

REPORTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

10

“DROP ME A FAX, WILL YOU?”:  
A Study of Written Business Communication

by

Leena Louhiala-Salminen

University of Jyväskylä  
1995

REPORTS FROM  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ  
EDITED BY  
KARI SAJAVAARA

REPORTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

10

“DROP ME A FAX, WILL YOU?”:  
A Study of Written Business Communication

by

Leena Louhiala-Salminen

University of Jyväskylä

1995

©Leena Louhiala-Salminen

ISBN 951-34-0639-3

ISSN 0357-332X

Printed in the University Printing House, Jyväskylä  
1995

URN:ISBN:978-952-86-0350-4

ISBN 978-952-86-0350-4 (PDF)

ISSN 0357-332X

University of Jyväskylä, 2024

## ABSTRACT

Leena Louhiala-Salminen

"DROP ME A FAX, WILL YOU":

A STUDY OF WRITTEN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

The present study focuses on written English business communication as it is seen by the professionals of the Finnish business community. The operating environment of companies is undergoing a rapid change at many levels, and the technological advances have changed the systems of communication. Mail is used rarely, the fax machine has replaced telex, and the number of e-mail users is growing all the time.

The first purpose of this study was to describe the general characteristic features of the present environment where English business messages are exchanged, and specify what communications media are used and what type of messages are sent. Secondly, the study looked at the language of the messages through the opinions of the language users.

The results are based on both quantitative and qualitative data: an extensive questionnaire survey was conducted among business graduates, graduate engineers and executive secretaries working in a variety of companies in different business sectors. Ten of the respondents were later interviewed.

The major findings showed that a growing number of business people need to have a solid command of English in their work, i.e., they have to be able to do business in English; thus the language is regarded as an inseparable part of their professional identity, and not a separate skill mastered by certain 'language specialists'. Writing in English was considered as important as speaking, telefax was the dominating medium, and a smaller number of the messages were format-bound (offers, orders etc.). The informants found that the language had changed: it is less formal, efficient, to the point, and not 'pure' British or American English, but a mixture of different elements that could be called, e.g., Euro English. In addition, from the pedagogical point of view, it was interesting to find that an extensive amount of all English communication took place within a corporate group, 'under the same roof', not in the traditional buyer - seller setting.

Keywords: business communication, workplace communication, business writing, needs analysis

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To be honest, this study derives from a feeling of frustration: having taught English business correspondence for a few years in the late 1980's I began to suspect that my classes and what was happening 'out there' were too far apart. The starting point was pragmatic, and, at the beginning, very straightforward: I wanted to find out what English business communication in the real world is like to be able to design and teach courses that make sense. Naturally, it was not that simple. Along the way, the scene started to look more complex, and the number of questions grew out of hand. Because of the many changes in the technological and organizational business environment in the late 1980's and early 1990's it seemed necessary to first conduct a survey that would describe the present business environment where message-exchange takes place. Only after that I would be able to analyse the language that is used.

This is a report on my licentiate study, in which an attempt is made to define the characteristics of the present business environment that have to do with English interpersonal communication, and the language used in it. Now my fingers itch to start the analysis of authentic messages, and their language. There are several people I would like to thank for their contribution to this study. Mirjaliisa Charles was the first person I turned to with my vague ideas, and has, with her never failing enthusiasm, always been available for discussions and ready to offer a helping hand. Her cheerful commitment to a cross-disciplinary approach has been a great source of inspiration. Mirjaliisa advised me to contact Professor Kari Sajavaara, and I could not have made a better choice. He has been the supervisor I needed to get the work done: never pushy, always encouraging and optimistic.

I am grateful to all my colleagues and friends at the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration with whom I have had discussions on business communication, but very special thanks are due to a good friend, Anne Kankaanranta. We share a passionate view to communication and can easily discuss meanings of words or phrases for hours. Anne has been present through the whole process, and I am very happy about it. I also want to mention the Head of our department, Tuija Nikko, who has been most supportive.

At an early stage of my project I was lucky to meet Hilikka Yli-Jokipii, whose pioneering PhD study in business communication was published last year. In addition to many good chats and laughs, Hilikka gave me invaluable advice and guidance; what she did not know I didn't have to worry about.

There are many others who have helped me. I am deeply grateful to the Associations of Business Graduates (SEFE), Graduate Engineers (TEK) and Executive Secretaries (SY) for their assistance in compiling the sample. The 400 respondents and the ten businesspeople I interviewed all gave me some of their valuable time, and offered insightful and interesting comments, for which I am grateful. And, all my friends and relatives, in business, teaching or elsewhere have been patient and interested, which has made life a lot easier.

For financial support I would like to thank the Foundation for Economic Education (Liikesivistysrahasto), the Foundation of the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration (HKKK:n tukisti) and the Department of English at the University of Jyväskylä. They made it possible for me to attend international conferences, and at the final writing phase, to spend some time free from the daily

school routine.

I also want to thank my parents, Marja and Esko Louhiala for their loving support and genuine interest in my studies — ever since the first grade! And, as always, there are the near ones who suffered most. There were days with cold pizzas and burnt potatoes (or the other way round), mornings with dirty socks or no socks at all. I am proud of our two wonderful daughters, the big sister Pauliina, and the newcomer to our family, Kristiina, who both showed tolerance and flexibility — and, at the end of the day, kept my feet steadily on the ground. Finally, there was always a shoulder I could lean on. Without Jussi's assistance and encouragement the study would not have been completed.

Espoo, September 25, 1995

Leena Louhiala-Salminen

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	9
2	EARLIER RESEARCH	11
2.1	Research in business language	11
2.2	Research in Business English	14
2.3	The new technologies in business communication research	16
3	DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA IN BUSINESS	18
3.1	Letter	19
3.2	Telephone and telegram	19
3.3	Telex	19
3.4	Fax	20
3.5	E-mail and integrated CMC	21
3.6	Organization of communication	21
3.7	Historical perspective	22
4	THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE	23
4.1	Business English	23
4.2	LSP vs workplace communication	26
4.3	Professional discourse	29
4.4	Discourse and social change	30
4.4.1	Relationship between language and context	30
4.4.2	Three-dimensional conception of discursive event	31
4.4.3	Discursive change in relation to social change	32
4.4.4	Functions of discourse	33
4.4.5	Shifts in general cultural values	33
4.5	Genre analysis	34
4.5.1	Discourse community	35
4.5.2	Genre	37
5	METHOD	39
5.1	Questionnaire survey	39
5.2	Interview study	41
6	DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS	43
6.1	Results of the questionnaire survey	43
6.1.1	Respondent profile	43
6.1.1.1	Sex, age and educational background	44
6.1.1.2	Organizational status	46
6.1.1.3	Use of English at work	47
6.1.2	Company profiles	49
6.1.2.1	Line of business, location, and size	49
6.1.2.2	Type of foreign connections and contact areas	50
6.1.3	Workplace situations where English is used	53
6.1.3.1	Which English?	53



6.1.3.2	Oral and written language skills	56
6.1.3.3	Use of English in different work situations	61
6.1.4	The structure and organization of written communication	65
6.1.4.1	Type of messages sent	65
6.1.4.2	Type of messages received	67
6.1.4.3	Medium	68
6.1.4.4	Work procedure in sending messages	70
6.1.4.5	The benefits and disadvantages of the telefax	74
6.1.5	Language of written messages	78
6.1.5.1	Situational factors affecting language	78
6.1.5.2	Change of business language	80
6.1.5.3	Difficulties in the writing process	85
6.1.6	Opinions of business communication studies	87
6.2	Interviewee profiles and summary of interview results	91
6.2.1	Interviewee profiles	91
6.2.2	Summary of interview results	95
7	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	97
7.1	Major findings in relation to the research questions	97
7.2	Main results in relation to the theoretical framework	100
7.3	Implications for teaching and course design and suggestions for further research	104
	THE BIBLIOGRAPHY	107
	APPENDIX 1	110
	APPENDIX 2	112

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years the very rapid technological advance in the media of interpersonal business communication has profoundly changed the process of sending and receiving messages in businesses and other organizations. After the telefax was first introduced in the late 1970s, it took some time, and a number of improved fax-machine models, before the medium was generally accepted, and it started to expand to companies of all types and sizes. The latter half of the 1980s was the time for 'a fax revolution', the machines proliferated in business enterprises and other institutions, and even individual people started buying them to be used at home. A somewhat similar trend can be found in the use of electronic mail for business purposes; the coverage is, however, not nearly as large as the fax's, and it seems that e-mail is still today used more for in-house communications in the company's own network than in communicating with customers or other outside parties through commercial networks. It is evident that the computerized workplace is different from the old 'telephone and typewriter' office, but little is known about the effects of the technological revolution on actual communication processes and the language used in communication. The present study aims at exploring the area by examining the communication environment in businesses, and looking at business people's views on the language that they use in communication.

The starting point for the present study is pedagogical: the perspective of teaching and studying English business communication. In Finnish business colleges, universities and other institutes of higher education the subject is usually labeled 'business correspondence', and the courses traditionally deal with the different phases of a business transaction and focus on 'letters' (or rather 'messages' as they are called in this study; for further discussion on the letter-message distinction see p. 98) exchanged between the buyer and the seller during the transaction. The contents of business communication courses have been roughly the same in various institutions in Finland, with emphasis on the phraseology and form of messages; thus business communication has mostly been taught and studied according to rigid patterns. Written communication has been regarded as a skill that can be learned through sample letters, translation exercises and a store of phrases, rather than focusing on improving the student's writing as a process, and taking the situation into account.

The above 'letter-centered' approach was prevailing throughout the 1980s, when the present writer worked at a Business College teaching English. Traditional business correspondence had a major share in the curriculum; it covered about 50% of the higher-level two-year course (*yo-merkonomi*). Different letter types and phrases were studied and translations from Finnish practised; the format and layout were standardized, and regarded as given. At the same time, intuitively and through reports from business people, it seemed that in real life situations business was carried on — import and export transactions took place, goods and services were exchanged, and money transferred — with messages that were very different from the textbook examples. Towards the end of the decade the real examples were mostly faxes, often handwritten and messy, containing a few words or sentences that carried the core message through. At that time the concepts of 'a fax' and 'to fax' were adopted to general usage; according to people in business, the line "drop me a fax, will you?" was one of the most frequent

business repiques in daily conversations. It seemed that there was a large gap between what was taught in business communication courses, and what the reality that the students met after school was like.

The obvious gap between classroom and reality is the actual origin of the present study. The discrepancy was discussed by us teachers, and we asked ourselves: " To what extent are the present courses of business communication relevant as it seems that traditional letters are very seldom written any more, and instead only brief, often handwritten faxes are thrown back and forth?" Thus the basic research question of the present study relates back to teaching:

What should the studies of written business communication at an advanced level — in the present rapidly changing environment — contain, to best equip the students for their future jobs in business?

In order to find an answer to the basic question several areas will have to be studied: (1) the present workplace environment where English is used, (2) business people's own opinions on, and attitudes towards, their communication and their experience of business communication studies, (3) media developments, and the effect of the medium on the language, (4) authentic business messages and the process of their production, (5) teaching material and teaching processes. The present study, which is regarded as the first phase of a more extensive project, deals with the first three areas and aims at

- describing the present workplace environment where English business messages are exchanged in the Finnish business community; the focus will be on recent media developments
- finding out what the messages are (letters, faxes, telexes, e-mail) ; and
- surveying business people's opinions on business communication and the language used.

The main problems raised for examination are:

- (1) What are the general characteristic features of the present environment where English business messages are exchanged?
- (2) What communications media are used?
- (3) What are the messages?
- (4) How do the users see the language? Have they noticed changes along with the more extensive use of the new electronic media?

