinese business writing usually use sentences that can identify and reinforce one's position in society. As part of my survey research, I interviewed the president of the Chinese Friendship Association (CFA) at SPSU. She told me that the CFA is supported and granted funds by the Chinese Consulate in Houston, TX. When she writes emails or letters to the ambassador in the Consulate, she has to write in an official tone and use business formal language. She told me at the end of writing she would position

herself as a student president being taken care of by the Chinese government and she would express her thankfulness by statements such as “we are appreciated [sic] by the concern of our government.”

Examples from Google Incorporated and Baidu Incorporated

Google.com is the world’s largest search engine website. However, Baidu.com is the most used Chinese search engine. In a previous class taken at SPSU, our class examined the overview statements by Google, Inc. and Baidu, Inc. I chose the overviews of Google and Baidu because even though both companies are large search engine companies, when it comes to writing a company’s introduction page, they adopt different writing styles. No word characteristics that show differences in communication styles can be found from their writing.

On the “about company” page of Google.com, the company uses a more direct, targeted writing style with a clear and concise language pattern. It uses an oversized font size stating the company’s mission at the very beginning of the web page. Then the company categorized the information into 12 groups to introduce the history, products, management and service information. The language is simple and the web page design is clear at the first glance. Google adopts a bullet point style to list the facts instead of writing them into paragraphs. The information has been processed in a way that important information is put into an obvious position, and writing sentences become shorter, simple and concise.

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.

Our company has packed a lot into a relatively young life. Since Google was founded in 1998, we've grown to serve hundreds of thousands of users and customers around the world.

When Larry met Sergey

Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin met at Stanford University in 1995. By 1996, they had built a search engine (initially called BackRub) that used links to determine the importance of individual webpages.

Google facts

Founded
1998

Founders
Larry Page and Sergey Brin

Incorporation
September 4, 1998

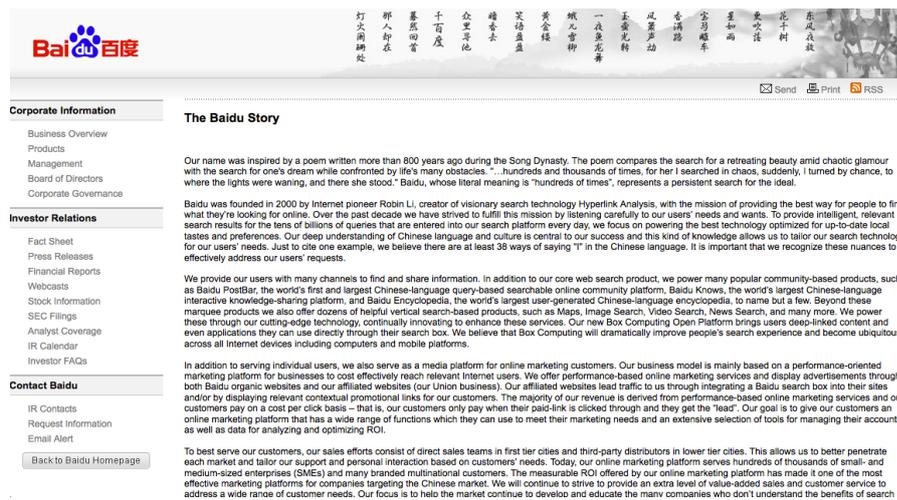
Initial public offering (NASDAQ)
August 19, 2004

Headquarters
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View
CA 94043

- Google Inc.
- Out of the office
- Do-It-Yourself ads
- Gmail: no joke
- Gone public

Figure 2. Google company's overview

In contrast, Baidu names their overview “the Baidu story,” which can be found at the home profile page on Baidu.com. Baidu's company overview is an actual article, which starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion. Interestingly, Baidu's overview begins with a poem since the company's name was inspired by that poem and it uses the first paragraph to explain how a poem from 800 years ago inspired the naming of the company. Then the next five paragraphs introduce the company's facts, products, achievements and services. The ending uses the traditional and accepted “future prospect”. Baidu's overview uses a less direct and more formal style compared with Google. Furthermore, it tends to use long sentences, maintains a greater sense of group identity, and it relies more on proverbs, poems or prose. In Baidu's company overview, at the second to last paragraph, Baidu positions itself as a leader in the web search-engine market. Therefore it also “help[s] the market continue to develop and educate the many companies who don't understand the benefits of search engine marketing so that...[Baidu] can help them grow their businesses.” This latter statement points to another characteristic from collectivity-influenced culture in that business writing emphasizes and positions itself in society.



Corporate Information

- Business Overview
- Products
- Management
- Board of Directors
- Corporate Governance

Investor Relations

- Fact Sheet
- Press Releases
- Financial Reports
- Webcasts
- Stock Information
- SEC Filings
- Analyst Coverage
- IR Calendar
- Investor FAQs

Contact Baidu

- IR Contacts
- Request Information
- Email Alert

[Back to Baidu Homepage](#)

The Baidu Story

Our name was inspired by a poem written more than 800 years ago during the Song Dynasty. The poem compares the search for a retreating beauty amid chaotic glamour with the search for one's dream while confronted by life's many obstacles. "...hundreds and thousands of times, for her I searched in chaos, suddenly, I turned by chance, to where the lights were waiting, and there she stood." Baidu, whose literal meaning is "hundreds of times", represents a persistent search for the ideal.

