A cross-cultural analysis of English and Chinese business faxes: A genre perspective

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Abstract

This paper develops a theoretical framework based on genre analysis and cross-cultural persuasion for comparing English and Chinese business faxes. Although extensive research has been done in genre analysis and second language writing, scarce literature can be found in cross-cultural genre study of business faxes. Specifically this paper compares faxes used in New Zealand and China. It has been found that English faxes and Chinese faxes are used differently in a number of areas, especially in persuasive orientations. Chinese faxes have a much stronger emphasis on affective aspect useful for building business relationships. This difference is also found in rhetorical structure and linguistic strategies. For example, *logos* has been identified as a major persuasive orientation in English faxes while both *qing* or *pathos* and *li* or *logos* were seen as important for Chinese faxes.

Keywords: cross-cultural genre analysis, business persuasion, faxes, New Zealand, China.

Resumen

Un análisis intercultural de los faxes comerciales en inglés y en chino: una perspectiva basada en el género

Este trabajo desarrolla un marco teórico basado en el análisis de géneros y en la persuasión intercultural para comparar faxes comerciales escritos en inglés y en chino. A pesar de que existe un gran volumen de investigación acerca del análisis de géneros y de la escritura en segundas lenguas, los trabajos sobre estudios interculturales relacionados con el género de los faxes comerciales son escasos. Este trabajo compara faxes utilizados en Nueva Zelanda y China. Se demuestra que los faxes escritos en inglés y en chino se utilizan de manera distinta en

diferentes áreas, especialmente en lo relativo a orientaciones persuasivas. Los faxes chinos confieren un mayor énfasis a aspectos afectivos, con el fin de desarrollar relaciones comerciales. Esta diferencia se encuentra también en la estructura retórica y en las estrategias lingüísticas. Por ejemplo, el *logos* ha sido identificado como una importante orientación discursiva en los faxes en inglés de la misma manera que lo son el *qing* o *pathos* y el *li* o *logos* en los faxes en chino.

Palabras clave: análisis de géneros intercultural, persuasión en los negocios, faxes, Nueva Zelanda, China.

Introduction

This paper aims to propose a theoretical framework comparing English and Chinese business faxes. Although extensive theoretical frameworks can be found in genre analysis and teaching (such as Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993 & 2012; Hyland, 2007; Martin, 2009), cross-cultural comparative study has not become a research focus in genre analysis (Canagarajah, 2002; Hyland, 2002). On the other hand, the comparative study in contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1966; Kirkpatrick, 1991; Young, 1994; Li, 1996) mainly focuses on skills of L2 writing and much less attention has been given to comparing the social roles of genres in the professional contexts. An exception can be found in a group of researchers who pay particular attention to comparing genres (such as Yli-Jokipii, 1994; Ulijn & Li, 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 1999; Louhiala-Salminen, 1999; Zhu, 2000 & 2005). As more and more people are communicating with other cultures, we need to explore cross-cultural genre study in greater depth, including understanding the micro-level messages and macro-level issues in professional communication. In addition, there is also a genuine lack of theories that incorporate culture-specific features of writing and persuasion. This paper will contribute to cross-cultural genre study by incorporating the sociocognitive tradition of genre analysis (such as Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Swales, 1990; Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Paltridge, 1997) and cross-cultural considerations.

This paper specifically compares English and Chinese faxes used in New Zealand and China. Faxes are one of the communication medium of business communication. Although faxes are reported as less frequently used than other genres such as emails (Louhiala-Salminen, 1999), they are still commonly used in New Zealand and China. In particular, faxes are a major form of business communication (Zhu, 2004). New Zealand and China are

chosen because they represent a typical case of distant cultures with New Zealand belonging to the Anglo-Saxon cluster and China to the Asian clusters (Hofstede, 1991; House et al., 2004). It would be interesting to see if cultural differences also exhibit themselves in the use of business faxes.