The following working hypotheses can be found underlying the main problems:

- (1) The present business environment is characterized by extensive utilization of new electronic media, which have brought more efficiency to message exchange. This has meant that, to a large extent, business people are in charge of their own 'correspondence' themselves, and fewer secretaries or other intermediaries are used.
- (2) Telefax is the main medium used.

- (3) The type of sent and received messages varies widely and is often impossible to categorize. The rapid pace of business does not allow, or give reason to, the use of standard, pattern-like forms; it is the situation in question that defines the type.
- (4) The users have noticed changes in the language; it is found to be less formal, and less 'correct' English.

To reach the aims of the study the following research methods were applied

- pre-interviews of business people and business educators in Finland and the United States (for example representatives of a large Finnish engineering company, a large American paper manufacturer, small businesses in consulting, the Finnish Export Centre in New York) to explore the field, establish the research area, and formulate relevant research questions (October 1991 - March 1992)
- pilot questionnaire survey to 60 addressees with which the final questionnaire form was tested (November 1991)
- questionnaire survey sent to 1000 people in business for quantitative data on the present English business communication of the Finnish business community (May 1992)
- research interviews for qualitative, more detailed information; ten of the respondents to the questionnaire were chosen at random to be systematically interviewed on their communication (March - May 1993)

The present thesis is a report on the above measures to analyze the field of English business communication. After the results have been presented attempts will be made to discuss some of the problems related to the basic research question (p. 8). However, it is for the second phase of the total project that the language of authentic messages, and the content of teaching, will be studied, and only then can the final conclusions be drawn.

## 2 EARLIER RESEARCH

The following three chapters will give an overview of earlier research related to the area of the present study. Firstly, chapter 2.1 briefly presents some of the research on languages in business settings in general, and highlights the present trends in the field. Chapter 2.2 focuses on research done on business English in the USA, Europe, and finally Finland. Thirdly, chapter 2.3 introduces projects where the new communication technologies have played a role in the research setting.

## 2.1 Research in business language

Research in business language usually falls within the wide scope of the "ill defined and underdefined discipline" (James 1993:17) of applied linguistics (AL). The pursuit to define AL is one of the most discussed topics within the field. In his article 'What is applied linguistics?' Carl James (1993) presents his views on the earlier ostensive or 'list' definition and the expository or 'theory' definition, and concludes with his own suggestion, which is a definition that aptly suits most of the work done in business languages. He argues that AL should be seen as an interface between linguistics and practicality, "as an 'expert system' where two forms of expertise, value-free and value-added, inter-react in the form of a transdiscipline" (James 1993:17). 'Value-free' refers to the general properties of the language, and 'value-added' is a term assumed from economics referring to the added value that spoken, written, heard, or read texts get *in use* (emphasis added). He further claims that AL can be defined as the knowledge of language that we need to be able to influence language performance, which is a point of view that most business language researchers would emphasize, and a concrete starting point for many of the studies in business languages.

Overall, the amount of research done in business languages is surprisingly small. Every new researcher in the field is amazed by the vast unexplored areas that could and should be looked into.

In a paper read at the Conference on Language Learning and Business Education in Barcelona Nigel Holden (1989:43, also quoted in Yli-Jokipii 1991:59) called for more research on language use in business contexts:

... we know surprisingly little about language usage and performance in business contexts and in relation to companies' competitive quest for resources and strategic advantage... There is a need all in all for empirical investigations which attempt to study language in the business world for what it is. These studies are not only necessary in order to enhance our understanding of language as a facet of corporate communication. There is another reason: how people use language in business contexts represents one of the most potential social influences on modern life. It is curious that this matter has been neglected for so long.

In recent years, however, along with such multinational and multicultural political and economic developments as the strengthening of the European Union and the establishment of the Single Market, the EEA agreement, the NAFTA treaty, and the increasing importance of the Pacific Rim in world trade, the interest in the research of language in multicultural business settings has grown. There seems to be a universal agreement on the importance of language in business contacts, which is evidenced by the emphasis that is put on communication skills in the qualifications of all business people. They have to be able to *make use of* the language efficiently in order to achieve their goals; language is used as a tool, and the user has to know how to handle it in a particular business situation. Communication skills are considered important in all business contexts, but it is obvious that in multilingual and multicultural situations the

role of the language is crucial; without a common code system that both parties master well enough, it would be impossible to achieve any results in business or to carry on any other kind of cooperation. It is this growing awareness in the business community of the importance of language and communication that has recently boosted more research into the field, mostly done by teachers of business languages and business communication, and often inspired by the pursuit of the factors that would improve the students' (either 'real' students or people already working in business) performance.

One of the trends in the research of business language in multicultural environments has been the recent interest shown in the English speaking world towards languages other than English. James Calvert Scott dealt with the British efforts to upgrade business foreign language skills in his paper presented at the Tenth Annual EMU (Eastern Michigan University) Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions (Voght and Schaub, eds. 1991:143) and quoted a study (The Single Market: The Facts, 1989) that showed clear evidence of a direct link between export performance and foreign language proficiency. Similarly, there seems to be an increasing awareness in the United States of the significance of at least some knowledge of other languages and cultures in business. The above annual EMU conferences have been arranged fourteen times, and they have attracted participants from both universities and business, and served as meeting places for educators, researchers and 'practitioners' to discuss the use of languages in business contexts. The conferences focus on "two inter-related topics: (1) the value, use and teaching of foreign languages and cultures for international business and other professions, and (2) the internationalization of business and professional education" (Voght & Schaub (eds.) 1991:i). It has to be noted, however, that the target level of foreign language learning in the United States and other English speaking countries is very much lower than the level aimed at in the teaching of English for business purposes in many small European countries, e.g. the Netherlands, Denmark or Finland. Thus the research interests and the general problem setting in language learning research in the United States are very different from the European tradition. In America the aim is some basic knowledge of the structure and everyday vocabulary of the foreign language, and the knowledge of the foreign culture, to reach the level of awareness and appreciation which would make it easier to communicate with a business partner with a different linguistic and cultural background. It is taken for granted that the 'real business', be it orally or in writing, is done in English. In Finland, and many other European countries, students are supposed to adopt the foreign language to be used effectively as a tool in their future business positions. The aim is *to do business in the foreign language* (which in most cases is English): negotiate agreements, sell and buy products and services, write memos, minutes and other documents and messages, give presentations etc., without turning to translators, interpreters or other language experts.

Another trend is the tendency to look at professional communication as a whole; there are projects going on where the traditional spoken/written distinction has been rejected. In the international conference on Discourse and the Professions in Uppsala in 1992 Sonne Jakobsen, Svendsen Pedersen, and Wagner reported on their research project on inter-company foreign language communication, in which the corpus consisted of tape recordings of telephone conversations and copies of business faxes and

letters. This holistic approach towards professional communication was strongly called for by Britt-Louise Gunnarsson in her keynote address at the AILA World Congress in 1993 (Gunnarsson 1993:20) entitled *Studies of Language for Specific Purposes — A Biased View on a Rich Reality*:

The separation of the study of written texts from the study of spoken discourse leads to a fragmentization of our knowledge of professional communication. If we look at the communicative reality in which professional texts are formed, and in which professional talking takes place, the separation seems quite absurd... there is no clear borderline between texts and talk in professional settings. They are instead largely intertwined. There is also no clear division as to content, form or function. Thus professional reality cannot explain the existing separation between studies of the spoken and written sides.

## 2.2 Research in Business English

In spite of the tendencies in the United Kingdom and the United States to acknowledge the existence of other languages, and to realize that there are situations where it might in fact be costly if the British or American party did not know the addressee's language or cultural background, it is still a fact that the common code in world business and other international cooperation is overwhelmingly English. There are some estimates on the shares that English language messages occupy in the various modes of communication; one estimate was given by Colin Moon, a business language consultant of Mercuri International, in his lecture "Does good language always communicate?": 75% of all letters, 85% of phone calls, and 90% of fax messages sent and received in business are in English (Moon, lecture at Svenska Handelshögskolan, 1992).

Considering the importance of business English, and the large share it has in all business communication, it is in fact very little that the wide field has attracted scholarly interest, and the research traditions vary. In the United States the focus seems to be more on written business communication. There is a well-established and active research community built up around an organization called the Association for Business Communication (ABC). Founded in 1935, the organization fosters research and education of business communication, and issues a quarterly journal and bulletin and gives out other publications on the educational and research issues of the field. The ABC also organizes several regional and one national conference every year, where topics related to various aspects of business and managerial communication are dealt with. Many of the studies are concerned with the teaching of business writing, the status of the discipline, curriculum planning, and other education-related topics. The membership of the ABC includes members from outside North America, but the activities and the publication of research work are mostly carried on by Americans, who, as native speakers of English, look at English business communication from the L1 perspective.

In addition to the interest in business writing in the United States there is a great deal of active research in cross-cultural communication, which was discussed above (page 13). This work is often carried out in departments of management, business administration or international business, and not in departments of languages and communication. Language is seen as part of the international communication process, and as one of the elements that affect the success or failure of interpersonal communication. Victor (1992:14) presents a model of seven variables that are "likely to shift across cultures in a way that would affect business communication". He deals with such issues as environment and technology, social organization, contexting, authority conception, nonverbal behavior, temporal conception, and language (Victor 1992:15):

Perhaps no other element of international business is so often noted as a barrier to effective communication across cultures than differences in language... it (the language) remains the most obvious difference that international business communicators are likely to face... Although the inability to understand what one party communicates in a foreign language is the most fundamental problem that differences in language pose, lack of shared language presents many less obvious pitfalls as well. Because these other difficulties are more subtle, they may be more invidious than straightforward incomprehensibility.

From the point of view of the present study, the above definition is interesting, as the study deals with business communication in English in a setting where the communicators have a good command of the language, but have different native languages, and the possible problems in communication do not arise from straightforward incomprehensibility, but are what Victor above calls the "more subtle difficulties" that may be "more invidious" and thus crucial at the various phases of a business transaction.

The research tradition in Europe varies from traditional LSP studies on terminology, text types, and translation to research in various aspects of spoken discourse. It seems that on this continent spoken business communication has recently attracted more interest than written; for instance, English business negotiations of native speakers of English have been studied by Mirjaliisa Charles (Lampi 1986) of the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, and she has developed the topic further at the University of Birmingham expanding it into a cross-cultural setting, in which she compares English and Finnish negotiations (Charles 1994). Business negotiations have also been studied in Denmark by Johannes Wagner (1993) and Annette Grindsted (1992). Alan Firth of the University of Aalborg offers an interesting perspective on analysing interaction in a business setting (Firth 1991). He does not separate the spoken and written modes but looks at the negotiation activity involved in a business transaction as a whole, independent of the mode. In his study, negotiation takes place by telex, by fax, and on the phone. Firth draws attention to the way in which work tasks integral to the setting in question shape the interaction and how the tasks are undertaken in and through discourse activity, in spoken or written work routine (the holistic approach was also discussed above, pp. 13-14).



Despite the long and extensive tradition of teaching written English business communication in Finnish business schools and in business colleges and other institutes of non-university higher education, it was not until the year 1992 that the first extensive Finnish study was carried out in the field. Yli-Jokipii examined requests in professional discourse (Yli-Jokipii 1992), and looked at British, American and Finnish business letters. Further, for her dissertation she studied the same corpus, but went deeper in analyzing professional discourse in business organizations and the concept of request (Yli-Jokipii 1994). Her pioneering work offers a wide account on business writing and the present state of research in general, and focuses on the linguistic realizations of requests, which are studied from several viewpoints "related to such dimensions of language use as (1) the cross-cultural dimension (2) the educational dimension (3) the linguistic dimension and (4) the corporate dimension" (Yli-Jokipii 1994:23). Prior to Yli-Jokipii's study, written English business communication has been studied in some Masters' Theses. Luoma (1993) examined and compared English and Swedish business messages written in a Finnish medium-sized confectionary business and Källberg studied the syntactic features of telex messages in international banking (1987). Ruskelin (1989) has looked at written communication in the Finnish paper industry from a needs analysis point of view; needs of English at work by Finnish engineers have also been surveyed by Väänänen (1992), and Loppela and Paaso (1990).