Baidu was founded in 2000 by Internet pioneer Robin Li, creator of visionary search technology Hyperlink Analysis, with the mission of providing the best way for people to find what they're looking for online. Over the past decade we have strived to fulfill this mission by listening carefully to our users' needs and wants. To provide intelligent, relevant search results for the tens of billions of queries that are entered into our search platform every day, we focus on powering the best technology optimized for up-to-date local tastes and preferences. Our deep understanding of Chinese language and culture is central to our success and this kind of knowledge allows us to tailor our search technology for our users' needs. Just to cite one example, we believe there are at least 38 ways of saying "I" in the Chinese language. It is important that we recognize these nuances to effectively address our users' requests.

We provide our users with many channels to find and share information. In addition to our core web search product, we power many popular community-based products, such as Baidu PostBar, the world's first and largest Chinese-language query-based searchable online community platform, Baidu Knows, the world's largest Chinese-language interactive knowledge-sharing platform, and Baidu Encyclopedia, the world's largest user-generated Chinese-language encyclopedia, to name but a few. Beyond these marquee products we also offer dozens of helpful vertical search-based products, such as Maps, Image Search, Video Search, News Search, and many more. We power these through our cutting-edge technology, continually innovating to enhance these services. Our new Box Computing Open Platform brings users deep-linked content and even applications they can use directly through their search box. We believe that Box Computing will dramatically improve people's search experience and become ubiquitous across all internet devices including computers and mobile platforms.

In addition to serving individual users, we also serve as a media platform for online marketing customers. Our business model is mainly based on a performance-oriented marketing platform for businesses to cost effectively reach relevant internet users. We offer performance-based online marketing services and display advertisements through both Baidu organic websites and our affiliated websites (our Union business). Our affiliated websites lead traffic to us through integrating a Baidu search box into their sites and/or by displaying relevant contextual promotional links for our customers. The majority of our revenue is derived from performance-based online marketing services and our customers pay on a cost per click basis—that is, our customers only pay when their paid-link is clicked through and they get the "lead". Our goal is to give our customers an online marketing platform that has a wide range of functions which they can use to meet their marketing needs and an extensive selection of tools for managing their accounts as well as data for analyzing and optimizing ROI.

To best serve our customers, our sales efforts consist of direct sales teams in first tier cities and third-party distributors in lower tier cities. This allows us to better penetrate each market and tailor our support and personal interaction based on customers' needs. Today, our online marketing platform serves hundreds of thousands of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and many branded multinational customers. The measurable ROI offered by our online marketing platform has made it one of the most effective marketing platforms for companies targeting the Chinese market. We will continue to strive to provide an extra level of value-added sales and customer service to address a wide range of customer needs. Our focus is to help the market continue to develop and educate the many companies who don't understand the benefits of search.

Figure 3. Baidu company's overview-The Baidu story

A Case Study - Proposal Narrative for Democracy Frontline of Chinese Burmese

From September to November in 2012, I translated and revised proposals for my friend, Hong Huang, who aims to start a program called Democracy Frontline of Chinese Burmese with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Hong cannot write in English, so he wrote the first draft in Chinese and he allowed me to edit it in English. Later on, I examined the original proposal in Chinese and the revised English version. The Chinese proposal was not fit for the original Request for Proposal (RFP) for several reasons such as the writing style, content and language expressions. Problems with the original proposal included the overall indirect writing style, absence of problem-statement introduction, a delayed thesis, implicit main points for each section, too much contextual information and less abundant evidence to support the main point, characteristics considered as ineffective communication among American business writing according to writer responsible writing styles.

When I revised the proposal, I referred to the book *Writing Proposals* (Johnson-Sheehan, 2008) for its specific instructions for direct forms of business related written communication, such as proposals. Grant and business proposals are "selling a product or service," thus applying a rhetorical approach to persuade readers for the need of change and then addressing proper solutions to them by using a concise clear and direct language become necessary to

compete among other proposals (p. 6).

I deleted extra parts describing the historical context of Burma in the introduction and changed it to the statement of need by shortening long sentences and using facts and statistics as one of my extrinsic proofs. The major revision for the proposal was to change the implicit phrases and words into direct ones. For example, instead of writing “establishing the geographic bridge between China and the democratic world,” I suggested writing “provide a method to break China’s political self-enclosure.” Instead of using long paragraphs to describe the project objective, I used bullet points to list specific objectives that the project hopes to achieve. Hong adopted my suggestion on being more direct rather than using a long and implicit writing style. I later learned that he and his program received a response from the NED, which invited him to attend a meeting in Washington D.C.

