Concreteness in Business letters: a Corpus-based Analysis of

British and Pakistani English

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Abstract

Linguistic features of business letters have been a research target of both linguists and business writers. In this study, the language of British and Pakistani Business letters was compared and contrasted in terms of concreteness and abstractness. A corpus of 100 business letters from Inner Circle and Outer Circle writers were collected for analysis. The findings of the study revealed that British writers use more specific and concrete nouns, definite determiners, numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives, cohesive and rhetorical devices than the Pakistani Writers in order to be become concrete and vivid in their communication. The present findings are rather corpus specific since the data include only two countries; however this study may lead to further cross circle research including Expanding Circle research of business letters in terms of concreteness and abstractness. The issue of concreteness in Cross-circle business English can also be studied from psychological, sociological and anthropological perspectives in future Research.

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Technological developments in every area of business and commerce have imposed new demands for ever higher standards of clear, concise and understandable business communication. In spite of the range of modern communication methods available today, the business letters are still an important method of communication. Business letters are an integral part of the modern business world. They are written not only to inform but also to persuade the addressee about certain business issues and concerns. To write an

effective business letter, a good business writer follows strictly the principle of concreteness besides clarity, conciseness, consideration for the receiver and courtesy.

Business Communication in English began in the early 15th century. The Central UK Government encouraged the use of English in business letters as a patriotic gesture during the war against France. They inspired businessmen to use English instead of the previously-used Latin or French. The writers of business letters enthusiastically switched to English but they retained the highly formal letter writing ^{style} of the ars dictaminis (the art of letter writing). But later, the writers started using different words and expressions either to avoid monotony or to give additional meaning to their writings. These stylistic choices were highly influenced by the culture, time and region. In the present era, for instance, the loose sentence has been favoured in all modes of discourse but in classical times, the periodic sentence held equal or greater favour, and during the age of enlightenment, the balanced sentence was a favourite of writers (Richardson, 1994:2).

For an effective and accurate exchange of ideas, a business writer uses words, phrases and sentences as concrete as possible because concrete writing is a reader friendly writing. It is direct, vivid and easy to understand (Herta Murphy, 1997:43). On the other hand, abstract messages contain ambiguous words and complex syntactic patterns which need further interpretation. If the message is hedged with superfluous words and expressions, it often clouds the meaning. The use of abstract language is the greatest vice of present day writing (L Gartside, 1986:72).

1.2 Aims

Business language has been studied extensively by both linguists and technical writers; however, the comparative study of business letters appears to be a deserted area of the

field, especially from native and south Asian Perspectives. The aim of the present thesis is to study British and Pakistani Business letters in the choice of using concrete and abstract devices to the hypothesis that Native Users are more concrete and vigorous writers who tend to use more concrete lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive devices and rhetorical devices in contrast to non-natives who mostly use abstract and general nouns, indefinite article, quantifiers and few cohesive and rhetorical devices.

It also aims to illustrate how an abstract language is a barrier to effective business communication and to determine the most and least frequent used concrete and abstract devices in business letters by the writer from Inner and outer circles. It also aims to find answers to the questions if British Writers use more concrete devices than Pakistani Writers and what are the most frequent used concrete devices in British and Pakistani Business Letters.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 The Concept of Circle and Englishes

In the modern global business world, the concept of Englishes seems to be getting popular and accepted round the globe especially in business communication. A comparative study of the target language and the second language shows that every language moves down time in a current of its own making. It has a drift….nothing is static in language. Every word, every grammatical unit, every locution, every sound and accent is slowly changing configuration moulded by some invisible and impersonal phenomenon (Sapir, 1921:150).

Englishes are categorized as classical English, Elizabethan English and modern English With respect to time. With respect to region, it has different varieties such as

British English, American English, Australian English and Indian English. Within these varieties, there lie a large number of local dialects such as cockneys, Cheshire, Lancastrian and many others. With respect to its use, it can be categorized as formal and Informal, spoken and written etc (Hudson, 2001:32-60).

Kuchru (1985) suggests English in the world can be classified into three concentric circles: The Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle countries include, The USA, the UK, Australia, Ireland and New Zealand. They use English as their mother tongue or the first language. The Outer Circle countries are those in which English is used as an official language or English is used in prestigious domain such as education, trade and politics. A vast majority of these countries were colonies of the UK. They include Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The Expanding Circle countries are those in which English is taught as a compulsory school subject and English is getting popular as a foreign language. The countries belonging to this Circle includes China, Korea and Japan.

Though the users of language from outer and expanding circles try to achieve excellence in the use of target language, yet they often fail to achieve this excellence due to one or the other reason. Later, the second language users start using language as they want and finally succeed to have their own ways of pronouncing words, to have their special vocabulary and even their own grammatical rules.

British English is a very broad term applied to English to distinguish the forms of the English Language used in the UK from all other forms used elsewhere. The *Oxford English Dictionary* applies the term to English "as spoken or written in UK. British English has its own phonological, morphological, syntactic patterns and semantic

paradigms which make it different from all other forms of English such as American and Australian English.