### **2.3 The new technologies in business communication research**

The new communication technologies have hardly had any role in business communication research. Of the above studies, Yli-Jokipii included fax-messages in her corpus, but only those that met her criteria of 'a letter', and no distinction was made between mailed or faxed letters. She discusses, however, other modes of communication (telex and fax) quite extensively and gives solid reasons for her perspective: "No cross-cultural research based on a corpus of natural data exists in the case of letters. If it had existed, it would have been better to focus the research on language restricted to the electronic media of transmission, with possibilities for comparison with non-electronically conveyed messages" (Yli-Jokipii 1992:36) Luoma's messages also include faxes, but similarly, she does not make the distinction between different message forms.

In the 1980s there was some interest in the then widely used telex-language. The Finnish study by Källberg was mentioned above; Helena Zak (1985) analyzed the discourse structure and word abbreviation and omission of telexes. At that time telex was the most extensively used mode for communication in business, and totally ignored in linguistic research and Business English text-books, which "take the business letter as their model of business correspondence" (Zak 1985:3). Zak points out that letters are on their way out, to be replaced by the telex and the fax. She reports to have included also fax messages in her data, but consistently speaks about telexes only in the analysis, since her judgement is that "telex and fax differ only in their mode of transmission; the type of text produced by a writer is the same" (Zak 1985:3). As she did not make the telex/fax distinction in the analysis, it is impossible to comment on the above claim in her corpus, but the 'sameness' of telex and fax text can obviously be explained by the

fact that in the early or mid 1980s, at which time her material had been collected, the telefax was still an emerging medium, just starting to take over the telex. Thus it seems natural that in the beginning the writer chose to use the same language structures and forms in faxes as she/he had used in telexes.

Zak concludes that the telexes that she analyzed from the viewpoint of discourse analysis perform a basic set of discourse and illocutionary functions, and that "these functions are performed within a certain predictive discourse framework" (1985:130), which provides the bones for the text. The flesh, text content, depends on the situation in question and no particular lexis dominates. The implications for teaching business writing, according to Zak, are that it would be inadequate to equip students with a mere knowledge of the discourse framework of the texts; the writers and readers need to be able to face the unexpected in terms of content and need mastery of a wide range of English. In her conclusion, Zak also focuses on the interactional level of the telex exchange (1985:132) and quite justifiably questions the claim by Brown and Yule that "written language is, in general, used for primarily transactional purposes" (1983:4).

The only study found focusing on business faxes is the Master's dissertation of Roger Thompson (1991) at Aston University. He examined the communications systems at a Spanish Advertising Agency, which was the Madrid branch of an American Multinational marketing organisation. Thompson carried out interviews among the employees and collected a corpus of about 60 English fax messages, and studied the discourse features in them. He very clearly rejects the claim mentioned above by Zak (page 19) that the type of text produced by telex and fax is the same. Instead, Thompson emphasizes the linguistic elements that foster mutual cooperation, friendliness and politeness that he found in the fax messages, and concludes that, although almost anything can be sent through the fax machine, there is, based on his corpus, a 'typical' fax that is a mixture between a business letter and the telex message, retaining "some of the richness of a Business letter, but with the utility nature of telex (speed, turnaround etc)" (Thompson 1991:14).

At a general level the new communication technologies in the workplace and the implications for organizational communication have been discussed in several articles in recent years. The December 1992 issue of *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication* contained an extensive special section on technology and business communication. The articles dealt with electronic mail, voice mail, fax, and the new collaborative systems where computers, telephones and graphic systems are merging into integrated communication technologies. The effects of the new technology on the social and cultural environment of a business setting were discussed, but most writers looked at the matter from the educator's perspective, focusing on course design and other classroom related topics. Hansen (1992) presents all the new forms of media (e-mail, fax, hypermedia, voice mail, videoconferencing and group decision support systems) and suggests topics for further research. Hansen describes fax as an attractive text-delivery system, which is rapidly finding its way into homes, too. Fax combines the best of two worlds: electronic transmission speed and paper as the end result.

It is an interesting compromise for a society not quite ready for the paperless information age... Yet fax technology has been little researched. Several interesting questions exist: ...

- Do people send more faxes than they receive, i.e. is fax used as a vehicle for response or for broadcast of information?
- How do fax texts compare to texts distributed by conventional means?
- Do people compose documents expressly for fax, and if so, do these texts have distinguishing characteristics? (Hansen 1992:5)

In the same issue Howard discusses computer-mediated communication (CMC) as the business communication medium that is spreading throughout American society at a fast pace. The networking systems are being supported by politicians and invested in by businesses. More and more companies switch to e-mail "because it appears to lead to more creative and better informed solutions to business problems" (Howard 1992:11). Howard also discusses some of the potential problems that the new medium without an established set of 'rules for conduct' may bring along.<sup>\*)</sup> He strongly objects to the view that "writing e-mail messages isn't any different than any other kind of writing" (1992:11). Instead, he is convinced that CMC is radically different from print or oral communication, and calls business communicators to "develop genres which cater to the special needs of 'electronic audiences'" (1992:11). Specifically, he points out two aspects typical of e-mail communication: the very large volumes of information sent and received, and the lack of contextual cues in the messages.

Dubin writes about e-mail and the fax, based on her paper presented at the AILA Congress in 1990 (Dubin 1991). She deals with the two modes in the North American academic settings, and presents her own, and her colleagues' experiences. She quotes Art Buchwald, who has pointed out that "the most important new word in the English language is 'fax'" (1991: 50) and expects an even more widespread use in the near future. She does not study the language any further, but claims (1991:50) "... faxing tends to reserve the protocols which have already been established for various types of writing. Typically, faxed materials are identical with those sent via conventional postal systems or messenger services. They simply arrive instantaneously." Dubin's views on e-mail are more reserved; she acknowledges it to be firmly established in the domains of communications, science, and multinational business, but considers it to illustrate "a literacy club" (Smith 1988, as quoted by Dubin 1991:50); those who have it know they possess something which imparts prestige and power, others sense they lack something for which they do not have the proper credentials or entrance requirements (Dubin 1991:50).

---

<sup>\*)</sup>The new social codes of the computerised workplace have also been dealt with in articles and programmes in the mass media. In the *British Independent*, on 16 January 1994, Helen Fielding wrote about the "Netiquette", the new etiquette for the electronic messaging system which is in evolution, and which is needed e.g. to screen part of the 400 messages that the Chairman finds in his computer every morning, including inadvertent invitations to the pub and assaults on his character. (H. Fielding: Screen secrets: an office user's guide).

Kalaja and Leppänen take an interesting approach to e-mail language when discussing transaction and interaction in e-mail messages (Kalaja & Leppänen 1991). They do not want to place e-mail messages along with the one-dimensional continua written/spoken but look at the texts with reference to the communicative event itself. They propose a framework within which texts can be compared with each other indirectly, irrespective of mode, and similarities and/or differences can be explained with reference to the overall goals of the writer or speaker. Kalaja and Leppänen (1991:10) claim that "also written texts, regardless of their level of formality or intimacy, can show the writer's focus on interaction... (which) in e-mail messages can be realized by similar linguistic means as in spoken texts, or, what is most interesting, by quite different means."

The present study will draw on many of the results and conclusions of the previous research mentioned above. However, the aim in this study is to look at the developments of business English (BE) in the middle of the changing technological environment within a particular setting characterized by:

- (1) BE used by non-native, but often nearly native-like speakers; and
- (2) BE as a teaching/learning object; educational perspective.

### 3 DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA IN BUSINESS

Written messages have been sent between individuals as long as people have been able to write and read. The modern post office, which is run by the state, and transmits governmental, private and business messages, has existed for 300 - 400 years; the Finnish Post Office was established in 1636.

The development of communications media is naturally intertwined with the development of society in general. New interventions and structural changes in society have changed forms of communication, but also the other way round: new communications methods change organizations, and society as a whole. For hundreds of years progress was slow and societal structures stayed unchanged. Now, during the past fifty years we have seen a radical change over to an information society, which has brought along — and been influenced by — tremendous advances in information technology.

The rapid advance in business communications media during the past few decades, and, even more so, the past few years (see Figure 2, p. 23), has changed 'the typewriter and telephone office' into a computerized environment where PCs and fax-machines are in constant use. From this perspective it is understandable that, as it seems, business communicators and their skills, attitudes, and language have not always quite kept up with the development of the technology.

#### 3.1 Letter

In business a mailed letter was the only form of communication for hundreds of years. The number of all letters transmitted by the Post Office of Finland has been on the increase

most of this century, while the share of private letters has decreased; in 1964 households sent 33% of all letters, and businesses 67%, in 1982/83 households accounted for only 15%, and businesses for 85% (Pietäinen 1988:322). The number of all letters and packages sent from Finland to foreign countries grew from approximately 5.5 million units in the year 1925 to 43.5 million in 1980 (Pietäinen 1988, appendices 42-46). Mirja Hellevuo from the research unit of PT Group (the Finnish Post Office) said that, during the past few years, the growth of the number of letters has stagnated, but it is still too early to see the real trend and estimate the reasons; according to her, part of the stagnation can be explained by the current economic recession and part by the increased use of electronic media. She also pointed out that invoices cover a very large share of all business letters in the domestic market; as long as invoices are still mailed, the volumes of letters transmitted by the post will stay large. In her opinion, electronic media have not, or not yet, taken such a large market share from ordinary letters as had been expected; she was of the opinion that fax messages often replace telephone calls, rather than letters (private communication).

### **3.2 Telephone and telegram**

During the first half of this century, telephone calls and telegrams were increasingly used in business to deliver urgent messages. Telephones still have a vital role in today's business communication; it is certainly true that a certain number of phone calls have been replaced by faxes or e-mail messages, but the supply of telephone services has diversified, and for example, mobile phones, answering machines, and voice-mail have opened up new opportunities for communication. Telegrams were used frequently in foreign trade still in the 1960s, but after the introduction of teleprinter or telex machines the importance of telegrams soon declined.

### **3.3 Telex**

Telex machines are remotely connected electric typewriters with dial-up mechanisms to make the connection with the recipient's machine. In the 1970s and early 1980s, written business communication typically consisted of large numbers of telex messages that delivered daily, routine-like matters, and letters that were written and sent if the matter was not urgent, and a more personal touch was required. Telexes were used extensively, as they offered many advantages compared to phone calls or telegrams: the rates were fairly low, messages could be sent any time during the day or night, which made communication with distant countries considerably easier, a written document was produced at both ends, and even 'conversation' was possible, if the sender and receiver were sitting by the machines at the same time. As the machines developed, it was possible to type the message first on a special perforator which punched a series of holes for each character in a paper tape, and only then send the tape out at maximum speed; high speed was important as the charge was proportional to the actual transmittal time. Because of the costs involved, telex language was squeezed and abbreviated. There were certain

abbreviations that were used by the operators to indicate the state of the connections, such as

abs	absent subscriber, office closed
bk	I cut off
mom	please wait
occ	subscriber is occupied.

In addition there were very many international abbreviations that were frequently used in telex exchange, for example

asap	as soon as possible
bibi	byebye
pls	please
tk	thanks
rgds	regards.

Most business relationships also had their own abbreviations and acronyms for product and place names, and other frequently mentioned items, and some used still suitable parts of the standard published codes that had been in use with telegrams. All this made the language of telexes often difficult for outsiders to grasp.