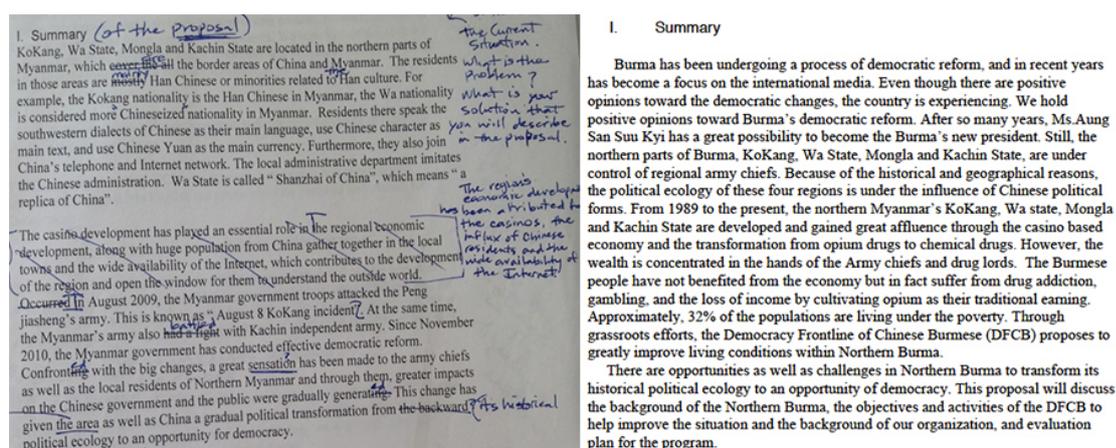


Figure 4. The Original translated proposal and the revised English proposal

China and the United States use different business writing styles and standards. Directly translating one language into another one will not fit the “good standard” of effective communication even though the meaning has been translated. To achieve effective business communication endorsed by U.S business culture, according to Bovee and Thill in *Excellence in Business Communication* (2011), it is important to be aware of the audiences and to use the “you” centered, or audience-centered, communication. Instead of using “I,” “we” and “my,” the focus should be on the customers’ perspective, and content should be written on their

behalf, such as “Changes are made for you based on your benefit.”

Furthermore, shorter writing is getting popular among large businesses now. According to an article from *Business Journal (Central New York)* citing a new national survey in 2008, many large businesses and organizations prefer shorter written communications from their employees. NFI, a firm that studies trends and attitudes in business and organizational management, conducted a worldwide survey that shows that in large companies, 85% of people say written communications from subordinates are too long. “Shorter, clear and concise” are the keys to effective business writing in large American companies or organizations.

Suggestions

Bullard, an assistant professor in the Department of Business Education and Office Management at Middle Tennessee State University, conducted a study on business communication courses taught in schools and colleges of business holding membership in the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The author pointed out the general changes teachers suggest may occur because of “increased emphasis on oral communication, less emphasis on some types of business letters and problem solving with the aid of computers” (1971, p. 35). At the same time, Zong from Beijing Institute of Foreign Trade and Hildebrandt from the University of Michigan (1983) studied historical background and reviewed three courses in business communication in China. Zong and Hildebrandt drew conclusions on how to create closer academic ties with China in business communication. As the article states, “business communication in China involves both sending and receiving messages, along with a competence to understand the business protocol of international trade” (p. 27). Zong and Hildebrandt believe that providing examples, clarifying intercultural differences, and arranging exchange visits all foster business communication on an international level.

According to Beamer (1994), with a growing number of Chinese-speaking students attending business programs at American universities, the author realized that there are language differences between Chinese speakers and English speakers in business communication such as grammar and structure. American teachers in English business communication programs need to understand the differences in order to better deal with the challenges as well as to better understand problems the students will have in learning. She suggests differences lie in four areas: “(a) conventions of writing in English, (b) the structure of thought and its relationship to language, (c) the meaning of learning, and (d) classification versus analysis” (p. 12). Beamer’s observation of writing differences is based on a perception of cultural and social difference. For example, “logic is culturally defined” or “The syllogistic reasoning of Aristotle,” are not “universal phenomena” (p. 13). As part of reader responsible writing, Chinese-speaking students rely much more on implied messages than U.S writers do.

I believe the writing styles between Chinese and English speakers represent two different approaches: reader responsible and writer responsible. When writing across cultures, writers should be aware of the differences in writing styles and write for what audiences expect in that country. Figure 5 below outlines the suggestions I propose to writers when writing to different audiences.

Suggestions on writing differently with different audiences	
For Chinese writers targeting American audiences:	For American writers targeting Chinese audiences:
Adopt a direct and explicit writing style	Adopt an indirect and implicit writing style
Start thesis or main points right at the beginning	Avoid being too bold and straightforward to be considered impolite in writing
Use concise, clear and short language and sentence structures	Provide background or contextual information at the beginning

Avoid long and ambiguous sentences	Use proverbs, metaphors, idioms and mottos
Avoid fancy jargon words	Apply formal writings and show respect to persons who are “above” you
Apply bullet points and short paragraphs	Long paragraphs are appreciated

Figure 5. Suggestions on writing differently with different audiences

In addition, in my personal experience of the business communication courses at SPSU, I have found that the business communication course does not have much emphasis on the intercultural perspective of business communication even though the enrollment rate of international students is growing. I believe there should be greater focus on intercultural business communication because of the trends in globalization, the rise of transnational corporations and of very diverse and multicultural workforces.