The structure of the paper is organised in this manner. It first reviews the relevant areas of research findings in contrastive rhetoric, classical and Chinese rhetoric, and genre analysis. Second, a framework of comparing genres is proposed based on the theoretical review of genre analysis and cross-cultural rhetoric and persuasion. Third, the framework is exemplified by a comparison of English and Chinese business faxes. Finally, the major findings are highlighted followed by theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Genre analysis and the sociocognitive tradition

According to Bakhtin (1986), genre reflects "deep semantics" and it is not just the "sites of actions", but also sites of ideological action. In a similar light, genre is seen as related to a social constructivism within the sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schutz & Luckmann, 1974; Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995). According to this view, genre can be defined as "socially constructed models" that respond to recurrent communicative problems. As Guenthner and Knoblauch (1995) further elaborate, genres represent a central communicative means in the construction of social reality. Furthermore, the social stocks of knowledge are not statically transmitted, and they are "being built up, maintained, transmitted and also modified in communicative processes" (Guenthner & Knoblauch, 1995) via "prepatterned" conventions. According to Swales, genre is characterised by a set of communicative purposes. These purposes are sometimes criticised as being too utilitarian (Canagarajah, 2002), however, they can be appropriately seen as related to "genre as social action" (Miller, 1984: 151) that is culturally confined. In further elaboration, the purposes of a genre can be realised in "moves" and "steps". A move is seen as a communicative event, and a step is a unit under a move. Drawn from the concept of speech community used in sociolinguistics (such as Hymes, 1974; or Saville-Troike, 1984), Swales suggests that a discourse community is a group in which particular communicative tasks are central to the functioning of this group. A similar approach is used by other genre studies such as Bhatia's (1993)

examination of English promotion genres and Bazerman's (1988) and Myers' (1990) study of English scientific genres.

Bhatia's (1993: 21) "cognitive structures" of genre offers a further understanding towards genre knowledge and communicative purposes. To Bhatia, genre represents the "typical regularities and organisation". Here Bhatia looks at genre as reflecting relevant knowledge structures. The "regularities" and "strategies" apparently offer us some interesting clues for identifying significant patterns within the genre convention. For example, faxes apply certain strategies including embeddedness (Gimenez, 2004) and complementality (Zhu, 2004). Gimenez (2004) defines embeddedness as having more than one messages embedded into one email text and Zhu (2004) refers to the complementary nature of fax as dependent on other forms of communication such as telephones.

In sum, the sociocognitive vein of genre analysis contributes to the exploration of genre knowledge, institutional contexts, and the discourse community, thus offering an in-depth analysis to genre. For this reason, the sociocognitive perspective will form an essential component of this paper while close attention is also given to cross-cultural persuasion.

Cross-cultural persuasion

It is commonly acknowledged that cross-cultural dimensions are useful for understanding the contexts of genre. Relevant dimensions include Hofstede's (1991) individualism (focusing on individual interest) and collectivism (stressing group's interest). According to Hofstede, New Zealand belongs to the individualistic society while the opposite is true of China which is characterised by collectivism. Although this dimension is relevant to the comparison of faxes, a major perspective that is less stressed in cross-cultural study is the perspective of persuasion, hence a need for a detailed review of this aspect.

Aristotle, as a major representative of the Greek rhetoric, developed a wide range of concepts in rhetoric, and the most relevant to this study is the persuasive appeals. Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, in Aristotle & Kennedy, 1991) points out three means of influencing belief and action: *ethos* (character and standards), *pathos* (emotion) and *logos* (reason and evidence).

Fundamentally, *ethos* can mean the believability of the speaker, the credibility which the speaker brings to the speech situation. The speaker has to create

his own credibility; he has to maintain a moral linkage between himself and his content. *Pathos* as an artistic proof focuses on using the emotions as a supplement to a speaker's other means of persuasion. Aristotle's list of emotions is long, recommending co-joining them with ethical appeals. This second part of the persuasion process is simply to arouse emotional feelings in the message receiver. For the purposes of this study, *logos* is related to the logical, rational and evidential underpinning of a speaker's argument. While the two preceding elements seemingly appear more peripheral, it is the logical and reasonable substance that should be the primary part of a communicator's presentation. *Logos* is thus seen as the major element in persuasion, and arrangement of the ideas gathers under its rubric; a structure has to be imposed on the collected material. For Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, 3.13) such partitioning could be a duo: "A speech has two parts. Necessarily, you state your case and you prove it".