Telex machines were efficient and handy in many respects, but had evident drawbacks: the machine was noisy (often placed in a separate room), from today's perspective the sending procedure was slow, the print quality was not good, only either small or capital letters could be printed, and no pictures or graphs could be sent. Thus it is no wonder that facsimile or fax machines were greeted as a welcome invention, when the first models were introduced in the late 1970s.

### 3.4 Fax

After the introduction of the fax machine it took, however, about ten years, before we could see a real breakthrough; the first machines were very large, slow and complicated, but were developed rapidly, became easily accessible and really proliferated into all businesses and even private homes at the end of the 1980s and the first years of the 1990s. Today the fax machine is an indispensable communications medium in business, and has not only replaced the telex, but is far more widespread in the whole society than telex ever was. There are also interesting examples of the use of fax machines outside business, e.g. the immediate feedback given by viewers of TV programmes by fax, which creates a certain level of interaction, and an art exhibition which consists of fax messages sent in by the invited artists, to show the drawings or sketches they are currently working with.

A fax machine is basically a copier that scans a full-page document and transmits a signal to a second copier, which reproduces the document on another piece of paper. Whatever is on the page will be transmitted whether it is a typed or handwritten message, a drawing, a picture, a document, etc. Since anything can be sent, there is no commonly approved 'etiquette' for a fax format or layout. The messages vary from traditional letters

to a few hand-scribbled words, or illustrations. Delivery takes place by normal telephone lines within a couple of seconds or minutes, depending on the number of pages to be sent. Earlier fax models used specific coated paper, which sometimes made the text indecipherable, and also made it disappear after some time; the present machines do not have these problems as they print on ordinary copier paper, usually with high print quality. Today's fax machines are small, fast, and easy to use, they do not require more expertise than the use of the telephone. Corporations usually have a ready-made fax form with the company logo and/or other details printed on it; it is used as a cover note, on which short messages can be written, or it precedes longer messages giving the number of pages that will follow.

As mentioned above, the number and use of fax machines has grown very rapidly from the end of the 1980s. No exact figures are available, but Lea Lyytikäinen, a researcher of PT Group (the Finnish Post Office), has carried out a market survey for the company's own purposes, which is based on sampling, and shows an increase in the number of fax subscribers of 600-800% from the year 1987 to 1993. At the same time, the number of telex machines halved and the transmittal time dropped even more, close to 60% (private communication).

### **3.5 E-mail and integrated CMC**

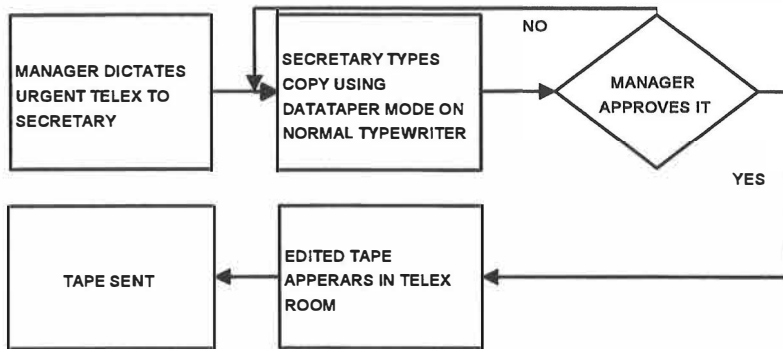
Electronic mail (e-mail) is a way of sending text or other computerized information from one computer to another within the same telecommunications network. For a few years, many large companies have had their own in-house networks, within one country, or around the globe. Also public networks are being increasingly used for e-mail communication among companies and other organizations. Along with the computer revolution of the 1980s, it seems that the boundaries between different means of telecommunication are disappearing. The trend in office automation today is toward total integration of corporate facilities to user workstations, which can provide the users with integrated capabilities, such as word processing and printing, graphics, sending and receiving faxes and telexes, and electronic mail.

### **3.6 Organization of communication**

In the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s many Finnish companies that were involved in foreign trade had centralized their written communication, or 'correspondence', into a special unit, where correspondents, translators, and secretaries took care of the writing, translating, and actual sending of telexes and letters. They were specialists in typing, telex exchange, and languages, but were not required any further knowledge of the actual business. Similarly, in other departments, people did not have to be able to type, or know other languages well, as they were always able to resort to the correspondence unit. This kind of centralized communication was also used by the big banks in Finland. Mauri Komsu, who was the head of the correspondence unit of Kansallis Bank in the 1960s and early 1970s, confirmed that sending out messages in those days was a complicated, multi-step procedure, and even urgent messages had to pass through several people until they

were finally sent out (private communication). Figure 1 depicts the various steps that were involved in the centralized system of sending out an urgent telex message. It is taken from a business English textbook that was first published in 1980, and extensively used in business colleges throughout the 1980s (Kansi & Malmiranta, 1984:267).

Today's business communication takes place in a totally different environment from the centralized 'correspondence' system discussed above. Computers have taken over many secretarial tasks, and very much so in written business communication; capabilities to communicate easily, fast and fluently via the new telecommunications media in the native language, and in most cases also in English and possibly other foreign languages, are among the qualifications of almost all corporate staff today; written communication is not a separate task that could be given over to a specialist, but an indispensable part of a business professional's work role.



**Figure 1.** Sending out an urgent telex message in a centralized communication system.

### 3.7 Historical perspective

To sum up the above discussion on the historical development of business communications media, Figure 2 below (p. 24) illustrates the time spans that the various media have been in use in business. The figure shows very clearly that the new electronic media are only recent inventions, whereas the concept of a 'business letter' is an old-established structure with long traditions in the business community.



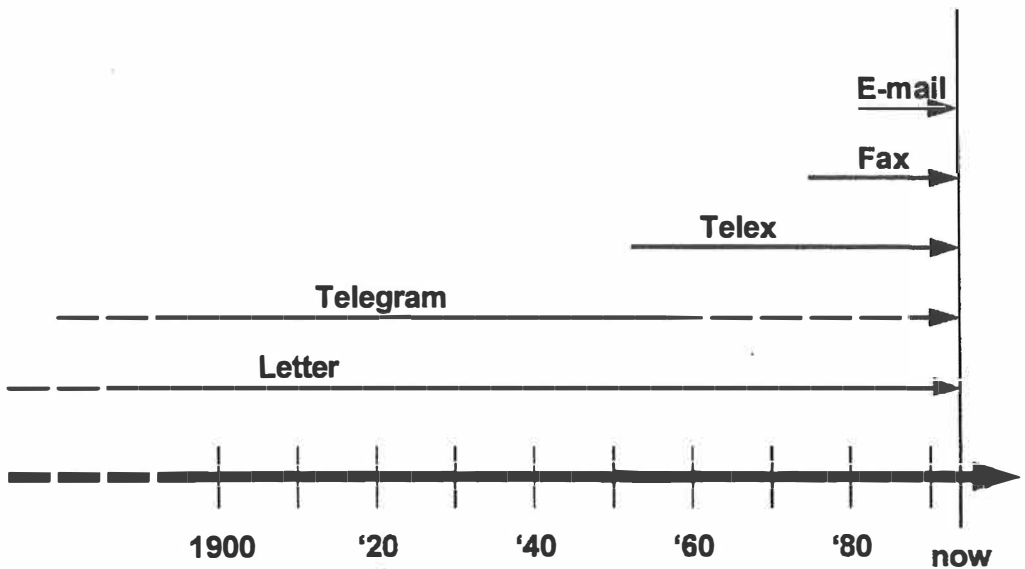


Figure 2. Historical perspective on the existence of various communications media.

#### 4 THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

The theoretical frame of reference for the present study will be defined in this chapter. Figure 3 below (p. 25) indicates how the framework is built, and what aspects from the various conceptual systems are included in it. The widest area where the study belongs to is business English (chapter 4.1); more precisely, the present research setting is workplace communication in a business environment (chapter 4.2), and in more exact terms it is professional discourse among business professionals (chapter 4.3). In addition, two specific viewpoints will be dealt with: the element of social and discursive *change* (chapter 4.4), and the element of *purpose*, as it appears in genre theory (chapter 4.5).

##### 4.1 Business English

The overall conceptual framework for the present study is business English (BE), which is a common and widely used term in general and vocational education and language training; it is the area that has produced more textbooks and other teaching material than any other specific field in English language teaching (ELT) (Yli-Jokipii 1992:21). Yet it has attracted much less scholarly interest, as a concept to be looked into, or as individual research projects to examine developments within BE.

Haegeman (1991: 154-156) presents an interesting discussion on the definition of BE. She quotes G.D. Pickett, (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 1987), who

says that business language looks two ways: firstly, it is communication between businesses and the general public, i.e. General English, and secondly, it is communication among businesses, in which case it is the specialised language of a particular business, e.g. insurance, fashion, etc. Pickett points out that these definitions relate largely to lexis and writing, much less to grammar and speaking. The second type of definition Haegeman mentions is that of looking at BE as a register, a kind of language determined by circumstances or situation. The third way of viewing business language is the most interesting: Haegeman suggests a broad view of BE as a 'variety' of English and says that "a variety can generally be defined as any form of linguistic organisation that corresponds to some significant set of sociocultural factors" (Haegeman 1991:155). This view means that BE could not be defined through lexis or situation but rather should be seen as a 'complete' language in its own right, just as American English or British English, and could thus be approached by researchers accordingly. This would leave no room for normative speculations on the 'good' or 'bad' English of business people, but rather notions such as European English, world business English or even '1992 English' would be accepted (for a further discussion of this topic see p. 99).

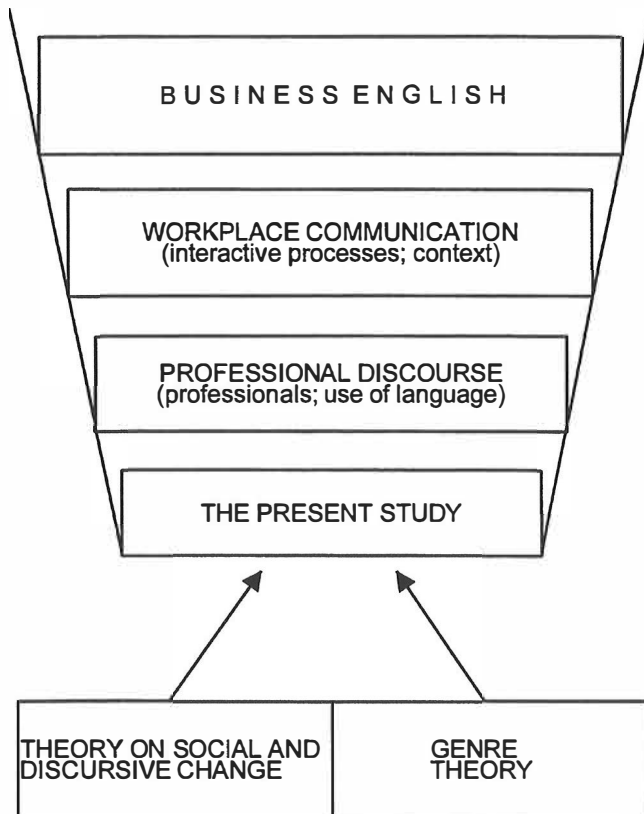


Figure 3. The theoretical frame of reference of the present study.

In an article collection about business writing, entitled *Writing in the Business Professions*, 'business' is defined broadly as referring to "any working situation, whether corporate, governmental, professional or industrial" (Kogen 1989:xiv). Yli-Jokipii (1992: 27-32) discusses the concept of business language in detail and takes the view that in her study business language covers the following areas:

- corporate language
- organizational language
- managerial language, and
- administrative or governmental language if the other party is a corporate representative.