Limitations

Because of time constraints, I could not include questions regarding individualism and business writing in my survey. I would like to explore more if the emphasis on pronouns in Chinese is influenced by the collective culture. I would also like to include more examples by interviewing some students or professors discussing their way of writing emails, letters, and reports to their bosses. Moreover, the participants in my survey were limited to those on the SPSU campus and the number of participants was small. These factors are limitations of this research.

Conclusion

After examining Chinese and English written business communication, I found evidence in support of Hofstede’s theory that power distance affects both countries’ writing performances. I believe writing respectfully to a person who enjoys more power is reflected by power distance. In addition, applying “buffer writing” to deliver negative messages in

sales writing is another influence of the power distance between companies and clients. Individualism and collectivism influenced the existence of certain kinds of business writing genres in China. Specifically, the changes of social-economic structure in China from 1949 to 1979 influence Chinese business genres. Business writings of a collectivity-influenced culture emphasize one's position in society while business writings of individual-influenced culture intensify individual identity. Overall, Chinese business writing adopts a reader responsible writing style while English written business communication follows the writer responsible writing style. The characteristics of different writing styles also can be found in the case study of proposal narrative for Democracy Frontline of Chinese Burmese. Suggestions for intercultural writing are provided for Chinese writers targeting American audiences and vice versa. American teachers of English business communication need to understand the differences in order to better instruct the challenges as well as problems the international students encounter in learning. I also believe the focus on intercultural business communication should be implemented in SPSU business communication courses.

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Annotated Bibliography

Beamer, L. (1992). Learning intercultural communication competence. *Journal of Business Communication*, 29, 285-303. doi:10.1177/002194369202900306

This paper discusses the meaning of intercultural communication competence, which is the ability to encode and decode meanings equivalent to other communicators' cultures.

Moreover, the paper mentions a five level model, which includes "acknowledging diversity, organizing information according to stereotypes, posing questions to challenge the stereotypes, analyzing communication episodes and generating "other culture" messages."

The author's five level developmental model of intercultural communication competence is related to my thesis because the author not only places emphasis on the cultural differences but also stresses the cultural differences that affects business communication. It addresses five areas of value orientations, including "thinking and knowing," "doing and achieving," "the self," "social organization," and "the Universe." According to "the self," "one dimension is the relative importance of individualism versus interdependence and interrelatedness." "In [the] second dimension, youth is opposed to age; in some business environments age is more important than training or even experience." Those dimensions of business culture insights are important to my thesis.

Beamer, L. (1994). Teaching English business writing to Chinese-speaking business students. *Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, 57, 12-18.

doi:10.1177/108056999405700104

With a growing number of Chinese-speaking students in business programs among American universities, the author realizes that there are cultural differences between Chinese speakers and English speakers in business communication. American teachers in English business communication programs need to understand the differences in order to better deal with the

challenges as well as problems the students may have in learning. The author suggests differences lie in four areas: (a) conventions of writing in English, (b) the structure of thought and its relationship to language, (c) the meaning of learning, and (d) classification versus analysis. Beamer's observation of writing differences is based on a perception of cultural and social difference. For example, "logic is culturally defined...The syllogistic reasoning of Aristotle, for example, is not a universal phenomenon." As part of high-context culture, Chinese-speaking students rely more on implied messages than U.S writers do. This article has great insight in pointing out the differences of Chinese and U.S business writings.

Big businesses prefer shorter writing. (2008). *Business Journal (Central New York)*, 22(8), 2.

Retrieved from: <http://cnybj.com>

Big businesses prefer shorter writing is an article from *The Central New York Business Journal*. It points out many large businesses and organizations prefer shorter written communications from their employees, according to a national survey conducted in 2008. A company called NFI studies trends and attitudes in business and organizational management, which conducted a worldwide survey shows that in large companies, 85% of people say written communications from subordinates are too long. However, the article shows that not so many complaints about the length of written communication come from small business managers.

This article relates to my thesis because it provides statistics about different views of written business communication in large and small businesses. It shows "shorter, clear and concise" are the keys to effective business writing in American companies or organizations. Furthermore, I can use this article as a start in my thesis discussing the current principles and opinions of American written business communication.

Bovee, C., & Thill, J. (2011). *Excellence in business communication*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Excellence in Business Communication is the book that I used for my Business Communication class. This book talks about understanding business communication, how to achieve effective Business Communication from planning, writing and completing business messages, prepare reports and presentations and write employment messages. This book provides me with theories and examples regarding effective business writing. For example, the book suggests being aware of audiences and using the “you” attitude for audience-centered communication. Examples related to effective and ineffective business messages are also available in the book. Moreover, this book is helpful because it provides concepts and suggestions from a native English speaker’s perspective. An example can be found in chapter three, “Communicating in a World of Diversity,” where the author points out individualism, equality and privacy are endorsed by business culture in the United States.

Bullard, D. (1971). Current trends in teaching business communication: A report of practices in member schools of the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business. *Journal of Business Communication*, 9, 27-35. doi:10.1177/002194367100900103

This paper summarizes the characteristics of business communication courses taught in schools and colleges of business holding membership in the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), and concludes about practices and recommendations for further developments. The author pointed out the general changes may occur as “increased emphasis on oral communication, less emphasis on some types of business letters and problem solving with the aid of computers.” This paper gives me a general idea on how American schools teach business communication courses I can use the author’s data and studies to compare the business study with Chinese colleges and

universities. I can also use the author's opinion on the weakness and improvements for American business communication courses.