English has long been an important spoken and written language in Pakistan, both in its own right and sometimes mixed with Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and other local languages. In 1947, after the creation of Pakistan, English became Pakistan's de facto official language, a position which was formalized in the constitution of 1973. In Pakistan, English has become an accepted norm and the users of that language are assumed to have intellectual and social superiority but Pakistani Writers have failed to achieve the level of excellence in the use of concrete language due to certain invisible reasons (Javed, 2009:36).

2.2 Concept of Concreteness in Communication

Concreteness is the most important aid to clarity because general statements make little impression upon the average mind. To secure the best effect, concrete language must be used to amplify and illustrate all general statements. Concrete devices do not only make the meaning of the writer clearer but they also give force and vigour to the ideas presented. In fact, some writers have named concreteness as the most important aid to force (Ketcham, 1992:112).

Using concrete expressions is one of the most important features of modern business English. Concrete words create visual images which are easy to comprehend. They name materials, objects and substances which physically exist. On the other hand, abstract words refer to general ideas and things, qualities and conditions. They sometimes do not create visual pictures for the readers because they are feelings and ideas and sometimes they create a general image. For Example, convenience, value and reputation

do not create a visual image and *newspaper* and *machine* create many but similar images. The readers usually take longer time to understand overused and vague words because they strain the reader mentally. Even if the reader makes educated guesses to figure out their accurate meanings, but he cannot be sure that he has got the intended meanings of the writer or not (Murphy, 1997: 44).

Besides Noun, Adjective is an important tool of concreteness or abstractness. Numeral adjective which is concrete can be further divided into cardinal, ordinal and multiplicative. Cardinal adjectives denote how many, the ordinal adjectives show which one of the series and multiplicative adjectives show a number of repetition. They carry only one meaning and do not cause a little confusion for the reader because they do not have as many connotative meanings as quantifiers have. Demonstrative and possessive adjectives identify a referent in a fairly precise way. In English, a demonstrative adjective is an adjective that explains whether something or someone is nearby or far away. They are also called locative expressions because they point out the location of the referent (Thomas, 1868: 43).

Words can cluster together in different possible constructions. One sequence of words may have more than one interpretation generally because the rules of sentence constructions allow deletion or ellipsis. In this regard, sentences in active voice are more concrete than those in passive voice because active voice lays emphasis on the doer of the action. In passive voice, the patient is used as a subject rather than the agent and it has a verb in different form- the past participle with the helping verb. For example, *Ali groomed the horses*. In this sentence, *Ali*, the agent, is the subject and *the horses*; the patient is object but in the sentence *the horses were groomed by Ali.* In this sentence, the

patient "the horses" is used as the subject. It has a verb in different form- the past participle with the helping verb *"were"*. Both the sentences differ in focus. In the first sentence, the speaker focuses on the noun phrase *"Ali"* while in the second sentence, the focus has been shifted to *"the horses"*. In some cases, passive constructions are used to obscure the identity of the doer "the agent" for example, *the horses were groomed* is in the passive in which the agent has been back-grounded that it becomes merely an implied participant (Kreidler 2003:168).

Many writers describe this foregrounding of the patient and the back-grounding of the agent in terms of promoting the patient and demoting the agent (Saeed , 2003:165).The qualifications for foregrounding and backgrounding are complex, partly grammatical, partly semantic and partly due to the flow of discourse. Due to this complex phenomenon, Herta Murphy (1997) recommends to use active voice to produce concreteness in business communication because they convey conviction and responsibility.

Another syntactic construction that turns the writing abstract is nominalization. When a verb is nominalised or camouflaged, the verb describing the action in a sentence is changed into a noun. For example, when a writer uses the verb phrases *make an acquisition, make an appearance, make an application* and *make an arrangement*, he puts the action into noun rather using verbs such as *acquire, apply and arrange* (Lesikar, 2003:64). In prescriptive stylistics, nominalizations are considered to make sentences more difficult to follow and to promote wordiness.Seven verbs-*be, give, have, hold, make, put and take* – (in any tense) are designated as *deadly* when the action they introduce is hidden in a "quiet noun" (Murphy, 1999:46). Besides putting action into

nouns, the practice of putting action into infinitive also makes writing abstract. For example: *the duty of a secretary is to check all incoming mail and to record it.* In this sentence, the writer puts the action into the infinitive rather than the verb which is less concrete than the sentence *the secretary checks all coming mail and records it.* Business writers also avoid using non-defining relative clauses because they cause syntactic ambiguity. Non-Defining Relative Clauses give further information which is not needed to identify the person, thing or group you are talking about. For example, *my sister, who is living in Pakistan, is coming to stay with us.* "*Who lives in Pakistan*" is not essential, which means that I only have one sister and she does not need to be defined by the "relative clause" (Heidrun Dietich, 1994:8).

The proper arrangement of lexical and grammatical units makes language concrete and vivid. A well-knit or a compact sentence is more concrete than a loose sentence. For the meaning of a sentence is the product of proper arrangement of constituents. If the grammatical units are not connected and arranged properly, they can be more harmful than no more information. In a concrete sentence, there should be subject-verb agreement, agreement between verb and antecedent, agreement between adjective and noun (Kreidler, 2004: 63).