She also discusses the term 'technical language', which is often considered to cover, at least partly, the same field as business language, as for example in the bibliographic sourcebook by Moran and Journet (1985) called *Research in Technical Communication*, under which title they present articles on typical business communication documents and situations. There are, however, areas of technical language (e.g. technical specifications) that clearly fall outside the scope of business language. Thus the term 'technical and business communication' is often used to cover the field extensively.

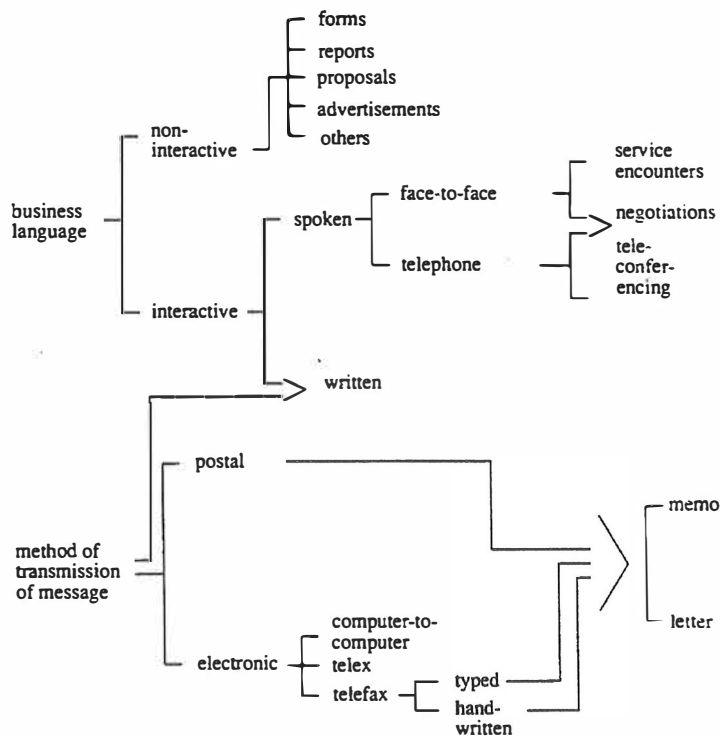


Figure 4. Business Language (Yli-Jokipii 1994:38).

The present study sets out by looking at business language and business English along the lines adopted by Yli-Jokipii: "it is the language used in transactional situations in business enterprises, industrial or non-industrial" (Yli-Jokipii 1992:28). Later, as noted above, the existence of a separate language will be discussed in the light of the opinions on the matter found among the respondents and interviewees.

Yli-Jokipii (1994:38) has drawn a figure (Fig. 4) defining Business Language. The basic distinction for her is between interactive and non-interactive language, which terms she prefers over 'communication' or 'communicative'; she further divides the uses of language to the spoken and written modes, and the written mode according to the method of transmitting the message. The figure covers the area extensively; changes will, however, be suggested below on the basis of the results of the present study (see p. 100).

#### 4.2 LSP vs workplace communication

The terms 'language for specific purposes' (LSP) or 'English for specific purposes' (ESP) are inherently fruitful objects for argument: language is always used for a purpose and there is definitely no end to a discussion about the scope of the word 'specific'; every situation is unique, and every purpose specific, if we want to see it that way. Therefore, it seems only natural that each conference or publication dealing with LSP tends to pose this question at least twice, at the beginning and at the end, and often a few times in the middle: *What is LSP?* or *Is there LSP?* In the LSP section of the AILA 1993 conference one of the papers went a step further, claiming *There is no such thing as LSP* (Lankamp 1993).

The traditional fields of LSP cover studies of professional written texts and the oldest branch relates to the study of terminology, which is still a feature that strongly characterizes LSP. In her keynote address of the LSP section at the AILA 1993, Britt-Louise Gunnarsson gave a thorough account of the historical development of LSP and said that although there had been earlier individual studies on professional terminology and texts, for example on legal, scientific or business language, it was not until the 1970s that the field got more organized (Gunnarsson 1993). The first European symposium on LSP was held in 1977, the *Fachsprache* journal was launched in 1979, and the *ESP Journal* in 1982. Gunnarsson divided LSP into two directions: firstly, the traditional LSP field, which is concentrated in Central and Northern Europe and which deals with issues related to problems in translation and terminology, and secondly, the ESP field, which has developed in the United States and the United Kingdom in English language departments, with a strong orientation towards literature studies and analysis of different genres in a more text-based manner. The former could thus be described as language-based and product-oriented research, aiming at a description and classification of different types of languages for specific purposes, whereas the latter has an interest in rhetoric, aiming at describing the argumentative and persuasive patterns of individual texts.

The concept of LSP or ESP is often defined from the educational perspective, which seems to be a justified view, conforming also to the starting point of the present study. Hutchinson and Waters (1986:6) discuss the emergence of ESP, and say that the post-war expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale created a demand for an international language, and the role fell to English. Previously, learning English was seen as part of a good education, but few really questioned why it was

necessary. Now that English has become the international language of technology and commerce, "it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language — businessmen and -women who wanted to sell their products, mechanics who had to read instruction manuals, doctors who needed to keep up with developments in their field ." This created pressure on language teaching, which was supposed to meet the new demand, and cater for the needs of the various professions: "the traditional leisurely and purpose-free stroll through the landscape of the English language seemed no longer appropriate in the harsher realities of the market place" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1986:7). The teachers felt they had to specialize, some of the former ELT teachers now became ESP practitioners. Hutchinson and Waters assume this educational view of ESP, but emphasize that up to that time, ESP had focused too extensively on *what* people learn, and not *how* they learn, i.e. in their book they distance themselves from the previous language-centered approach, and present their own model for a learning-centered approach to ESP.

However, for the present study the framework of LSP or ESP does not seem adequate, not in any of the orientations discussed above. These approaches pay no or too little attention to the various processes involved in communication situations, and to the actual real-life context of communication, which are important elements for the framework of the present study. Thus the ideas and models that have been presented under the more holistic concept of workplace communication are much more suitable sources to be drawn on in the present study.

Candlin (1993a) spoke about workplace communication in the changing work environment (reorganization of industrial tasks, workplace restructuring) and claimed that the new forms of work practice are inherently communicative; thus there are continuing and growing demands on the communication skills of all employees, and a higher competence level is required. According to him, changes in social and industrial practices have major impacts on workplace communication, which can be seen in the changes in work practices: more team work, involvement in quality management procedures, and adjustment to the advance of the new technology. Candlin looked at communication in the workplace from the pedagogical point of view, and called for a view where text, the object of teaching, is not only seen as a product ("form") or a process ("function"), but the product and process are sited in the context of the social and political environment. He also pointed out the impossible distinction between task skills and language skills: how is an effective performance of a task in a real-life context assessed by the learner him/herself / colleagues / the manager / the language teacher? How can language be extracted from task skills?

To examine communication in the workplace Roberts et al. (1992:6-10) present an expanded view of language, which goes far beyond an analysis of form and function, connecting language both to the social contexts of culture and power, and to the assumptions and expectations which individuals project into language use. The expectations operate at three levels (Roberts et al 1992:7):

<i>Schema:</i>	knowledge and assumptions brought to the interaction;
<i>Frame:</i>	strategies for and interpretations of what is going on in the interaction;
<i>Language:</i>	uses and forms

The extent to which all these are shared between interlocutors will affect the quality and outcomes of an interaction.

The expanded view of language "includes a critical view which engages with language as creating social identity, with the role of language in creating and maintaining social structures, and so with issues of language and power" (Roberts et al. 1992:9). They criticize the functional view for failing to realize that many 'functions' are universal (e.g. 'clarification'), but whether and how they will occur linguistically depends on expectations and interpretations. They distance themselves from the 'teachable' functional view:

An expanded notion of language does not strait-jacket language into something teachable. It recognises that many aspects of the language will be learned not taught. An expanded, communicative view of language requires a pedagogic content which is based on the realities of speaker interaction (Roberts et al. 1992:9).

As the above considerations by Candlin and Roberts et al. show, workplace communication is a wide umbrella definition which refers to all kinds of communication in workplace settings. However, the emphasis is not on the 'pure' linguistic aspects, but the umbrella covers the whole workplace, and communication is seen as a dynamic real-life process between the participants, which is influenced by various individual, organizational, social and societal factors. It is along these lines that the present study focuses on business communication, workplace communication in a business setting, conducted by business professionals.

### 4.3 Professional discourse

The term 'professional communication' is in the present study understood similarly to workplace communication discussed above; only the scope is narrower, emphasizing the professional status of the communicators. To complete the framework, it could, however, be argued that the word 'communication' conveys too mechanical or automatic connotations, stressing the roles of sender and receiver as well as the encoding and decoding phases of the message, and devaluing the importance of the dynamic process as a whole, in a professional setting. Therefore, the concept of professional discourse is suggested as the best suited frame of reference for the present study.

During the past two decades various scholars have used the term discourse, and it has been defined in various ways depending on the discipline or the specific orientation. Roberts et al. (1992:70) present six approaches to discourse:

- (1) linguistic units above the level of sentence (Sinclair; Coulthard; van Dijk; Stubbs);
- (2) language in its social context (Brown and Yule; van Dijk);
- (3) strategies for interpreting interactive signs and conventions (Gumperz);
- (4) cohesion and coherence (Halliday and Hasan; Tannen);
- (5) language as the means for organizing social, political and economic values (Foucault);

- (6) language as reflecting and maintaining power relations (Fowler; Hodge; Kress and Trew; Fairclough);

The above definitions vary from the very specific orientation, "cohesion and coherence", to such wide perspectives, as "language in its social context", or "linguistic units above the level of sentence". However, most of the above aspects emphasize the dynamic nature of discourse, and the fact that any piece of discourse is part of something else, not an entity in isolation. They look at *the use* of language in its context, not as a static object for research or teaching purposes. Based on the above considerations the framework for the present study can be summarized: discourse among business professionals in the rapidly changing business workplace environment. The following chapter will deal with the element of *change*. After that, the dimension of genre analysis will be added to the framework to include the element of *purpose* in the above picture.

#### 4.4 Discourse and social change

##### 4.4.1 Relationship between language and context

The present study deals with language change in a certain, restricted area of discourse, i.e. business communication. Fairclough (1992) presents interesting ideas on language and its change in society in general, and an account of his views will be given here to serve as a basis for discussion from this study's point of view.

Fairclough sets out to develop a method for studying social change by means of language analysis, aiming at a synthesis between linguistics and language studies on the one hand, and social and political thought on the other. His considerations centre around the concepts of 'discourse analysis' and 'discourse', which he attempts to use both in the sense they are used by linguists, and in the sense they are used in social theory, for example in the work of Michel Foucault, where 'discourse' refers to different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice (cf. p. 43). An important aspect in Fairclough's thinking is the view that the relationship between language and its social context is two-dimensional, both affect and change one another. Language is constructed in a certain social environment, but also the other way round:

Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or 'constitute' them; different discourses constitute key entities (be they 'mental illness', 'citizenship' or 'literacy') in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects (e.g. as doctors or patients) (Fairclough 1992:3).

Fairclough refers to Foucault and his considerations of discursive change and power, and poses two questions: "To what extent do discursive changes constitute these wider social or cultural changes, as opposed to merely 'reflecting' them? And how far, therefore, can wider processes of change be researched through analysis of changing discursive practices?" (1992:55) The present study focuses on discursive changes in

business environment, and the above questions and considerations will below be discussed from that point of view on the basis of the results of the study ( p.102).