Chan, C. C. (2007). [Review of *Written communication across cultures: A sociocognitive perspective on business genres*, by Y. Zhu & J. Benjamins]. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(7), 1329-1332. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2007.03.003

This journal article is a book review of Yunxia Zhu's book, *Written Communication across Cultures: A Sociocognitive Perspective on Business Genres*. This paper summarizes Zhu's work in reviewing Kaplan's (1966) theory on contrastive rhetoric, intercultural theories by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1991). She also shed lights on Chinese concepts of Guanxi to give the Chinese perspective on business communication.

Some details from this paper are helpful to my thesis. For example, with more involvement of business practices, Chinese business genres are evolving. China has been allowed to access WTO (World Trade Organization) in 2001, and from 2001 to 2004, "foreign direct investment (FDI) in China increased every year." The increasing presence of foreign invested enterprises, multinational corporations, and associated knowledge transfer from foreign-invested enterprises to local subsidiaries, which all contributes to the change and development of Chinese business genres.

Ding, D. (2005). An indirect style in business communication. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 20, 87-100. doi: 10.1177/1050651905281051

This article examines an indirect writing style in professional communication in China and analyses how Confucianism inspired the indirectness of Chinese society and writing. The author points out the "direct-indirect dichotomy is still prevalent in business communication practice." The indirect business style "as a rhetorical strategy" for business communicators

creates a “strong bond between individuals” and builds a “harmonious social structure,” thus the author encourages the use of indirect style communication when writing to audiences who are from a collective society which “values self-denial.”

This article is useful for my thesis because it fully examines the causes and application of indirect writing style in Chinese business communication. According to the author, business communication in China emphasizes the “importance of proper human relationships.” In written communication, this emphasis usually appears “at the beginning and ending” of writings. Furthermore, in Chinese business communication, individuals may tend to stress the importance of “long-term cordial relationships” more than just “pure business profits.”

Gong, K. (2011). Cultural difference effects on business: Holding up Sino-U.S. business negotiation as a model. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 7(2), 101-104.

doi:10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020110702.011

This paper focuses on how cultural differences can affect business negotiations between China and the U.S under the contemporary contexts. The paper discusses that with the growing business relations between China and the United States, it is important for both countries to realize the differences between the cultures in order to create effective communication. The author points out that “ it is necessary for China to use it in an accurate way in Sino-US negotiation”.

The paper discusses the current landscape of business communication, which gives me suggestions on how cross-cultural communication applies in contemporary business communication for Chinese and Americans. The article said “The influence of different regions and political systems” and “ different thinking” are two factors that affect verbal differences and non-verbal differences. I can argue in my thesis about the author’s opinions.

Hershkowitz-Coore, S. (2003). *Power sales writing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Power Sales Writing is a book teaching business professionals on how to write effective business related writings. This book provides me a guideline of how to compose successful business writing from native English speaker's point of view. From *Power Sales Writing*, I find out how English writers deal with composing "bad news" messages and how they buffer can be used in business sales letters.

I find this book useful for my thesis because the written communication the book suggested indicates a concept of "power distance" by Geert Hofstede. Take chapter 17 about writing "bad news" messages, for example. The author suggests that sellers should set a positive tone then start with an authentic and solution-based buffer to communicate a negative message to customers. Since there is a power gap between the relationship of a seller and a buyer, how sellers communicate with buyers to make them satisfy and do not loose them for next business is critical in business communication.

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

The author of *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values*, Geert Hofstede, is an eminent researcher in the field of intercultural and organizational cultures. His book discusses cross-cultural theories in international organizations. The research from this book is based on collected data from 40 different nations, which gives credibility to Hofstede's studies. This book explores how four main dimensions dominate value systems in these 40 nations. Power distance, uncertainty in organizations, individualism, and masculinity are Hofstede's four cultural dimensions. These cultural dimensions affect human thinking, organizations and institutions, and these studies provide theories to my thesis on researching the differences of business writing in organizations.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

I would like to use Hofstede's *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.) in my thesis. This book has been updated from the first edition in 1980. This book includes more explanations and examples for Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For example, I would like to use the example of the male psychology undergraduates in Hong Kong to illustrate Power Distance Index (PDI) differences in my paper. Furthermore, I find the definition of individualism and Hofstede's third cultural-dimension are very useful because this edition clearly defines the concept of individualism.

Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2008). *Writing proposals*. New York: Pearson Longman.

I choose *Writing Proposals* because this book specifically instructs people on how to write proposals and grants, which are direct forms of business-related written communication. Proposals are "a tool for managing change." Because of the non-stop changes in business, we have an opportunity to use proposals to think and build up plans. This book teaches how to use a rhetorical approach to develop proposals and grants. Both grant proposals and business proposals are "selling a product or service," thus the author believes effectively using persuasive strategies will lead to successful proposal writing. Defining objectives and analyzing the rhetorical situation are part of strategic planning before composing a proposal. According to the book, four areas of a proposal include description of the current situation, a project plan, qualifications, and costs and benefits. On each section, the author provides methods for drafting an effective proposal body, such as "logical mapping" and "a why table." This book is a good source for how effective business proposals should be composed

from the United States.