As the grammatical meanings of a sentence depend on the proper arrangement of constituents, the grammatical meanings of a passage depend solely on the proper arrangement and unity of sentences. A passage can be concrete in grammatical meaning if there is a proper arrangement of constituents within a sentence and between the sentences. The writer constructs his message in such a way that one idea sets the next idea up. In concrete writing, there should be no abrupt shift from one idea to the other. To

maintain a unity of thoughts and ideas, the writers use coherent devices such as referencing, transitional words and conjunctions, enumerations and exemplifications (Scollon and Scollon, 2003:63).

Rhetorical devices make writing very convincing and appealing. A rhetorical figure can be defined as an artful arrangement of words to achieve a particular emphasis and effect (Dictionary of Literary Terms& Literary Theory 1998:784). They are a very powerful means of persuasion and are particularly useful for business writing as they make it sound laconic, impressive and easy. When using rhetorical techniques, the writers can change the shape of information which gives the message more vitality and impact.

Although there are literally hundreds of figures of rhetoric, ranging from anadiplosis to zeugma, some are very rare used in writing or speaking, while others such as parallelism, repetition and euphemism are so common that it is rare to see any business writing in which they are not frequently used. Herta Murphy (1997) suggests when using a figure of speech, it is important to see that you are helping your cause rather than hindering it. A misused form or a form used in an inappropriate place can act as an obstacle. The persuasive devices the business writers often use are repetition, metaphor, and euphemism.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Method of Data Collection

The corpus of business letters from the same branch of industry was collected in the following way: to begin with, one hundred letters were collected British and Pakistani Writers but later only fifty letters, five from each type, were selected for the analysis. We have selected letters of enquiry, a response to an inquiry letter, letters of complaint, letters

of adjustment, a letter of refusal, collection letter, sales letters, credit letters and letter of motivation. The number of business letters representing each country is fifty as this was thought to be a sufficient number for complete analysis and to find out the answers to the research questions.

The UK and Pakistan from the Inner Circle and outer Circle have been selected as a source of data for the present thesis. The letters by British writers were collected with the help of branch managers working at Morrison, Tesko and Barclays through e-mail while the letters by Pakistani writers were collected from the branch managers working at Kohnoor, Nishat Chuniyaan and National Bank of Pakistan. They were written by different individual customers and the different company representatives working in different departments such as sales, credit and administration. It should be noticed that the names of the writers are not mentioned because the corpus analysis is based on region and nationality rather than individual identity.

3.2 The Corpus

The data is a collection of different business letters written by British and Pakistani writers for Inquiry, Complaints, Refusal, Collection, Adjustment, Sales, Credit and Motivation.

Instead of American and Australian English, British English was selected because the British ruled over India from 1857 to 1947. During their rule, they tried hard to replace Persian, Urdu and Hindi with English.

Another reason to select the UK as the representative of the Inner Circle and Pakistan as the representative of the Outer Circle is that British English is the oldest of all

other forms of English and is considered as "standard English" which is taught and used as a second and official language in Pakistan.

3.3 Data Processing

The data was analysed in three stages. First, the letters were studied to find out the frequency of each lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive and rhetorical devices used by the writers from Inner and Outer Circles. The occurrences of each item were counted to find out if British writers use more concrete devices than Pakistani writers. The mathematical models of ratio and percentage were employed to make the results more concrete. In mathematics, a ratio is a relationship between two numbers of the same kind (*i.e.*, objects, persons, students, spoonfuls, units of whatever identical dimension), usually expressed as a:b which explicitly indicates how many times the first number contains the second. A percent is a ratio of a number to 100. A percent can be expressed using the percent symbol % (Conrad & Fleger, 2006).

The quantitative analysis was followed by different examples from the letters by British and Pakistani Letters for concrete analysis of the data.

Finally, the finding were analyzed and criticized qualitatively in the light of concept of concreteness and abstractness.

4. Data Analysis

As mentioned above, all the collected letters have been quantitatively processed after giving a detailed and comprehensive reading to address the issue of concreteness in cross Circle business writing. We have found out that the linguistic devices such as abstract noun, indefinite article and quantifiers, passive voice, putting action into the infinitive and noun, displacement of grammatical units turn the language abstract. Prior to the data

analysis of each lexical and grammatical category, an overview on the distribution of concrete devices is given in the following table.

Table 1: Distribution of Concrete and Abstract Devices in Inner and Outer Circles

Sr. No	Types of concrete and abstract devices	Native English Frequency	Pakistani English Frequency	Total number of frequencies in both the Englishes	Total *2198*
	Lexical Items				
1	Proper Nouns	21	9	30	1704
2	Common Nouns	28	34	62	
3	Abstract Nouns	69	141	210	
4	Concrete Nouns	36	14	50	
5	Indefinite Article	118	88	206	
6	Definite Article	205	178	383	
7	Quantifiers	48	56	104	
8	Numerals	78	31	109	
9	Possessive adjectives	232	225	457	
10	Demonstrative Adjectives	58	35	93	
	Syntactic Patterns				
11	Passive voice	28	38	66	147
12	Action in noun	6	15	21	
13	Action in infinitive	13	19	32	
14	Relative clauses	10	18	28	
	Coherent devices				
15	Referencing	39	25	64	216
16	Transitional words	70	51	121	
17	Enumeration	11	10	21	
18	Examplication	7	3	10	
	Rhetorical Devices				
19	Repetition	35	24	59	131
20	Parallelism	28	11	39	
21	Euphemism	15	18	33	

To begin with, there are four groups in the above table: lexical items, grammatical patterns, cohesive devices and persuasive devices, found in the corpus, among which,

lexical items have the highest frequency (1704), followed by cohesive devices (216) and the lowest comes to persuasive devices (131).