Fairclough also focuses upon historical change; he is interested in "how different discourses combine under particular social conditions to produce a new, complex discourse" (1992:4). He claims that at present there can be found a growing awareness of the importance of language in social and cultural change, but leaves it open, if the tendency actually reflects an increase in the social importance of language, or if it is that present-day research now finally recognizes the importance of language in social life that has previously been neglected. As examples of changes in language practices that have profoundly affected the activities, social relations and the social and professional identities of the people involved, he mentions, firstly, the upsurge in the extension of the market to new areas of social life, such as education and healthcare. Another example is the tendency to transform workplace culture by setting up institutions which place employees in a more participatory relation with management, for example 'quality circles'; as a result, Fairclough sees that all workers are now expected to engage in face-to-face and group interaction as speakers and listeners and thus most job descriptions now stress communication skills. This is regarded as a tendency to define people's occupational identities in terms that have traditionally belonged to the sphere of private life, which Fairclough(1992:7) considers to be a transnational trend:"The new global order of discourse is thus characterized by widespread tensions between increasingly international imported practices and local traditions".

#### 4.4.2 Three-dimensional conception of discursive event

Fairclough uses the linguistic term 'discourse' to refer to 'language use', 'parole' or 'performance', which is the standpoint taken also in the present study. He sees any 'discursive event' simultaneously as a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. This three-dimensional conception is presented diagrammatically by Fairclough (1992:73) by Figure 5.

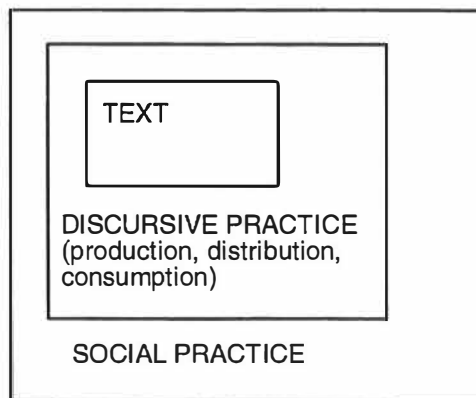


Figure 5. The three-dimensional conception of discourse by Fairclough.



From the point of view of the present study, Fairclough makes an interesting remark on the close linkages between 'content' or 'meaning' and 'form' of a text. He finds that the rigid opposition between content and form is misleading, because the meanings of texts are closely intertwined with the forms. He mentions some grammatical structures as examples, but also points to other levels, such as the turn-taking system in a classroom, or the politeness conventions operating between secretary and manager, as 'forms' being intertwined with the 'meaning' element of the respective discursive events (1992:89). Similarly we could argue that in business communication, form and format are inseparable from the meaning; the message is always interpreted from the receiver's standpoint as a whole entity, as a piece of discourse which incorporates the form and the content, and is seen as one element of the ongoing discursive practice, and thus also of social practice.

#### **4.4.3 Discursive change in relation to social change**

Fairclough's main focus is discursive change in relation to social and cultural change. The origins and motivations of change in the discursive event lie in the problematization of conventions for producers or interpreters; people are faced with dilemmas (1992:96). As examples of these situations Fairclough mentions the problematization of conventions for interaction between women and men, and the problematization of traditional political right-wing discursive practices. We could also argue that this kind of problematization can be caused by technological advances, the changing media environment, which is the viewpoint of the present study. The result is that

Change leaves traces in texts in the form of the co-occurrence of contradictory or inconsistent elements -- mixtures of formal and informal styles, technical and non-technical vocabularies, markers of authority and familiarity, more typically written and more typically spoken syntactic forms, and so forth. In so far as a particular tendency of discursive change 'catches on' and becomes solidified into an emergent new convention, what at first are perceived by interpreters as stylistically contradictory texts come to lose their patchwork effect and be 'seamless'. (Fairclough 1992:97)

In the present study the 'emergent new conventions' of business fax/e-mail messages are the objects of examination, and the views of 'interpreters' on the texts will be studied.

Fairclough takes up the concept of 'genre' in the discussion of interdiscursivity, the principle according to which societal and institutional orders of discourse have primacy over particular types of discourse, which again consist of diverse and varying elements: vocabularies, turn-taking systems, scripts, politeness conventions, and so forth. But, Fairclough points out, it is possible to classify the elements in terms of a small number of major types, such as 'genre', 'style' and 'register', of which genre overarches the other types particularly in the sense that it corresponds closely to the types of social practice, and the system of genres determines which combinations and configurations the other types occur in (1992: 124-5). The term 'genre' is used for a relatively stable set of conventions; it is associated with a socially ratified type of activity, such as informal chat, a job interview, a poem, or a scientific article. But it is not only a text type: "A genre implies not only a

particular text type, but also particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming texts" (1992:126). A reference is made (Fairclough 1992:126) to Bakhtin (1986), according to whom genres are "the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language". Changes in social practice are, on the one hand, manifested in changes in the system of genres, and, on the other hand, brought about through such changes.

#### 4.4.4 Functions of discourse

From the present study's perspective, Fairclough's discussion of the three kinds of constructive effects of discourse is relevant. According to him, discourse contributes, firstly, to the construction of 'social identities' for 'social subjects' and types of 'self'. Secondly, discourse helps construct social relationships between people, and thirdly, it contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief. The three effects correspond to the three functions of language that Fairclough respectively calls the 'identity', 'relational' and 'ideational' functions (1992: 64). Halliday (Halliday and Hasan 1985:44) deals with the same issue, when he defines the 'metafunctions' of systemic theory: interpersonal, ideational and textual. His 'interpersonal' category corresponds to Fairclough's 'identity' and 'relational' functions combined; the textual category refers to the text structure, such aspects as given/new information, presentation of topic or theme, foregrounding/backgrounding information, and so on. Similarly, Brown & Yule (1983) speak about the transactional function (to transmit information) and interactional function (to establish and maintain social relationships) of the language. One of the aims of the present study is to examine business fax and e-mail language from the viewpoint discussed above, the different functions of discourse (see p. 105).

#### 4.4.5 Shifts in general cultural values

Fairclough has studied doctor-patient relationships, and found that the scientific ethos of a doctor is to a large degree undergoing a change. In the doctor-patient discourse, doctors seem to be rejecting the elitism, formality and distance of the medical scientist figure, in favour of a nice, ordinary person, a 'good listener' (1992:147). This is found to accord with general shifts in dominant cultural values in society, the devaluation of professional elitism and the high value set on informality, naturalness and normalness. Fairclough also claims that conversation is colonizing the media, various types of professional/public discourse, education, and so forth. He finds that a central manifestation of increasing informality is the way in which conversational discourse has spread from its primary domain into the public sphere. One dimension of this is a change in the relationship between spoken and written discourse, the predominant shift being towards speech-like forms in writing (1992:204).

Parallel to this overall societal trend, there is the above mentioned (p. 31) tendency in workplaces to draw areas that traditionally have belonged to people's private lives into the workplace. Fairclough (1992:193) sees this phenomenon as a movement linked to technological change and new styles of management: "'Personal' characteristics of employees, which have hitherto been seen as private and outside the legitimate range of intervention of employers, are now being redefined as within that range of intervention.". It seems probable that this type of 'personalization' of the workplace has an effect, not only

on the wording and rewording of various domains, but also on the general style of, and attitude towards, communication.

One more interesting remark by Fairclough should be mentioned in this connection. He speaks about two fundamental tendencies of contemporary societal order of discourse: democratization ("the removal of inequalities and asymmetries in the discursive and linguistic rights, obligations and prestige of groups of people", 1992:201) and commodification ("social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities. ... for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption" 1992:207). The impact of these tendencies upon the various, more local, institutional orders of discourse is variable: some are heavily democratized/commodified, others less so. However, the salience of these tendencies is evident. According to Fairclough (1992:220), this is possible because of the contemporary 'fragmentation' of discursive norms and conventions. He refers to a certain breakdown of more local orders of discourse, which makes them permeable by the general tendencies. Fragmentation involves (1) greater variability of discursive practice, (2) less predictability for participants in any given discursive event, and, consequently, a need to negotiate how the event will proceed, and (3) greater permeability to types of discourse emanating from outside the domain in question, and to the general tendencies. Fairclough mentions workplace discourse as one of the domains becoming more fragmented in this sense.

In the present study attention will be paid to the business community's views on language change, and the appearance of the general tendencies found by Fairclough (informality, speech-like forms, personalization, democratization, commodification, and fragmentation) will be examined. As the present study ultimately focuses on pedagogical questions (see p. 8), Fairclough's conclusion is interesting. To conclude the discussion on discourse and social change, he calls for a 'critical language awareness' (CLA) element in language education, which would help the learners to become more conscious of the practice they are involved in as producers and consumers of text: "of the social forces and interests that shape it; the power relations and ideologies that invest it; its effects upon social identities, social relations, knowledge, and beliefs; and the role of discourse in processes of cultural and social change" (1992:239).

#### 4.5 Genre analysis

In the above chapters (4.1 - 4.4) the general framework of the present study was at a very general level defined to be *Business English* and more precisely *workplace communication* in a business environment, and in exact terms *professional discourse*, as the study focuses on message exchange between business professionals, and looks at the language as it is used in its environment. The discourse examined in the present study is surveyed from two specific viewpoints: (1) discursive and social change, presented in Ch. 4.4, and (2) genre theory. Thus the present framework will now be completed with an overview of the concept 'genre analysis', as presented by John Swales in his account of the definitions and pedagogical applications of the method (Swales 1990). In recent years his pioneering work has been extensively discussed and commented on in many forums, and also elaborated by other scholars, for example by Vijay Bhatia (Bhatia 1993).

The term 'genre' has been prevalent in literature and rhetoric for a long time as a name for different literary forms. Now it is in common usage also in linguistics, and has, as Christopher Candlin pointed out in his lecture (1993b), almost become devalued as a term, referring to any kind of text and any kind of subject matter. He also mentioned that the basis for the present genre analysis was set out by Halliday in 1978 in his book *Language as a social semiotic*. Halliday was interested in the relationship between our grammatical, textual and contextual knowledge, which constitute what he called the social semiotic. In the 1980s the concept of 'genre' was studied and discussed especially by Australian scholars, e.g. J. Martin and C. Painter, who defined genres as goal-oriented social processes. They also emphasized that genres are staged, because it usually takes more than one step for the participants to achieve their goals. (Painter, C., and J. Martin 1986, quoted by Candlin 1993b).

Swales's (1990) genre analysis grows from perceived shortcomings of earlier discourse studies, particularly through their lack of socio-rhetorical orientation. It is based on a view of language as social action and on the claim that to understand the nature of texts we need to study their use as instruments of communication. He is interested in the roles texts play, and the way texts are related to their uses and users in particular special interest settings. According to him, textual knowledge is insufficient for a full account of genre, since it does not provide a rationale why genre texts have acquired certain features. To find the rationale it is necessary to go beyond the text by methods such as interviewing, participation, protocol analysis, etc. He admits that exploring the extra-textual territory is not an easy task, but proves to be a rewarding one in the end: "Admittedly, searching for the rationale behind particular genre features may prove elusive, but the process of seeking for it can be enlightening for the investigator — as indeed for the instructor and student" (Swales 1990:7). As this quotation also shows, Swales's starting point and main aim is pedagogical; he wants to show the value of genre analysis as a means of studying spoken and written discourse for applied ends, and more specifically, to offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research English. But before concentrating on this specific area he presents an in-depth analysis of the concepts of discourse community (DC), genre, and language-learning task. The first two concepts are relevant to the theoretical framework of the present study, and will be discussed in the following chapters.

#### 4.5.1 Discourse community

Swales (1990:25-27) presents six characteristics necessary and sufficient for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community:

- (1) a broadly agreed set of common public goals;
- (2) mechanisms of intercommunication among the members;
- (3) the participatory mechanism is used primarily to provide information and feedback;
- (4) utilization of one or more genres in the furtherance of the aims;
- (5) some specific lexis; and
- (6) a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise.