From the above discussion we can see that *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* may not enjoy an identical level of priority and Aristotle places major importance on *logos* in persuasion, treating *pathos* only as secondary to the logical presentation of an argument. The stress on *logos*, clear structure and argumentation has an overwhelming influence on contrastive rhetoric. This also indicates a major difference from classical Chinese rhetoric to be detailed below.

Confucian school of thought represents a dominant influence on Chinese persuasion and communication (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Zhu, 2009). Confucian thought is mainly based on *ren tao* or the way of humans and the moral codes he prescribes in his teachings. To him, *ren* ("benevolence") is seen as the highest standard of moral perfection. In order to achieve these virtues, Confucius sets the highest standards for adequate conduct in these five key role relationships between ruler and subject, neighbour and neighbour, father and son, husband and wife, and older brother and younger brother, among which four are hierarchical relationships. These relations are related to *pathos* and are often advocated as important forms of effective persuasion in Chinese culture. In relation to this relational and hierarchical context, Chinese written genres, in particular those involving interaction of the reader and writer, tend to stress the relationships between the reader and the writer.

It can be inferred that Chinese rhetoric and persuasion has a much stronger emphasis on *pathos* or affect. To Confucius, affective, cognitive and logical

functions are closely intertwined and equally valued (Garrett, 1993; Lü, 1998). They are expressed very much in the modern terms of *qing* ("feelings or emotions embedded in the context") and *li* ("reasons or facts") (Li, 1996). Li (1996) advocates that *qing* has great persuasive power and compliments *li*. Although *qing* and *li* may not be the only criteria for good writing, they certainly represent an important dimension of writing criteria. Good writing thus should be excellent in expressing both emotions and argument. *Qing* and *li* can thus be seen as the essential element in Chinese persuasion. Based on this, Zhu & Hildebrandt (2003) point out that Chinese rhetoric tends to stress on both *pathos* and *logos*. Their findings also coincide with Li's (1996) discussion of Chinese persuasion based on both *qing* (emotional approach) and *li* (logical approach).

A theoretical framework of cross-cultural genre comparison

Based on the above literature review, genre comparison involves the exploration of relevant knowledge structures (Bartlett, 1932; Rumelhart, 1988), and "deep semantics" across cultures. In this light of this organising frame, specific stages of comparison are developed in Figure 1. This involves four stages: comparing sociocultural contexts; comparing persuasive orientations, comparing communicative purposes, and comparing texts including moves and steps. It incorporates a range of theoretical underpinning discussed earlier. The concepts rhetoric and persuasion are useful for understanding persuasive orientations. The incorporation of both purposes and persuasive orientations offers a fuller understanding of genre. The concept of "social stock of knowledge" or institutional knowledge permeates all the stages, which is useful for interpreting the specific strategies used in the text.

In general, the stages proposed in Figure 1 aim to embrace the cognitive depth in cross-cultural genre study in two areas. On the one hand, relevant social stocks of knowledge are referred to as a fundamental element to determine what can be relevant for comparison. On the other hand, communicative purposes are examined and identified in relation to persuasive orientations, thus giving cross-cultural considerations to different set of purposes. At the textual level, rhetorical structure is seen only as one component of the text while consideration is also given to other genres or

features such as embeddedness (Gimenez, 2004) and complementality (Zhu, 2004). In this way, the proposed stages of comparison can help to overcome the constraints of a purely linear-staged comparison and offers the possibility of examining genres more horizontally and comprehensively.
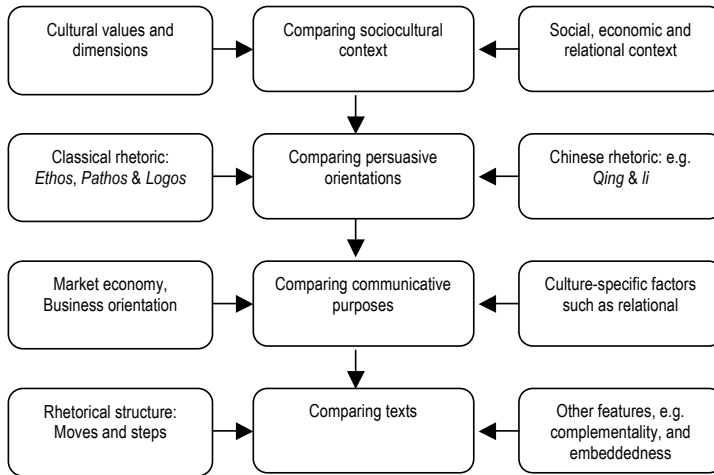
Cultural values and dimensions	→	Comparing sociocultural context	←	Social, economic and relational context
Classical rhetoric: *Ethos, Pathos & Logos*	→	Comparing persuasive orientations	←	Chinese rhetoric: e.g. *Qing & li*
Market economy, Business orientation	→	Comparing communicative purposes	←	Culture-specific factors such as relational
Rhetorical structure: Moves and steps	→	Comparing texts	←	Other features, e.g. complementality, and embeddedness