Examples:

Lexical Item: In reply to <u>your advertisement</u> in <u>today's newspaper</u>, I offer my <u>services</u> for the post of office assistant (Letter of Employment, Pakistani English).

Syntactic Pattern*: I shall be <u>pleased to provide</u> any further information* (Letter of Credit, British English).

Cohesive Devices: *The manufacturers have, <u>however</u>, promised us a further supply by the end of this month and if you could wait until then we would deliver your requirements promptly* (Letter of Refusal, British English).

Persuasive device: *There is little doubt that many of them are faulty –<u>some of them leak and some of them blot</u>.* (Letter of Complaint, British English)

Words are divided into different forms according to their role and functions. They are known by their technical names such as nouns, adjectives, articles etc. Some of the words are easier to comprehend because they carry a single meaning while others are difficult because they carry more than one meaning. In terms of concreteness, common and abstract nouns, indefinite articles, quantifiers are ambiguous because they carry more than one meaning while proper and concrete nouns, definite articles, numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives are concrete. In the following section, the language of business letters in terms of concreteness is analysed to determine the difference between British and Pakistani English.

4.1 Lexical Items

4.1.1 Nouns

Noun is defined as the name of person, thing, place, idea or quality. It functions as a subject, direct or indirect object in a sentence. Thus, it is one the most important lexical units that turn language concrete or abstract. In business communication, nouns hold the most important place because business is all about selling and buying things (Saeed, 2003: 27). The nouns which turn the language concrete or abstract fall into four sub categories i.e. common noun, proper noun, abstract noun and concrete noun. Nouns are definite or proper when they carry a single meaning and are abstract when they carry more than one meaning. It does not seem reasonable to ask what the meaning of Mohammad, Jesus and Carl Marx is. Of course, they refer to a particular person or unique referent but the words *organization* and *consignment* are abstract because they refer to many working bodies at the same time and it is difficult for the receiver to figure out the correct entity. Here is the distribution of nouns used in the data followed by examples.

Table 1.1: Distribution of nouns in Corpus

Sr. No	Types of Nouns	Frequency of British English	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total	Percentage Ratio of Occurrences in British & Pakistani	Percentage of Occurrences for each type of nouns
1	Common Nouns	28	38	62	45:55	17.61
2	Proper Nouns	21	09	30	70:30	8.52
3	Abstract Nouns	69	141	210	33:67	59.65
4	Concrete Nouns	36	14	50	72:28	14.20

Table 1.1 shows the number of nouns used in the corpus. Abstract nouns are by far the largest number in Pakistani business letters but numbers of abstract nouns were smallest in British letters. The most notable difference between British and Pakistani English

(33:67& 70:30) is in the use of abstract nouns and concrete nouns, respectively. The ratio of common nouns however, is 45:55. It is logical to draw a conclusion in the light of research findings that British business letters are more concrete and vivid than Pakistani business letters.

Examples:

Daily Telegraph   (Letter of Motivation, British English)

Mr. W Stevens   (Enquiry Letter, British English)

Newspaper   (letter of motivation, Pakistani English)

Machinery   (Letter of Enquiry, Pakistani English)

Thank you very much order number 237 for <u>bed coverings.</u> (Order Letter, British English)

We greatly appreciate your <u>interest</u> in our <u>products</u>. (Order Letter, Pakistani English)

Daily Telegraph and *Mr. Stevens* refer to a particular object and person while *newspaper* and *machinery* carry more than one referent; it becomes difficult for the receiver to identify which newspaper or which tool of machinery. So, they are indefinite and less vivid. *Daily Telegraph* and *Mr.Stevens* are easier to comprehend because there is a direct sense relation between the words and their referents. On the other hand, the words such as *interest* and *satisfaction* are abstract. They are invisible because they do not have colour, size, shape, sound, flavour or texture. They do not have a quality that someone can see, hear, smell or touch them. The words which do not have obvious relation to objects or description in the world around us are difficult to comprehend.

4.1.2 Articles

Article also plays an important role to make language concrete and specific. The Definite article "the" makes the noun specific and shows that the reader is familiar with the item the writer is talking about while indefinite article "a or an" is used to generalize the thing or a person.

Table 1.2 Distributions of Articles in British and Pakistani Business Letters

Sr. No	Types of Articles	Frequency of British English	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total	Percentage Ratio of British : Pakistani	Percentage of Occurrences for each type of articles
1	Indefinite	118	88	206	57:33	37.80
2	Definite	205	178	383	54:46	63.20

Table 1.2 shows that definite articles occupy more space than indefinite articles in the collected data. On average, British writers use more definite articles than Pakistani writers. There are 205 definite articles in British English making up to 54% of the total of definite articles in Corpus. On the other hand, British writers use 118 indefinite articles which make up 57% of the total of indefinite articles. Though Pakistani writers use fewer indefinite articles, yet it does not make them more concrete because they miss *indefinite article* at certain places where they should have used.