From a business professional's point of view, the above criteria seem to match nicely with features that would characterize 'a business community'. Yli-Jokipii (1994:36) discusses these criteria, and finds item (3) somewhat distant from the business environment, but quite correctly points out that feedback can also take a form of an act, e.g. gaining or losing business may be regarded as realizations of the feedback process. Swales's genre framework, and the concept of discourse community, has also been used in business environment by Lampi in her analysis of the Chairman's statements sections in corporate Annual Reports (Lampi 1992:129). She found the concepts and framework suited for cross-cultural comparisons.

The mechanisms for intercommunication referred to in item (2) vary according to community; they can be meetings, telecommunications, correspondence, newsletters, conversations, etc. (Swales 1990:25). Swales elaborates the idea by giving two examples: Cafe owners A, B, and C, who have the same professional roles in life and interact with the same clientele, do not form a discourse community, if they do not, for example, belong to the local Chamber of Commerce, and thus never interact with each other. On the other hand, lighthouse keepers or missionaries in their separate lonely posts do form a discourse community as soon as they have a common base with which they all communicate, if not directly with one another.

In the present work, discourse community is seen as a multi-layered concept, where the higher levels do not meet all of the above criteria, but still serve as useful pre-concepts, pre-DCs, in which the smaller entities can be embedded. As can be seen in Figure 6 below (p. 37), the largest pre-DC to be defined for this study is the global, international business community, within which the various national business communities interact with each other and within themselves. The national communities then include various sectors, e.g. the Finnish banking community, which again interact among themselves and with other sectors, coming now close to meet all of Swales's criteria. However, the 'purest' version of a discourse community would then be the community formed by one company, or a corporate group with all its subsidiaries and other outlets, and its clients as well as other regular contacts.

Naturally, the above DC could be opened further and further, like a Russian doll, to the level of different divisions and departments, even in some cases as far as to one single person in a company, who would be in charge of a certain separate operation, and his/her contacts.

Swales developed the criteria with the academic community in mind; thus applying them to the business world requires one more comment. The first of the above criteria, "a broadly agreed set of common public goals", may seem contradictory in the case of the basic discourse community unit of the above figure, a community formed of one company and its clientele. The seller's goal can be regarded as the opposite of the buyer's: the former seeks for the highest possible price for his products or services, and the latter is trying to get them as cheap as possible. But this conflict is only the surface structure of a business transaction; underneath the surface the seller and the buyer have a common goal: in normal circumstances, and certainly in the long run, they both aim at a balanced relationship, in which the exchange takes place in optimal conditions that guarantee satisfaction for both parties. This smooth and rewarding business transaction is the shared goal ("common goal"), and also shared knowledge ("public goal") by the seller and the buyer of a certain discourse community.

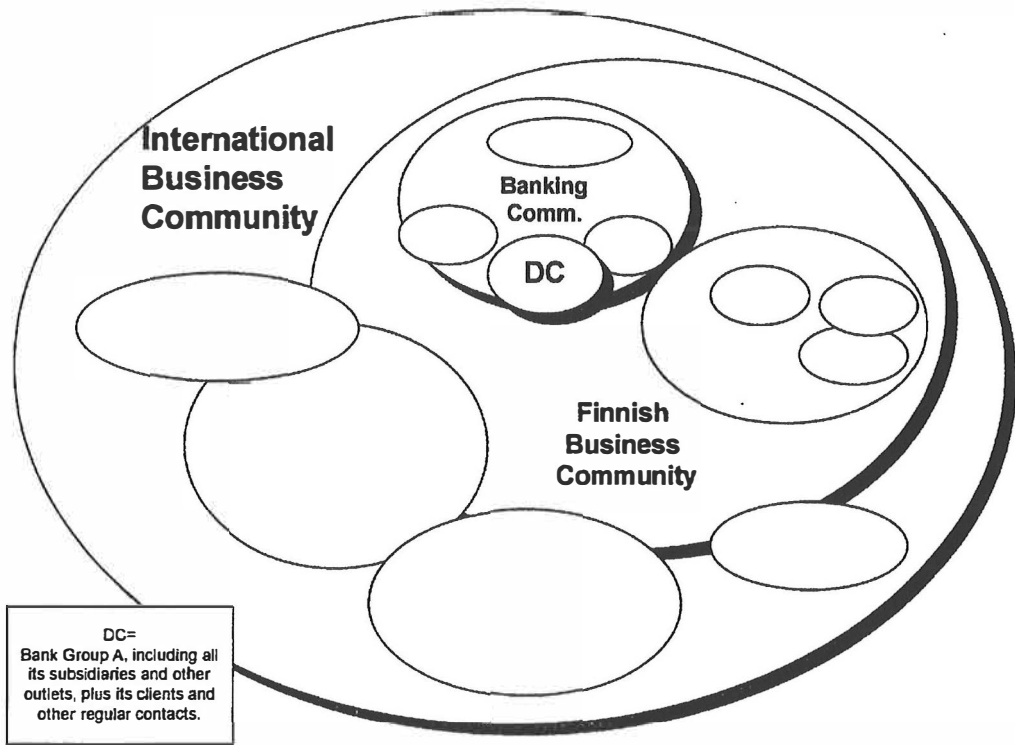


Figure 6. A discourse community and its pre-DC's.

#### 4.5.2 Genre

Swales looked at the concept of genre in four different disciplines (folklore studies, literary studies, rhetoric and linguistics) and found a common stance on which he based his own definition. He summarized the common features (Swales 1990:44, emphasis original) as follows:

- (1) *a distrust* of classification and of facile or premature prescriptivism;
- (2) *a sense* that genres are important for integrating past and present;
- (3) *a recognition* that genres are situated within discourse communities, wherein the beliefs and naming practices of members have relevance;
- (4) *an emphasis* on communicative purpose and social action;
- (5) *an interest* in generic structure (and its rationale);
- (6) *an understanding* of the double generative capacity of genres — to establish rhetorical goals and to further their accomplishment.

This stance suits very well for the discussion of the possible 'business genres' or 'business writing genres', and the applications to course design and teaching. As Swales also points out (1990:45), the above orientation does not reduce courses to narrow prescriptivism or formalism, or deny students opportunities for reflecting upon rhetorical

or linguistic choices. A genre is linked to a certain activity, a structured event, and has characteristic linguistic realisations, but it should not be regarded as deterministic. Candlin (1993b) stressed that we are dealing with probabilities, likelihoods of particular linguistic realisations. Swales underlines the importance of the expectations of the members of the discourse community, and discusses prototypicality (see below, p. 38).

After a thorough elaboration Swales defines 'genre' (1990:58, emphasis added):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which sharesome set of *communicative purposes*. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. *Communicative purpose* is both a *privileged criterion* and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of *similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience*. If all high probability *expectations are realized*, the exemplar will be viewed as *prototypical* by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation.

According to Swales, shared purpose is the primary determinant of a genre, not similarity of form. Sometimes the purpose is easy to identify, as for example in recipes, sometimes it is more hidden, as often is the case in political speeches. Recognition of the purpose provides the rationale for the genre, which gives rise to constraining conventions; thus communicative purpose is the principal property of a genre and "other properties, such as form, structure and audience expectations operate to identify the extent to which and exemplar is *prototypical* of a particular genre"(1990:52). The members of discourse communities employ genres to realize communicatively the goals of their communities. Swales points out that understanding the rationale facilitates communication, but does not necessarily guarantee communicative success.

Bhatia builds his definition of a genre very much on Swales's elements, but adds the psychological dimension. He says that a genre is generally highly structured and conventionalized, with constraints on allowable contributions; "these constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s)" (Bhatia 1993:13) Thus, to fully understand and interpret a genre, one needs to be aware of the cognitive level of genre construction, i.e. to be an expert member, or to use a specialist informant and examine his/her reactions. Bhatia acknowledges Swales's definition of a genre as a good fusion of linguistic and sociological factors, but claims that Swales "underplays psychological factors, thus undermining the importance of tactical aspects of genre construction" (Bhatia 1993:15).

Swales mentions ordinary conversation and narrative as pre-genres, from which more specific types of interaction have evolved (1990:58-59). He does not, however, give the 'letter' a similar status ; it refers to the means of communication, but lacks sufficient

indication of *purpose* (1990:61, emphasis added). Swales claims that the "same observation holds for subsets of the class that refer to fields of activity such as *business letters* or official letters. It is only when the purpose becomes ascribable that the issue of genre arises, as in begging letters or letters of condolence" (1990:61, emphasis added). He finds the above names to describe classes of communications as 'convenient multigeneric generalisations', but not pre-genres. It could, however, be argued that although 'a letter' and 'a fax' as types of communication originate from the transmission method and as such lack any indication of purpose, the situation is all different if the names are preceded and defined by the word 'business': a business letter, a business fax. Bearing in mind the discussion (p. 57) about the common goal of the seller and the buyer — a smooth and balanced business transaction that satisfies both parties and helps them to achieve their individual goals, which in the end are expressed by the figures of the bottom line — the concepts of 'a business letter' and 'a business fax' can be regarded as overarching pre-genres, under which more specific genres, for example, sales letters, or even more specifically, quotations placed within a certain discourse community, operate. The multi-layered system of discourse communities was earlier (Figure 6, p. 37) described as a Russian doll, and the same comparison seems to be applicable here, too.

## 5 METHOD

### 5.1 Questionnaire survey

A questionnaire survey was used as the main method for analyzing the field of present English business communication, and finding answers to the research questions discussed above (p.9). The study was conducted in the spring and summer of 1992. The idea was to obtain a representative sample of Finnish business people in various organizational positions in different business sectors. Also, an attempt was made to cover companies of all sizes, representing different corporate cultures. Moreover, the addressees were supposed to have different educational backgrounds. Thus, based on the above criteria, the sample consisted of three groups: business graduates, graduate engineers, and executive secretaries. The respondents were chosen at random from the members of the following three associations, whose membership extensively covers the Finnish business community:

- (1) The Finnish Association of Graduates in Economics and Business Administration (the Finnish abbreviation SEFE will be used in the present study to refer to this group);
- (2) The Finnish Association of Graduate Engineers, TEK (the abbreviation TEK will be used here to refer to the engineers); and
- (3) The Association of Executive Secretaries (SY will refer to the group of secretaries in this study).

SEFE and TEK are both labour unions, but traditionally they also emphasize other aspects, such as professional development and professional 'togetherness'. About 60% of



all Finnish business graduates belong to SEFE (about 22,000 members), and 75% of engineering graduates to TEK (also about 22,000 members). The Association of Executive Secretaries is not a labour market party but an ideological association providing various professional services to its members. The association has approximately 1,700 members.

The seven-page questionnaire consisted of 31 different questions, out of which 26 were multiple choice and 5 open-ended (see Appendix 2, p. 112). It was sent to 400 business graduates (SEFE-members), 400 engineering graduates (TEK-members), and 200 secretaries (SY-members), i.e. 1,000 people altogether. The addressees were chosen at random from among the members of SEFE and SY, while the engineers were picked from among the TEK-members who work in the private sector (approximately 80% of all members).

A total of 395 questionnaires were returned; two of them contained only the statement that the questions were irrelevant to the respondent in question at the moment, and these two were excluded from the data. Thus the response rate was 39.5% and the final number of the fully or partly filled-in questionnaires that were analyzed was 393. The response rate was somewhat lower than expected; in the pilot study conducted prior to the final survey a response rate of over 60% was reached. The lower rate can partly be due to the more extensive questionnaire at the final phase, and also probably to the traditionally busy end of May - early June season in Finnish businesses before the summer holidays. Also, the fact that the 1,000 respondents were chosen at random without any predetermined criteria (other than leaving out the public sector of the engineers), e.g. the need of English having been emphasized, can certainly be regarded as a reason for the survey not achieving a higher response rate. However, the response rate of 39% was regarded as satisfactory for the purposes of this study for two reasons; firstly, since the aim was to look for trends in the development of business communication, not for exact information on the distribution of the population's views, and secondly, because the quantitative data was later complemented by qualitative data from the interview study.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to look at the target group's overall needs of business English and study their views on their own written communication, its structure, the medium, and the kind of language required in various professional situations. Special emphasis was placed on the respondents' opinions on the changes in recent years; on the one hand, the changes in the organization and structure of person-to-person communication and, on the other hand, the changes in the kind of language used. The respondents were also asked to comment on the contents and methods of English studies in business schools/colleges or universities of technology.