Khorram, S., Vora, D., & Dakhli, M. (2010). Who talks to whom in workgroups: The impact of cultural composition on communication networks. *Academy Of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, 1-6. doi:10.5465/AMBPP.2010.54492061

This conference paper discusses the formation of communication networks within cross-cultural groups. Their theory is based on Triandis's framework, which differentiates "individualism and collectivism in part based on type of self-construal and the corresponding emphasis on rationality versus relatedness." Furthermore, theories also examine "vertical" and "horizontal" aspects of individualism and collectivism.

The conclusions of the theory contribute to my thesis. For example, "literature on multicultural work groups is related to the use of cultural values as a predictor of group culture." The importance of cultural values should receive as much attention as other diversity components. The characteristics of cross-cultural groups can encourage or block communication. Therefore, managers should pay more attention to the selection of group members to enhance communication.

Lin, L., & Jones, C. (2005). A comparison of business communication in China and the U.S. with implications for business educators. *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal*, 47(3), 113-127.

Retrieved from: <http://www.dpe.org>

This journal article compares business communication in China and the U.S in nonverbal communication, written communication, verbal communication, and communication technology. This paper gives readers a brief economic history in both countries. The study surveyed 70 professional and managerial employees from both countries and drew conclusions that some patterns and styles of business communication are similar, such as

greeting people by shaking hands and the importance of eye contact, and some patterns and styles are quite different. For example, “ Chinese tend to use nodding of the head a lot;” while “Americans use waving as a gesture more often than Chinese.”

The conclusions about written communication in this study were very useful to my thesis. According to the results of the survey, “more Chinese participants than Americans indicated that written letters, reports, and other forms of written business messages are in a formal style.” Moreover, in writing the beginning of a business letter, more Americans than Chinese tend to start with the main reason for it. These conclusions that related to written communication contribute to my thesis opinions.

Lin, L. (2011). Cultural and organizational antecedents of Guanxi: The Chinese cases.

Journal of Business Ethics, 99(3), 441-451. doi:10.1007/s10551-010-0662-3

This paper discusses the concept of “Guanxi”, a general form of social networks, and points out Guanxi is deeply rooted in Chinese society in commercial activities, business ethics and organizational behaviors. Moreover, the author examines the influences of Confucianism and Guanxi and the organizational, ethical climate between Taiwan and Mainland China. The Guanxi system can be best used to establish “long-term partnership of reciprocity and trust” between companies thus creating advantages for business development.

This paper gives me ideas on how “Guanxi” as a business culture restricts and influences the organizational ethical environment. I believe the “Guanxi” system can apply Hofstede’s power distance theory to explain why Guanxi system is very important in Chinese society and organizational behavior. The Guanxi network can be viewed as a positive method of management and worthy of note for managers either of Western and Eastern business companies.

Luo, X. (2013). Guanxi competence as intercultural competence in business contexts-A Chinese perspective. *Interculture Journal*, 12(20), 69-89. Retrieved from:
<http://www.interculture-journal.com>

This journal article proposes an intercultural competence model from a Chinese perspective and put it into its business context. The Guanxi (social capital) concept is introduced for the purpose of the development of an intercultural competence model. The Guanxi-based intercultural competence model presents four cultural dimensions, which are economical, individual, social and cultural dimensions. The author's conception tends to use an existing approach, which is western perspective oriented, to apply it in a foreign perspective and develop intercultural competence to Chinese business contexts.

This journal article points out how Guanxi management contributes to the study of intercultural competence. Guanxi concept as a culture-specific realization plays an essential role in Chinese business contexts as it is "embedded in Confucian social theory" and it excludes and connects with other fundamental concepts in Chinese culture. According to the authors, "the constructs of Guanxi were classified to six dimensions." In the utility dimension, the constructs of "profit," "exchange," and "relating to power" can be used in my thesis as examples to interpret how Hofstede's power distance theory apply in Chinese contexts.

McCool, M. (2009). *Writing around the world: A guide to writing across cultures*.

London: Continuum.

Writing Around the World is the textbook of Introduction to Technical Communication class that I took in Fall 2011. This is the first book that I would like to use when considering comparing writing and culture. This book discusses a "working definition of culture," "deepest dimensions of culture," "cultures bring different assumptions to the writing process," "notions of responsibility" and "guides for assessing the writing strategies of the target

reader.” I find *Writing Around the World* is useful for my thesis because this book provides theories and practices for intercultural writing, analyzes language and culture, and compares writing process among different cultures from language to logic and style. For example, McCool points out that English mostly has been considered as a writer responsible language and Chinese as a reader responsible writing. Moreover, “informality, spontaneity, and direct eye contact all characterize the American style of writing and communication.” These all provides theories and rules of intercultural writing for my thesis. In the mean time, the notes and examples that I have learned from Professor McCool’s class also contribute to my thesis as well.