For example:

(1)*The manufacturers have, however, promised us a further supply by the end of this month.*   (Letter of Acknowledgment, British English)

(2)*We will hopefully get the consignment much before the desired time limit.*

(Letter of Acknowledgement, Pakistani English)

(3)*We wish to export crockery for all descriptions. But as so happens, we are not aware of ....export procedure.*

(Letter of Inquiry, Pakistani English)

In the above examples, both the British and Pakistani writers use definite article *the* before common nouns *manufacturers* and *consignment* which turns them into proper nouns but in (3) the definite article is found missing which turns the language less concrete. The writer uses the definite article when he knows that the reader is familiar with items.

On the other hand, indefinite article (a or an) is used to generalize things. For example,

We may explain that owing to a machinery breakdown in our factory last month.

(Letter of Adjustment, Pakistani English)

The manufacturers have, however, promised us a further supply by the end of this month.   (Letter of Acknowledgment, British English)

In the above examples, all the phrases with indefinite article are ordinarily interpreted as non-specific and general in reference. They create ambiguity for the reader in understanding the accurate meanings.

4.1.3 Adjectives

Adjective is a word that modifies or refers to a noun or pronoun. The adjective which turn the language concrete or abstract can be divided into four types: quantifiers, numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives. Three of them (numeral, possessive and demonstrative) are concrete and make the noun specific and definite. Only *the quantifier* is indefinite and creates ambiguity in business communication. Numeral adjectives are definite and specific. They do not create any confusion for the reader because they carry a single meaning with no connotative meanings. For concrete writing, a writer should use definite adjectives and avoid using quantifiers which create ambiguity and a lot of misunderstanding for the reader.

1.3 Distribution of Adjectives in British and Pakistani Business Letters

Sr. No	Types of Adjectives	Frequency of British English	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total Number of adjectives in the corpus	Percentage Ratio of British : Pakistani	Percentage of Occurrences for each type of adjective
1	Quantifiers	48	56	104	46:54	13.63
2	Numeral	78	31	109	72:28	14.28
3	Possessive	232	225	457	51:49	59.89
4	Demonstrative	58	35	93	63:27	12.18
	TOTALS	416	347	763		100%

Table 1.3 compares the use of different types of adjectives in British and Pakistani business letters selected for the corpus based study. Possessive adjectives occupy almost 60% of all the adjectives used in corpus while demonstrative, quantifiers and numeral

adjectives are used 12.18%, 13.63% and 14.28% respectively. In Pakistani English, 54% quantifiers were used. In contrast, the rate of quantifiers in British English was very low at only 46%. On the other hand, numeral adjectives "12th" and "12" in the phrases "12th August" and "*12* copies" are definite and specific and carry a single meaning. The ratio of using numeral adjectives between British and Pakistan English is 72:28.

Examples:

(1) On 12th August I ordered 12 copies of Background Music by H Lowery under my order number FT567.

(2) *I regret that I cannot keep these books as I have an adequate stock already.* (Letter of Complaint, British English)

(3) *Your account will be credited with the invoiced value of books and cost of return postage.*(Letter of Complaint, British English)

(4) Our business is rapidly growing so we expect to place large order with you in future.

(Letter of Credit, Pakistani English)

In example 4, the quantifier *large* means different thing to different people. What is *large* for the writer might be *very little* for the reader. Quantifiers such as *all, several, little* and *many* are indefinite and create a lot of ambiguity and misunderstanding for the reader. It can be clearly seen that the Pakistani writers use more quantifiers than British writers. In the above example (2), the demonstrative adjective *these* points out that the referents being referred are nearby. Possessive adjectives are pronoun-like forms. The writers use

them with nouns to signal possessions. In (3), "your" is closely related to the genitive personal pronouns, but we call them *adjectives* because they modify nouns. It is very interesting to note that of all the sub categories of adjectives, i.e. quantifiers, numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives, only quantifiers cause lexical ambiguity and the rest of them are used to make the language more vivid and concrete. In conclusion, we can see that the ratio of numeral, possessive and demonstrative adjectives in British English is at a higher level than Pakistani English.

4.2 Syntactic Patterns

A concrete sentence is one which carries only one meaning and does not leave any room for misconception and misunderstanding. It contains all the necessary grammatical units to avoid ambiguity (Kreidler, 2003:123). If any of the grammatical units in a sentence is missing, it brings about misunderstanding. For examples, in the passive voice; due to the absence of *by phrase* the reader often fails to determine the doer of the action. For concrete communication, the writers do not use certain syntactic patterns i.e. passive voice and relative clauses. They also avoid putting an action into infinitives and nouns rather than putting them into verbs. The following table illustrates the major differences between British and Pakistani Business writing in terms of using abstract patterns.

Table.2 Distributions of Syntactic Patterns in British and Pakistani Business Letters

Sr. No	Types of sentences	Frequency of British	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total	Percentage Ratio of British :	Percentage of Occurrences for each type

		English			Pakistani	of sentences
1	Passive Voice	28	38	66	42:58	44.89
2	PA into Noun	06	15	21	29:71	14.28
3	PA into infinitive	13	19	32	41:59	21.76
4	Relative Clauses	10	18	28	36:64	19.04
	TOTALS	57	90	147	39:61	

The above table compares the numbers of passive voice, putting action into the nouns, infinitve and relative clauses British and Pakistani writers use in business letters which turn the language abstract. Table 2 shows that there are 38 sentences in the passive; 15 times action has been put into noun and 19 times in infinitive and 18 relative clauses have been used in Pakistani business letters. These figures can be contrasted with the number of syntactic devices used by the British business writers. They use only 28 passives, 13 infinitives, and 10 relative clauses. They use only 6 times nominalization or camouflaged verbs in their writings. The ratio of syntactic items in British and Pakistani is 39:61.