Figure 1. Stages for cross-cultural genre comparison.

Data selection and methodology

A corpus of 40 Chinese and 40 English sales order-related faxes are randomly chosen from a data pool of 564 faxes (including 256 Chinese faxes and 308 English faxes). Some background information about the data selection process is provided in detail here. These faxes were collected from four Chinese companies in Beijing and Zhengzhou and four New Zealand Companies in Auckland. All the companies were of a reasonable size dealing with both international and domestic businesses. The English faxes were written in English and the Chinese faxes were in Chinese. Here are the criteria I followed in the selection of fax data. First, they were related to sales orders such as requests about products, and inquiries about price and delivery dates. Second, as a fax message it had to indicate a clear format such as a cover page, salutation and signature. This criterion ruled out some other advertising materials that used fax as a medium. Third, the faxes did not include attached materials or documents of other genres such

as sales brochures, which were sent via fax in order to reach the reader quickly.

The most effective English and Chinese faxes (see Appendix) arose from the corpus in two sets or rating. First, I started with an initial rating of all the 40 English and 40 Chinese sales order-related faxes. Specifically, they were given respectively to five Chinese and five New Zealand managers to grade. These managers were chosen on a voluntary basis, and also available for conducting the rating. More importantly, they had extensive experience writing and using faxes in their everyday business practice. Second, based on the managers' grading, I decided on the five English and five Chinese faxes which were seen to be most representative of each corpus. The five selected faxes were then delivered with a questionnaire to 100 managers from each country. The New Zealand managers were from Auckland which is the country largest city and also the centre of business activities. The Chinese managers were from Zhengzhou which is located in Northern China. It is a city of with a population of more than four million people and is also a centre of business activities in the largest province of Henan. Subsequently the most effective fax was chosen based on a five-grade scale with 5 as the highest score and 1 the lowest. The English fax was graded 3.1 and the Chinese got an average rating of 4.0.

Stage 1. Comparing the sociocultural and technological context

In the first stage, both sociocultural contexts and technological environments are examined since fax is a technologically mediated form of communication. New Zealand is largely inherited from British and European traditions and is known as a Commonwealth country. The market economy has been a dominant feature in its economic structure (Zhu, 2005; Zhu & Hildebrandt, 2013). Business faxes are often used to promote products with a clear result orientation, which also coincides with Hofstede's (1991) individualistic and result-oriented culture and a strong focus on business outcome. The strong business orientation forms a basic principle underlying the major content of business faxes.

The social context of Chinese business practice reflects a mixture of both marketing economy and the traditional values based on Confucian thought. On the one hand, the economic reform connects China to the market

economy and sales promotions also have become an essential factor. This tendency has become even stronger and more evident since China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Western marketing strategies also apply to Chinese faxes to a large extent. On the other hand, traditional values relating to collectivism (Hofstede, 1991), and Confucian five relationships as well as group orientation (Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006) also prevail as part of this sociocultural environment.