Okoro, E. (2012). Cross-cultural etiquette and communication in global business: Toward a strategic framework for managing corporate expansion. *International Journal of Business & Management*, 7(16), 130-138. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v7n16p130

This journal article discusses how with the developing of globalization and the expanding of multinational organizations, it is important for global businesses to understand cross-cultural etiquette and international workforce diversity management to sustain competitive advantages among multinational companies. Furthermore, managers should realize and improve interpersonal relationship and group communication with cross-cultural negotiation skills.

This article studies contemporary international business contexts and analyzes studies with global orientation with business etiquette, which are useful sources to my thesis. The articles discusses “the success in global business ventures will be affected by the inability of international managers to understand appropriate business etiquette, customs, and values needed to conduct business among nations of the world.” In my thesis, I can use the study to emphasis the importance of understanding international business communication under

currently contexts.

Scott, J. T. (2005). *Concise handbook of management: A practitioner's approach*.

Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, Inc.

This article is a chapter from the book *Concise Handbook of Management*. In the chapter, it discusses the roles of business writing are conveying and clarifying information, reflecting seriousness on the part of the writer, and holding people responsible. The article also analyzes four forms of business writing such as e-mail, memos, letters and reports. Furthermore, it gives readers advice on how to convey effective business messages.

I find this article helpful because it discusses basic principles of written business communication and teaches readers how to write effective business messages. The author suggests in the book that one shouldn't "try to impress others with fancy jargon or overly technical wording," "keep everything short and to the point," and "Don't be ambiguous." I compare these tips with Chinese written business communication and discuss similarities as well as differences.

Thomas, J. (1999). Business writing in history: What caused the dictamen's demise? *The*

Journal of Business Communication, 36, 40-54. doi: 10.1177/002194369903600102

This journal article analyzes the history of English business writing by using the 1994 University of Michigan English dissertation, *The Language of Celys*. This article argues that dictamen, the art of letter writing in the medieval period, is based on "rhetorical principles developed in ancient Greek and Rome." The form and style are the conventions of the dictamen. The form consists of "various sections of the message organized in a particular way" and the organization and style follow patterns of "Address," "Salutation," "Notification," "Exposition," "Disposition," "Valediction," "Attestation and Date."

This journal article is helpful for my thesis because it provides the English writing history and I can compare the form and style between the Dictamen writing with Confucianism-oriented writing. I can also compare the history in Western and Eastern business writing and see the differences and influence on contemporary business communications.

Wang, J. (2010). Convergence in the rhetorical pattern of directness and indirectness in Chinese and U.S. business letters. *Journal of Business & Technical Communication*, 24(1), 91-120. doi: 10.1177/1050651909346933.

This journal article discusses two different rhetorical patterns in claim letters. Chinese business communication prefers an indirect rhetorical approach while westerners tend to write in a linear and direct rhetorical pattern. This journal puts two claims letters together to study the rhetorical pattern of directness and indirectness from China and the United States. The results of the study state how “local contextual factors” influenced participants’ preferences of both sides for similar rhetorical patterns.

Indirectness is the characteristic of reader-responsible writing while directness is a feature of writer-responsible writing. The study helps my thesis because the results that “claim letters written by two groups of students from China and United States exhibit a convergent rhetorical pattern of directness or indirectness”, which provides me a new insight on intercultural business communication on rhetorical practices. The rhetorical practices of directness and indirectness are not only restricted by the cultural influence, but also shaped by other factors as well, such as contextual factors.

Woetzel, J. R. (2004). A guide to doing business in China. [Special issue], *Mckinsey Quarterly*, 36-45. Retrieved from: <http://mckinsey.com>

This journal article fully explains the recent Chinese economic situation, including the market and enterprise information and development, foreign companies' involvement in Chinese market, and the business relationships between China and the United States.

This article is related to my thesis because it provides the economic backgrounds of contemporary Chinese business and economy information. For example, the journal article writes, "Even more important, financing has started to move toward the capital-markets model." "China thus attracts more than \$50 billion a year in foreign direct investment, second only to the United States." I can use this information in my thesis to inform my readers about the economic situations in China and add credibility to my thesis.

Wong, I. H., & Lai, P. (2000). Chinese cultural values and performance at job interviews: A Singapore perspective. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 63, 9-22. Doi: 10.1177/108056990006300102

This journal article examines Hofstede's dimensions of national cultures in job interviews in Singapore. The study explored only three dimensions, which are power distance, collectivism versus individualism and assertiveness versus modesty and researched differences lying in cultural values and how those theories apply in job interviews. The study results are reliable since authors analyzed transcripts of job interviews including nine English-speaking applicants from Chinese backgrounds and two experienced interviewers from Anglo-American multinational corporations in Singapore.

Even though the research is from a Singaporean's perspective, the results of this paper are still relevant to my thesis because, first, 77.2% of Singaporeans are of a Chinese background; second, as explained in the study, "All the students were Chinese Singaporeans, who had a minimum of 13 years of formal education, with English as the medium of instruction." I can use the results of the study and examine if the same results can apply for

the written communication between Chinese and American.

Zhu, Y. (2000a). Building knowledge structures in teaching cross-cultural sales genres.