4.2.1 Passive Voice

As discussed in the theoretical background, passive voice sentences are abstract and ambiguous in nature. Consider the following examples for further illustration:

Twelve copies of the correct title have been dispatched by Parcel Post today.

(Letter of acknowledgement: British English)

Most of the sets contained in the consignment were broken.

In the above examples, the writers do not lay stress on the doer of the action. They do not reveal the facts about the doer clearly. In all the above sentences, the patients have been used as subjects rather than the agents and they have verbs in different form- the past participle with the helping verb *"have* and *were"*. The writers focus on the patients and use passive constructions to obscure the identity of the doers "the agents". For example, the sentence, *"They have been dispatched to you today"* is in the passive in which the patient "they" has been fore-grounded rather than the agent. As it has been stated in section 2, the qualifications for foregrounding and backgrounding are complex, partly grammatical, partly semantic and partly due to the flow of discourse. Due to this complex phenomenon, Herta Murphy recommends business writers to use active voice to produce concreteness in their writing because they convey conviction and responsibility. The ratio of syntactic items in British and Pakistani is 42:58.

4.2.2 Putting Action into Nouns and Infinitives

An awkward syntactic construction that turns the writing abstract is putting an action into noun rather than verb. It is also known as a nominalization or camouflaged verb. When a verb is nominalised or camouflaged, the verb describing the action in a sentence is changed into a noun.

A glance at the indicators of using concrete and abstract items like putting action into infinitive in business letters reflects the great difference between British and Pakistani business English. The table shows that there are 13 and 19 occurrences of the infinitive in British and Pakistani English respectively. The figures in Pakistani English

are greater than the corresponding figures of 13 items in British English which may lead us to conclude that Pakistani writers are less concrete than British writers.

For example,

We shall be much grateful to you if you could kindly give us information on their financial standing.

We hope you to get a favourable finalisation of our requests.

(Letter of Recommendation: Pakistani English)

In the above sentences, the Pakistani writers put the action into the noun using deadly verbs "give" and "get". They are designated as deadly because the action they introduce is hidden in nouns "information" and "promotion". It is interesting to note that British writers use very few camouflaged nouns. Besides avoiding nominalization, a good business writer puts the action into the verb rather than the infinitive to make his writing more concrete and vivid. The sentence above with verb phrase *hope* contains one kind of infinitive clause but it is semantically abstract and not very clear and vivid. The verb *get* can be expanded only a little; it can be perfect (I hope you to have got) or progressive (I hope Sara to be getting) but *to get* does not distinguish between present and past and it cannot be preceded by a modal verb like *can, should, must* or *will* that is why it is abstract.

4.2.4 Relative Clauses

Non-defining clauses are abstract in nature because they do not identify a person, thing or object but gives extra unnecessary information which do not add meaning but make the language abstract and rather difficult to comprehend (Fowler,1933).

Table 2 shows that British English contains 10 instances in which a relative clause is used. These instances embody 36% of the total occurrences in the corpus. The non-defining relative clauses in Pakistani English on the other hand can be found in 18 cases which show that Pakistani Business English is more abstract than British Business English. For example,

Our illustrated catalogue that contains full information about electrical items has been sent to you. (Inquiry Letters: Pakistani English)

My curriculum vitae which are attached here under with will explain my suitability for the position.

(Letter of Motivation: British English)

In the above examples, the writers use non-defining relative clauses *which are attached here* and *that contains full information about electrical items* which *are* abstract and less vivid because they do not identify the items but give extra unnecessary information about the antecedent.

4.3 Cohesive Devices

Business writers use different kinds of cohesive devices to make their writing concrete and vivid. They use referencing, transitional words, conjunctions, enumerations and exemplications etc. Many researchers of Business English (Schollon 2001, Herta Murphy 1997) have come to the conclusion that referencing, transitional words, conjunctions, enumeration and exemplications are the most preferred devices for concrete communication in this register particularly in business letters.

Table: 3 Distributions of Cohesive Devices in British and Pakistani Business Letters

Sr. No	Types of cohesive device	Frequency of British English	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total	Percentage ratio of British : Pakistani	Percentage of occurrences for each type of cohesive device
1	Referencing	39	25	64	61:39	29.63
2	Transitional	70	51	121	58:42	56.01
3	Enumerations	11	10	21	52:48	9.72
4	Examplications	7	3	10	70:30	4.62
	TOTALS	127	89	216	59:41	100

The table shows that cohesive devices are the second largest item in the corpus; however the proportion is rather modest, only 216 items. It is interesting to note that transitional words and conjunctions are the most popular devices which occupy 56.1% of all cohesive devices and exemplications are the least used language device for concreteness in the corpus.