In terms of the technological environment, nowadays many businesses are conducted via fax as a means of communication because of its fast speed and its ability to attach copies of original documents. These features, which are also advantages, apparently have revolutionised the process of information exchange, and made business communication easier. As a consequence, recent years, particularly the past two decades, have witnessed a rapid increase in the use of faxes in business transactions. Louhiala-Salminen (1999) has researched the use of faxes in Europe. According to her, faxes are an important genre for business transactions. However, she also found that there was a tendency for companies to use faxes less frequently as they were being gradually replaced by emails, which are not only fast, but also more economical. Based on this, Louhiala-Salminen predicts that faxes may be transitory and short-lived as a form of business writing. However, these findings so far are not entirely applicable to the New Zealand and Chinese business contexts, at least, not to companies of reasonable sizes. For example, all the companies where I collected my data still use faxes as an important means of communication and receive faxes on a daily basis. China has also recently witnessed the popularity of faxes and business organisations prefer faxes to emails which are largely seen as a form of personal communication.

Stage 2. Comparing persuasive orientations and communicative purposes

The persuasive orientations discussed earlier still apply here as shown in Table 1, which will also be referred to in the other stages of comparison.

In English faxes, the logical approach is particularly stressed in marketing and sales promotion, while *pathos* is also explicated but only as a minor respect such as relating to the informal relationship with the customer. In contrast, Chinese concepts relating to persuasive orientations encompass

qing or emotional approach as well as *li* or logical approach, so both will be applied to Chinese faxes. Specifically *li* refers to two kinds of knowledge relating to marketing and appropriate business practice and technological contexts in China, and *qing* is related to politeness principles based on reader-writer relationships which may involve some specific interpersonal relationship such as salesman and customer.

	English Faxes	**Chinese Faxes**
Persuasive orientations	*Ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*	*Qing* and *li*
Communicative purposes	To promote business To advertise product To create a positive image To encourage further contact	To promote business To advertise product To keep record of business progress To create a positive/respectful image To encourage further contact To communicate a problem To seek cooperation To maintain long-term relationships
Rhetorical structures	Salutation Refer to previous communication Giving information Order Confirmation Polite closing Good wishes Signature	Salutation Refer to previous communication Giving information Order Confirmation Stressing co-op. Embedded moves Polite closing Good wishes Signature
Genre complementarity	Telephone Face to face meetings Emails	Telephone Face to face meetings
Embeddedness	Rare	Frequently

Table 1. Major findings from the English and Chinese faxes.

These persuasive orientations may well have an impact on the components of communicative purposes (see Table 1) of both English and Chinese faxes. As a result, they may not share exactly the same purposes although there is a clear overlap between the two genres. For example, similar purposes relating to business and sales are found in both English and Chinese faxes, and both have a predominant emphasis on the *logos* of business transactions. This kind of similarity indicates a strong convergence of business contexts which are characterised by market economy and competition. There is one particular difference worth noting though: the Chinese company's image is still related to respect, as found in the Chinese faxes, thus indicating a stronger *pathos* or *qing*.

The Chinese faxes appear to have more purposes than the English. For example, they include "keeping record of business queries and progress" as a purpose while there is no such a purpose for English faxes. Chinese faxes also have an additional purpose of communicating a problem, which is absent in the English corpus. Further differences can be identified in terms of the writer and the reader relationships. Both English and Chinese faxes share the purpose of establishing further contact. Chinese faxes, however, also intend to stress co-operation and long-term relationships, which is a reflection of a collectivistic society and group orientation.

Stage 3. Comparing texts

Both rhetorical structure and other textual features are discussed in this stage in order to reflect the comprehensive nature of the genres concerned.

Genre complementality and embeddedness

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, two other genre features are outstanding: genre complementality and genre embeddedness. Faxes, in both cases, are used as a genre to complement other genres or channels of communication. For example, both English and Chinese faxes mention the simultaneous correspondence between the writer and reader via telephone or face-to-face meetings. Faxes are very much used as an additional means of communication. As indicated in Table 2, about similar number of fax messages mentioned the on-going discussion via telephones and face-to-face meetings while the writer employs fax as a means of further communication. Both genres prefer to use telephone as an additional channel more frequently than meetings and emails. A significant number of English faxes referred to the content of earlier email correspondence with the reader while none of the Chinese faxes actually did this. This is further evidence to show that fax is a more popular business genre than emails in China.