Business Communication Quarterly, 63(4), 49-68. Retrieved from:

<http://bcq.sagepub.com>

This article divides sales letters in English and Chinese into four stages, which are “(1) social contexts; (2) communicative purposes; (3) rhetorical structure and (4) implications of genre comparisons.” The author emphasizes the knowledge structures for teachers and students to learn communications across cultures. The approach used by the author is based on the “concept of schemata” and “Swales’s techniques for genre analysis because it has been effectively used for teaching students to write sales letters in both English and Chinese.

This journal article discusses the characteristics of high-context cultures and low-context cultures, in which low-context cultures tend to “value procedures, short-term goals and relationships” while high-context cultures are valuing “long-term goals.” Furthermore, the author points out in the journal article that Chinese politeness behavior of showing respect through “appropriate linguistic forms” may be related to China’s collectivistic culture. In the author’s four-stage approach, the analysis of communicative purposes of English and Chinese sales letters and the breakdown of structural moves in English and Chinese sales letters are a good source for my thesis.

Zhu, Y. (2000b). Rhetorical moves in Chinese sales genres, 1949 to the present. *Journal of*

Business Communication, 37(2), 156-172. Retrieved from: <http://job.sagepub.com>

This paper discusses different sales genres used in business communication in Mainland China from 1949 to present. The author has been studying intercultural business communication and this paper is based on Zhu’s PhD dissertation at Australian National

University. This paper divides the sales related business writing in to two periods, before 1978 and after. As the author states, “Chinese written discourse is composed of literary genres and yingyong wen (practical writing).” Yingyong wen consists of daily writings on behalf of individuals (Riyong wen) and official letters on behalf of organizations (Gongwen). Furthermore, the paper discusses the history of the three Gongwen genres and the economic changes of Chinese sales genres.

This journal is related to my thesis because I find the three Gongwen genres, (Xia, Ping, Shangxing) apply Hofstede’s power distance theory in business writing because of the Chinese feudal society history. The socioeconomic context change also gives an impact to business sales genres. For example, during the planned economy period in 1949-1978, under the bureau and collective environment, there were fewer business practices, and sales documents were restricted to sales requests, sales official replies and sales circulars. After 1978, with the development of economic reform, more sales genres such as sales letters, sales invitations and sales circulars are applied.

Zong, B., & Hildebrandt, H. W. (1983). Business communication in the people's Republic of China. *Journal of Business Communication*, 20(1), 25-32. doi: 10.1177/002194368302000103

The two authors of this journal article are from the Beijing Institute of Foreign Trade and University of Michigan, and they provide historical background, a review of three courses in business communication in China and the conclusions for closer academic ties with China in business communication. This article focuses on the background, business communication courses and method of instruction on Chinese business communication.

The conclusions made by these authors are helpful for my thesis. As the article states, “business communication in China both sending and receiving messages, along with a

competence to understand the business protocol of international trade.” Furthermore, they discusses the pedagogical intent of Chinese business communication courses offered by Beijing Institute of Foreign Trade, which gives me examples and ideas on my thesis section about the current situation of Chinese business communication among colleges and universities and the improvement of business communication in China.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Section one

1. What is your gender?

Male Female

2. What year are you in?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

3. How old are you?

Less than 18 18-25 26-35 36-45 45 above

4. Are you American or International student in SPSU?

American student International student

5. What language is your primary preference language?

Chinese English Spanish

6. Do you speak other languages? If do, please list below.

7. Do you currently work?

Yes No

Section two

1. When you write emails to your professors, you will write in a respectful manner.

Absolutely
Mildly agree
I don't know
No, not necessary
Absolutely not

If you answered "Absolutely" or "mildly agree" to the previous question, please explain how you write in a respectful manner.

2. When you receive emails from your professors, you can tell their response showed the equal respect you showed to them.

Absolutely
Mildly agree
I don't know
No, not necessary
Absolutely not

If you would like to elaborate on this question, please do so below.

3. When you communicate with a professor who is of the same nationality as you, you will pay more attention and respect to him/her than professors of other nationalities.

Absolutely
Mildly agree
I don't know
No, not necessary
Absolutely not

4. If you currently work or have worked before, please answer the questions below.

When you write emails to your supervisor/director/manager etc, you will write in a respectful manner.

Absolutely
Mildly agree
I don't know
No, not necessary
Absolutely not

If you answered "Absolutely" or "mildly agree" to the previous question, please explain how you write in a respectful manner.

When you write a report to your supervisor/director/manager etc, you will write in a respectful manner.

- Absolutely
- Mildly agree

- I don't know
- No, not necessary
- Absolutely not

If you would like to elaborate on this question, please do so below.

When you receive emails from your supervisor/director/manager etc, you can tell their response showed the equal respect you showed to them.

- Absolutely
- Mildly agree
- I don't know
- No, not necessary
- Absolutely not

If you would like to elaborate on this question, please do so below.

When you receive notes from your supervisor/director/manager etc, you can tell their response showed the equal respect you showed to them.

- Absolutely
- Mildly agree
- I don't know
- No, not necessary
- Absolutely not

If you would like to elaborate on this question, please do so below.