4.3.1 Referencing

To make writing concrete, business writers usually start letters to avoid repetition by referring back to someone or something that has been previously identified. Table 3 illustrates the differences in the use of references contrasting the number of references used in Pakistani English (39%) with that in British English (61%).

For example,

> *I have pleasure in enclosing the catalogue of type writers which you requested in*
> *your letter of 8 February.* (Reply To Inquiry Letter, British English)
> *Receipt of your claim, along-with 20 colour monitors, is acknowledged with*
> *thanks.* (Letter of Adjustment, Pakistani English)

In the above examples, business writers give the reference of a previous letter or receipt but a close observation shows that the Pakistani business writer uses abstract referencing. He does not illustrate what the claim is about. Our findings also show that Pakistani writers do not use many references.

4.3.2 Transitional words & Conjunctions

Transitional words and conjunctions are used to make writing smoother and logical. It gives a flow to writing and helps the reader comprehend the ideas easily. They are used to add ideas, give conclusions, to generalize, to exemplify and to connect ideas and sentences.

Table 3 illustrates the difference between British and Pakistan English in the use of transitional words and conjunctions. The findings show that British writers use more transitional words and conjunctions (Approximately 58%) than those of Pakistani writers which makes British Business English more concrete and vivid than that of Pakistani.

For example,

> *I am <u>therefore</u> retuning the books by parcel post for immediate replacement, as I have several customers waiting for them.* (Letter of complaint, British English)
>
> *Most of the sets contained in the consignment were broken <u>and</u> had scratches on them.* (Letter of Complaint, Pakistani English)

In the first sentence, the British writer uses two transitional words *however* and *as* to make his writing smooth while Pakistani writer uses conjunction *and* to add more ideas.

4.3.3 Enumerations

Enumeration or enumerative linking adverbials are used to show the order of pieces of information. They can follow logical or time sequence, or they can be used to move on to

the next piece of information (Prado Alonso, Jose Carlos, 2009:135). Enumeration includes ordinal numbers, cardinal numbers, adverbs and phrases, for example,

>*A1 Quality of printing paper*

>*A2 Quality of printing paper* <u>(Letter of Demand, British English)</u>

>*1.   Pedestal fans*

>*2.   Air coolers*   <u>(Letter of Demand , Pakistani English)</u>

The above examples show that both British and Pakistani writers use cardinal numbers to show the order of pieces of information. The difference between the Englishes in the use of enumeration is very little and can be ignored to determine the results.

4.3.4 Exemplifications

Exemplification means to provide examples about something or some issue (Fondiller, 1999:32). In many cases, examples are used to make ideas much more persuasive and concrete. Table 3 clearly shows that the number of exemplifications in British English is almost double (70%) than those in Pakistani English (30%) which means that British English is more persuasive and concrete than Pakistani English. For example,

>*As one of our customers in past became irregular in his payments, we had to suffer a lot*. <u>(British English, Letter of collection)</u>

>*For example, most of the sets contained in the consignment were broken and had scratches on that.* <u>(Pakistani English, Letter of Complaint)</u>

In the above sentences, the writers give examples from past experience for clarity of thoughts and ideas. The expressions "for example" *and* "as" are cohesive markers and help the writers draw the attention of the reader to the particular issues.

4.4 Rhetorical Devices

The corpus contains many examples of rhetorical devices which the business writers use to improve effectiveness, clarity and enjoyment of their language.

Table: 4 Distributions of Rhetorical Devices in British and Pakistani Business Letters

Sr. No	Types of Rhetorical Devices	Frequency of British English	Frequency of Pakistani English	Total	Percentage Ratio of British : Pakistani	Percentage of Occurrences for each type of cohesive Devices
1	Repetition	35	24	59	59:41	45.03
2	Parallelism	28	11	39	71:29	29.77
3	Euphemism	15	18	33	45:50	25.19
	TOTALS	78	53	131	60:40	100

4.4.1 Repetition

Linguistic repetition is fundamental to verbal art and literature as well as ordinary talk. It operates at every level of linguistic analysis from phonological to larger chunks of discourse such as greetings and other politeness formulae. Repetition functions didactically, emotionally and expressively. It can be used for emphasis, clarification and confirmation (Jaworski, Coupland and Galasiński, 2002:30).

Table 4 compares the number of rhetorical devices used in the collected data of business letters. It shows the average of repeated words, phrases and clauses in both Englishes. British English dominates (35 repeated words and phrases or 59%) Pakistani English (24 words and phrases or 41%). Thus, repetition holds the biggest proportion 45% among the rhetorical devices recorded in the corpus. Let us consider a few examples for further explanation:

The <u>machine</u> bought by your friend was a 38 cm RANSOME. This is an excellent <u>machine</u>.   (Letter of Inquiry, British English)

Please send us the following <u>items</u>.......since we need the above <u>items</u> urgently.

(Order Letter, Pakistani English)

In the above examples, the Noun Phrases "the machine" and "the items" have been repeated for emphasis and clarification. The repetition makes the language more concrete and vivid. The reader does not feel any confusion in understanding what the writer wants to convey.

4.4.2 Parallelism

Another important commonly used rhetorical device is parallelism. It is used to connect part of sentences or longer pieces by using the same structure or to build force through repetition (Moliken, 2009:11). It is commonly used in business letters to make the message effective, readable and easier to remember.