Genre embeddedness is also worth noting as it is a significant feature for Chinese faxes. As shown in Table 2, 30 faxes have embedded messages often indicated with serial numbers (for instance, the Chinese fax in Appendix 1) while only 3 English faxes are embedded. The average number of embedded message within one fax is usually between two and four, with an exception of one fax, which has embedded as many as eight.

	Embeddedness	Telephone Contact	Email	Meeting
English Faxes	3	22	11	5
Chinese Faxes	30	35	0	3
Total	33	57	11	8

Table 2. Frequency of genre complementality and embeddedness.

Two types of messages are found to be embedded in the Chinese faxes: the writer sometimes includes a note informing the reader about order forms or contract; other embedded messages are very much like reporting an issue or a problem such as a delayed payment. The former plays a role of informing the reader and documenting the business transaction, which also fits well into the purpose of "keeping track of the business progress". On the other hand, embedding problematic messages can also be seen as related to Chinese politeness rituals. For example, the writer can insert or even camouflage a negative message in the sales-order fax in order to dilute the negative effect on the reader. This point will be further discussed regarding the most successful Chinese fax.

Comparing rhetorical structures

Rhetorical structures are compared in relation to persuasive orientations and communicative purposes. This stage includes a comparison of rhetorical structure, moves and steps. The moves found in both English and Chinese corpora are shown in Table 1.

At the overall textual level, English and Chinese faxes share the essential elements of order-related moves and other formulaic moves such as polite closing, polite closing, and signature and date. These moves are thus seen as the common generic features for sales order-related faxes. However, the Chinese faxes are composed of some additional features. For example, they stress co-operation and embed other messages and moves as discussed earlier.

Analysing the most successful faxes

This section analyses the most successful faxes and further details the linguistic differences and similarities (see Appendix). The two faxes are discussed with reference to findings from the corpus in general.

The English fax

The major purpose of the English fax is to provide order details regarding the loan of equipment for the Expo. As shown in the left-hand column, it includes six moves: salutation, referring to previous contact, providing order details, encouraging further contact, good wishes and signature. At the textual level, this fax focuses on the main purpose of equipment rental with no other embedded messages, and it is also typical of the features found in the English corpus as a whole.

"Hello" in the salutation indicates an informal conversational style, which coincides with the style in sales genres, but an even more casual salutation is used here.

The fax begins with "I trust your trip went well". This sentence can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it indicates the previous contact the reader has with the writer, who has been following up the development of the order. On the other, the writer also sends her greetings regarding the trip, indicating a certain level of *pathos*. However, this does not appear to be the major persuasive orientation in the fax.

The third move, which is the most important in this fax, is to provide order details. This move is made up of three items or steps. "Item" is preferred here in the analysis as it more reflects a feature of memo writing. The first item details the availability of what is being ordered for loan purposes. The writer here simply provides a list of four kinds of loan equipment as indicated clearly by the symbols in the text. The second item details the options for the arrangements to be made for hiring the equipment. The third item tells the reader when to sign the loan document. All these three items are purely factual and informative about the specific business dealt with, in this case the loan equipment. These items also speak to the point about how the business deal can go ahead. The writer does not seem to be too much concerned about the choice of words, and her major objective in writing the fax is to make the meaning come across.

The fourth move of polite closing can be interpreted as playing two roles. On the one hand, it encourages further contact by giving the reader the phone number. On the other, it winds up the letter politely by offering further services. The final two moves of good wishes and signature use standard forms are also frequently found in English letter writing.

The Chinese fax

The Chinese fax contains seven moves: salutation, greetings, order-related information, complaint, cooperation, good wishes and signature. The overall structure of the fax reflects the general findings of the Chinese corpus about the stress on both business and relationships. The fax represents an example of genre embeddedness and a complaint is included in the text – a characteristic also evident in some other Chinese faxes.

The first move is "Mr" plus the addressee's full name, which is also commonly used in the corpus as a standard form of salutation. The second move is composed of a series of greetings. "How are you" is a very common greeting and is frequently employed by most faxes. "Happy New Year" and "prosperity" are also used in this fax since it was written at the beginning of the New Year. These greetings are emphasised as a good sign for collaboration. The *qing* or *pathos* is thus heavily embedded in the greetings, and also lays the background for the collaboration the writer intends to stress later.

The third move, providing order details, acknowledges the receipt of the sales contract. However, the writer associates signing the contract or the business progress with the New Year. It means good luck to have something good happen at the beginning of the year according to the Chinese mythology. Here the contract is seen as promising for further collaboration. Both the business purposes and the *qing* or feelings are thus mixed and each reinforces the other. The writer then makes the promise that "you can trust our commitment to collaboration". Words such as *xinren* or "trust" and *fangxin* or "reassurance" are frequently used in the corpus. It has been found that writers sometimes use promises as a strategy to gain the reader's trust.

The fourth move is related to an implicit complaint regarding a deferred payment. It involves three speech acts: informing the reader of the delayed payment, in the meantime, making an implicit complaint, and raising a request to follow this up. The move begins with detailed information about the deferred payment, followed by an implicit complaint, as the writer points out the inconsistent information provided by Mr Zhang and his bank. Note that a reference is made to an earlier communication as a type of genre complementality, which can be a phone call in this context. The request, however, is more interesting in its use of linguistic strategies, and both *qing* and *li* are mixed together to achieve effective persuasion. The request is repeated; the first goes:

cishi   fanqing   Zhang Xiansheng jinsu   bang zhu chaxun,
this matter kindly ask Mr Zhang   earliest convenience help   check
up yinwei chang shijian tuoyan hui yingxiang gui (H) wo shuangfan yinhou
because long time   defer   can affect   you (H) I   both sides future
dingdan de   shunli   zhixing.
order   GNE smooth carry out

We kindly ask Mr Lian to help check about this at your earliest convenience
because deferred payment may affect directly the carrying out of our sales
orders.

As shown in this example, the request is raised in a very polite form of
fanqing or "kindly ask". The use of the third person for the reader along with
"Mr" or *Xiansheng* makes it even more polite. The avoidance of "you" fits in
well with the high-level degree of politeness. In this way, the *qing* or
emotional persuasive orientation is greatly achieved in this request followed
by the possible consequence of the delay. In order to further reduce the
imposition, the writer reiterates the request and associates it with the
collaboration which is also the theme throughout the fax:

qing   nin   yi   gui (H) wo dazhan hongtu   hejuo   weizhong
please you (H) take you (H) I   great   develop plan collaborate as important
tong Zhang Xiangsheng xiezhu chaqing cishi.
with Mr Zhang   help   sort out this matter

Please think about the possible further collaboration between you (H) and us.
Hope that you can help Mr Zhang sort out this issue.

More persuasion here is achieved by asking the addressee to think about the
further collaboration ahead, which also indicates a long-term strategy.
Collaboration is still underpinning the request here.

The fifth move, which is to stress cooperation, occurs twice in the text. It is
used the first time together with the request for the reader to look into the
matter. It is essential here as a collectivistic practice, and the delay in payment
is seen as a threat to the cooperation. Cooperation is mentioned once again
towards the end, which may well serve as a final reminder of the payment
issue raised earlier.

The sixth move, good wishes, reiterates the two important factors of
collaboration and the New Year for emphasis. A stress on cooperation and
good wishes ends the text with some good feelings towards the reader, thus
qing is well implemented.

The signature is followed by *shang,* which often indicates a person of a junior position or in the *shangxing* genre or the subordinate writing to the superior. However, the writer employs this form purposely to lower himself in order to indicate a humble tone. A humble tone is often seen as a polite as well as persuasive strategy in business letters (Zhu, 2000 & 2005).

In sum, *qing* or *pathos* and *li* or *logos* both underlie the moves in this Chinese fax. Words associated with both orientations permeate the moves, and business dealings are seen as closely related to cooperation principles and mutual trust. The writer mentions these principles whenever possible throughout the message. The mixture of both *qing* and *li,* or *pathos* and *logos,* becomes an essential component in persuasion in Chinese faxes.

Conclusion

This paper has proposed a theoretical framework for comparing genres and contributes to cross-cultural genre study in two areas. On the one hand, it offers an in-depth analysis such as institutional knowledge about genres of target cultures. On the other, it adopts both Western classical and Chinese persuasive orientations in order to achieve a balanced view for comparison. The strengths of the framework also lie in its focus on using persuasive orientations as a starting point, on exploring the knowledge shared by the professional discourse communities, and on its stress of other genre features such as complementality and embeddedness besides the rhetorical structure. The proposed framework can be used as a template for further replications and can also be extended to comparing other professional and business genres across cultures.