Table 4 shows the difference between British and Pakistani English in the use of the parallel construction. As an overall trend, it is clear that the number of parallel constructions in British English is almost double (71%) of those (29%) in Pakistani English. For example,

There is little doubt that many of them are faulty –<u>some of them</u> leak and <u>some of them</u> blot. (Letter of Complaint, British English)

By dint of <u>hard work, devotion and special attitude</u>, he got promotion within two years.

(Letter of Recommendation, Pakistani English)

Look at the different benefits each of these constructions offer. In the first example, the writer uses the same structure which is quite easy for the reader to remember and interpret. In the second example, the writer uses same abstract phrases which are comparatively easier to remember but rather difficult to comprehend.

4.4.3 Euphemism

Euphemism is a figure of speech which uses mild, inoffensive or vague words as a means of making something more positive than it might otherwise appear. It has been derived from Greek to mean *good word* or *good speech* and refers to a figure of speech in which things are labelled in overly positive terms or terms that understate the negative. The tendency to use euphemism in business communication is natural because everyone in business wants to establish a good relation with suppliers and purchasers to earn more profit or get the benefit of saving. It is really nice to be able to put things in positive way but it can also be used sometimes to obscure, mislead and confuse (Rudinow and Barry, 2008:319).

Table 4 illustrates the differences in the use of euphemism in British business letters (55%) by contrasting the number of euphemistic devices (45%) in Pakistani business letters. it shows a difference of 5% in terms of using rhetorical devices. Let us consider some examples for further illustration:

> *Thank you very much your letter dated 10 May pointing out faults in the pens supplied to your order number 8586.* (A Letter of Adjustment: British English).
>
> *We feel extremely sorry to learn from your letter of August 5th 2010 mat the consignment no.115, containing curtains fabric cloth is not to your satisfaction.*
>
> (A Letter of Adjustment, Pakistani English)

In the above examples, the British business writer starts the letter in a very positive way. He starts with a polite expression "thank you" and does not use negative words as the Pakistani writer does "we feel extremely sorry...." It shows the British writers succeed in seeing the things in positive terms or it understates the negative. On the other hand, the Pakistani writer also uses a polite expression "We feel extremely sorry..." but this negative imagery is not so much effective and concrete as positive imagery can be.

5. Conclusion

The present thesis aims to compare British and Pakistani business letters in order to find out whether British business letters are more concrete or Pakistani business letters. The letters were selected from different companies working in the UK and Pakistan and their language has been analyzed lexically and syntactically. The concept of Englishes and the issue of concreteness have been studied quite extensively, as the language of business letters is still a neglected area of research, especially in terms of comparison and contrast.

Being a corpus based study, a corpus from each of the Inner and Outer Circles were collected and tagged for each lexical, syntactic and rhetorical feature under study. During the whole process, the findings were compared and analyzed according to the standard norms of concrete business English and the conclusion was drawn on the basis of average occurrences of lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive and rhetorical devices which turn the language concrete or abstract.

In agreement with findings discussed in Herta Murphy (1997) Rudinow and Barry (2008) all the devices which turn the language concrete appear in both the Englishes. Lexical items includes nouns, determiner and adjectives, syntactic patterns includes,

passive voice, putting action into noun and infinitive and relative clauses, cohesive devices include referencing, transitional word, enumeration and exemplification while rhetorical devices include repetition, parallelism and euphemism.

Lexical items which turn the language concrete or abstract are shown to be the items most popular in both British and Pakistani English. They include nouns, determiners and adjectives. proper nouns, concrete nouns, definite articles, possessive s and numeral adjectives turn language concrete and vivid. It has been shown that British business letters contain more lexical concrete items than those of Pakistani. On the other hand, Pakistani writers use more abstract lexical items such as common nouns, indefinite articles, Quantifiers. The British writers use 53% concrete lexical items and 45 % abstract items in their letters. On the other hand, there are 47% concrete lexical items and 55% abstract items in Pakistani English.

Syntactic patterns, to be more specific, passive voice, putting an action into noun and infinitive and relative clauses also turn language abstract. The corpus data shows that British writers use 46% syntactic patterns which carry more than one meaning or used to hide certain facts, On the other hand Pakistani business letters contain 54 % syntactic patterns which are abstract and less vivid.

Cohesive devices including referencing, transitional words, enumeration and exemplifications are the second largest group of devices which make language concrete and make it easier for understanding and comprehension. The data shows that British writers use 59% of the cohesive devices contrasted with those of Pakistanis (39%).

Rhetorical figures are generally considered effective tools for concrete communication. However, business letters do not include all the rhetorical devices, but

they include only repetition, parallelism and euphemism. There are 60 % rhetorical devices in British business letters and 40% in Pakistani English.

To conclude with, British writers use more concrete language than Pakistani writers because they use more proper nouns, concrete nouns, possessive adjectives, definite determiners, cohesive devices, rhetorical devices and less abstract syntactic patterns in their writing. On the other hand, Pakistani writers use more common nouns, indefinite articles, quantifiers, passive voice; put an action into nouns and infinitive, relative clauses, fewer cohesive and rhetorical devices which means that their writing is less concrete and more abstract than that of British Writers.

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