As exemplification, this paper has compared English and Chinese business faxes and come up with significant findings. For example, *logos* has been identified as a major persuasive orientation in English faxes while both *qing* or *pathos* and *li* or *logos* were seen as important for Chinese faxes. These findings have confirmed the different persuasive orientations at play in Chinese faxes. Further differences are also indentified including extra communicative purposes relating to building business relationships, embedded messages, and moves relating to cooperation and long-term relationships. As part of the shared generic features of business faxes, both genres indicate a strong emphasis on business transactions and are used to complement other communication channels such as telephone and face-to-face meetings.

The above findings have theoretical implications for the comparative study of genre. It is essential to explore non-Western or culture-specific theories for comparing genres because genre is situated in its own sociocultural contexts. A culture-specific perspective can offer more depth to the target genres. While Confucian perspective is found useful for this particular study, it may also have influence on other cultures since Confucian school of thought has a great influence in many other Asian countries.

This study has pedagogical implications for cross-cultural genre analysis and genre and second language education as language is important for cross-cultural learning (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013). For example, genres can be learned following the proposed stages. Each stage contributes to genre teaching and learning in a particular area such as learning persuasive orientations and purposes. In this way, genre teaching can help enhance student understanding of discourse community and institutionalised knowledge, thus targeting a high-level competence for cross-cultural genre writing.

Like any other study, this one has its own limited focus on comparing two cultures. In addition, it needs to be noted that the findings were confined to limited data source of more than 500 English and Chinese faxes and from which a total of 80 faxes were studied. Future study may extend the comparison to a wider range of cultures to see if similar or more significant findings can be identified. Further research may also incorporate more extensive data source and examine the use of faxes across cultures from a longitudinal perspective to see how faxes may evolve over time.

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Appendix 1. The most successful English and Chinese faxes

The English fax

Salutation	Hello Paul,
Prev contact	I trust your trip went well. I have spoken to my colleagues in Hamburg
Order details	who confirm that they have the following available for loan for ANUGA:
Item 1	1 x paua banner
	1 x water banner
	2 x greenstone banners
	8 x aluminium doweling (for hanging banners)
Item 2	Philip Jones will be at ANUGA from 12-15 October and Catherine McLaren from 15-17. Philip said he can bring the material with him and Catherine can bring it back assuming this fits your requirements. Grateful if you can confirm this, alternatively they can courier the items to Cologne for you (there will be a courier charge for this).
Item 3	*Once arrangements are confirmed I will forward a loan document to* you for signing for this material and also the stand signage being provided via Display Equipment Ltd.
Further contact	If you have any queries please phone me on (09) 333 8888.
Good wishes	Yours sincerely,
Signature	Cassandra Leslie
	Promotional Manager International

The translation of the Chinese fax

Salutation	To Mr Wang Jianwei,
Greetings	How are you (H)?
	Happy New Year! Wish you prosperity!
Order details	1. I have recently received Contract AS-6589 signed by your (H) company. Thank you for ordering 60x58 cotton shopping bags. We are extremely grateful to you for your cooperation and support at the beginning of the New Year. In order to guarantee the time of delivery now we are making adequate arrangements to design samples and prepare materials according to your order. You (H) can trust our commitment to collaboration.
Complaint	2. At the same time, our company sent over 104,000 cotton bags and the delivery number is CVC/B 98055. We haven't received your payment yet. According to Mr Zhang, the payment of US$ 35,490 was sent on November 30. However, we consulted with Henan Branch, China Bank and found that no payment had been made by your (H) bank so far. We kindly ask Mr Liang[4] to help check about this at your earliest convenience because deferred payment may affect directly the carrying out of our sales orders. Please think about the possible further collaboration between you (H) and us. Hope that you can help Mr Zhang sort out this issue.
Stress co-op	Thank you for your cooperation!
Good wishes	Happy New Year!
Signature	*Zheng Liangchen (*shang*)*