All the answers received were coded and a statistical analysis carried out. The percentage distribution and mean values in the three groups were analyzed and compared. Crosstabulations were conducted between the variables that were found relevant for the research setting. Statistical significance was tested with chi-square test. The differences were considered highly significant if the p-value was under 0.001, significant if it was between 0.001 and 0.01, and almost significant if it was between 0.01 and 0.05.

## 5.2 Interview study

To complement the quantitative data from the questionnaire study, a series of interviews was conducted. Ten out of the 395 respondents were interviewed in March-June 1993. The purpose was to receive more in-depth information on the target group's overall needs for English in business and specifically on their written communication. In addition, there was a need to look at the different concrete situations, the context, in which messages are exchanged and thus obtain more information on the 'archive' of the discipline. The term 'archive' is used by Fairclough (1992:226) when he comments on the perspective of specialist disciplines:

One can only make a sensible decision about the content and structure of a corpus in the light of adequate information on the 'archive'. (This term is used in a way which extends it beyond its historical usage, to refer to the totality of discursive practice, either recorded past practice or ongoing practice, that falls within the domain of the research project.)

For the above purposes, interviewing was regarded as the most suitable research method. In a study on entrepreneurs Marjosola (1979, 38; translated into English by the present writer) discusses the advantages of the interactive element of the interview method :

Creating a holistic picture of the target phenomenon, which leads to increased understanding, is possible only when the study is conducted in such a manner that the researcher is in interaction with the target group and thus learns to understand its social rules, language, and through them issues that are relevant for the research objectives.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form. The method entails that the researcher does not prepare a list of detailed questions, but certain relevant themes are chosen that serve as 'umbrellas' for discussion. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1979) call this type of interview 'a theme interview' and state that although the topics or themes are designed in advance, the method lacks the strict form and order of the questions that a structured interview would have. It is also typical of the method that the informants' subjective views and experience are emphasized.

Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956:3-4, *The Focused Interview: a manual of problems and procedures*, quoted in Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1979:50) use the term 'focused interview', and list four inter-dependent features:

- (1) Extensiveness. The informants should be able to offer their views on all related aspects.
- (2) Specificity. The reactions of the informants should be as specific as possible.
- (3) Depth. The interview should help the informants describe the affective, cognitive, and evaluative aspects related to the target phenomenon.

- (4) Personal context. The interview should also cover the informants' earlier experience, and other characteristics that affect the meanings that they give to various phenomena.<sup>\*)</sup>

The above features were all taken into account in the ten interviews. The focus was on the informants' subjective needs and views, which was also pointed out to them explicitly, before starting the discussion. On the basis of the data from the questionnaire study eight main themes were chosen, and several subthemes were discussed under each topic. The aim was to look at the professional language environment from the informants' point of view, and encourage them to offer their own opinions and experience on the selected themes. The informants were also advised to look at the developments from the perspective of their whole working lives, and also try to remember how communication was conducted earlier.

A comprehensive outline for the interviews can be found on page 187 (Appendix 1). The eight main themes discussed were

- (1) basic information on the informant;
- (2) university/college studies in English in relation to the requirements of working life;
- (3) different Englishes and the role of cultural knowledge;
- (4) need for oral and written language skills;
- (5) medium and language of written person-to-person communication;
- (6) difficulties in producing or interpreting written messages;
- (7) efficient written communication; and
- (8) teaching of business communication.

The interviewees were chosen from among the respondents who had indicated their willingness to discuss the matter by giving the relevant contact data at the end of the questionnaire. A decision was made to choose the number of interviewees in the subgroups in relation to the number of questionnaires sent out: four business graduates, four engineers and two secretaries were interviewed. The criteria applied for selecting the interviewees were the following:

- (1) the interviewees should represent different business sectors and age groups and come from various types of organizations;
- (2) the interviewees should use English frequently (daily or weekly) and the amount of their written communication should be extensive;
- (3) there should be a certain amount of 'verbosity' in the answers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire to show that the informant has something to say about his/her communication and its environment.

The prevailing economic recession could be seen to some extent, when attempts were made to contact the respondents. As a result of heavy restructuring programmes going on in many companies, some of the respondents had left their posts after they had

---

<sup>\*)</sup> The original source not available; translation into English from the Finnish in Hirsjärvi and Hurme by the present writer.

returned the questionnaire, and some had assumed new tasks, which slightly complicated the process of arranging the interviews. After the initial contact was made, there were no difficulties in finding the time for the interview; none of the people contacted refused and all of them were very helpful and co-operative, and willing to present their views on business communication.

All the interviews took place at the interviewees' offices or a conference room nearby. They were told beforehand that it would take about 1½ hours and that the same issues that had been asked about in the questionnaire would be discussed, but now in more detail. Most of the interviewees only vaguely remembered having filled in the questionnaire, and were willing to go through the matters again. They were also encouraged to look for typical samples of their communication which they could refer to during the interview. Most of the interviewees provided a few copies of messages sent or received, and the contents, language and format were discussed in the interview.

After each interview a brief, descriptive report was written on the interviewee, and the points that seemed to stand out from the interview in question. The sessions were audiotaped; the length varied from 1 hour to 1 hour and 45 minutes. Then they were roughly transcribed, except for the items that were considered the most essential, which were transcribed word by word. The comments by each interviewee on the points that emerged as the most relevant for the present study were collected on note cards and compared with each other, and presented in a table form (see Table 36, p. 96). Comparisons were also made with the results of the questionnaire study.

Chapter 6 below will present the findings of the study. The results of the questionnaire survey will form the core of the analysis, but they will be complemented by qualitative information received in the interviews (Chapter 6.1). Afterwards, (Chapter 6.2) a review of the interviews will be given in the form of detailed interviewee profiles, and the most relevant findings of the interview study will be summarized.

## 6 DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Results of the questionnaire survey

In this chapter the data received from the questionnaire survey will be presented, and complemented by relevant qualitative information from the interview study. (N.B. the term 'respondent' refers to the the questionnaire study, the term 'interviewee' to the interview study, and the term 'informant' is used either in instances where the reference to the questionnaire or the interview is clear from the context, or sometimes as referring to both groups). First, background information will be given on the respondents and their companies, and workplace situations where English is used are described. Then, the focus will be on written communication, its organization and language. Finally, the informants' views on business communication studies will be presented. The questionnaire form can be found in Appendix 2.

**6.1.1 Respondent profile**

Of the 393 respondents, 143 (36%) were business graduates, 139 (35%) were engineering graduates, and 111 (28%) secretaries. The response rate in the group of secretaries was clearly the highest (56%), as could be expected; their answers were also more thorough and more extensive than those of the two other groups, and very few of the secretaries sent in questionnaires which were only partially filled in, which was the case frequently in the other groups. This can certainly be explained by the conscientiousness typical of the role of a secretary, and by the interest in languages and language use, which is usual in that role.

**6.1.1.1 Sex, age and educational background**

Both sexes are equally represented in the entire group of respondents. There were 197 men (50.3%) and 195 women (49.7%); one informant did not report the sex. However, the subgroups were highly different in this respect: of the engineers 122 (87.8 %) were men, whereas all the secretaries (except the one where the information was missing) were women. In the group of business graduates, the male respondents slightly outnumbered the female: 75 (52.4%) were men and 68 (47.6%) were women. All the above percentages correspond to the proportions of men and women in the respective associations.

The age of the respondents was categorized in four age groups. The percentages of the whole group and the three subgroups can be seen in Table 1. (N.B. in the tables that present the results of the questionnaire survey decimal figures have been rounded up; thus the totals do not always equal 100%.)

**Table 1. The age of the respondents in the whole sample and the subgroups.**

AGE	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
< 30	18	22	27	-
31-40	37	35	48	26
41-50	33	34	16	55
51 <	12	10	9	19
≈	100	100	100	100

The respondents are quite evenly distributed among the four categories in the whole sample, but there are great differences as to the age of the respondents between the subgroups. The crosstabulation of subgroup by age showed that the differences were statistically highly significant. It might look surprising that there were no secretaries under the age of 30, and 74% were over 41. This can be explained by the rigorous requirements that a secretary has to meet to become a member in the Association of Executive Secretaries. They are required several years of experience in an executive secretary/assistant position, and typically they are secretaries to the highest executives in large or medium-sized corporations. The association does not have any official statistics about the age of its members, but the office clerk of the association stated the average age to be close to 45 years (private communication).

An overrepresentation of the younger generation can be seen in the subgroup of engineers: 75% of the respondents were under the age of 40. Again, this is the case also in the association as a whole. The same trends can be found from the data concerning the graduation year. None of the secretaries had graduated in 1985 or after, whereas almost half of the engineers (47%) were 'recent graduates' (1985 or after). In the group of business graduates the figure was 33%. It seems that, in addition to secretaries, especially young engineers find professional English important enough in their work to complete this kind of a questionnaire. Moreover, their answers to the open questions were often extensive, and 21 out of the 61 recent graduates also volunteered to discuss the matter in a later interview. The earliest graduation years mentioned were 1950 (TEK), 1953 (SY), and 1954 (SEFE).

The questionnaire also included questions about the degrees that the respondents have and the school/university that they graduated from. As expected, the members of SEFE hold business degrees from Finnish institutions of higher education (98%) or degrees taken in other countries. Of the 140 Finnish business degrees, 56 were Bachelor's degrees: either B.Sc. (Econ) ("vanha ekonomi"), 43 respondents (30%), or correspondent/academic secretary (kirjeenvaihtaja/ akateeminen sihteeri), 13 respondents (9%). Of the SEFE respondents 84 (59%) had Masters' degrees in Economic Sciences (KTK/"uusi ekonomi"). It seems that the members with Masters' degrees were more eager to participate; in SEFE they account for approximately 40% of all members whereas the share of those with Bachelors' degrees ("vanha ekonomi") is about 50%. A total of 40% of the SEFE respondents had graduated from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, 17% from the Turku School of Economics, 12% from the Swedish School of Economics and from the University of Vaasa, 11% from the University of Tampere, 4% from the Åbo Akademi University, and 1% from the University of Jyväskylä.

As many as 86% of the members of TEK had Masters' degrees in engineering (DI), 4% had M.Sc. degrees in Chemistry/Physics/Mathematics (FK) and 9% were classified as "other", including postgraduate degrees, foreign degrees, and degrees in architecture, or they were drop-outs. More than half of the TEK members (51%) had graduated from the Helsinki University of Technology (TKK), 21% from the Tampere University of Technology, 12% from the University of Oulu, and 9% from the Lappeenranta University of Technology. The remaining few cases represented the Universities of Tampere, Jyväskylä, Helsinki, Turku, and Kuopio.

In the group of secretaries the educational background varied more than in the other two groups. The graduates of Business Colleges (kauppaoppilaitokset) accounted for 46% altogether; the figure includes the secondary-level degrees (merkonomi, 14%), and the non-university higher education degrees (yo-merkonomi, 21%) and also the degrees from the Helsinki Secretarial College (HSO-sihteeri, 11%). A total of 36% of the secretaries had a degree of an academic secretary/ correspondent (Bachelor's degree from one of the Schools of Economics).

The group of 'others' again included some foreign degrees and a few drop-outs. Of the Bachelors' degrees, 14% were from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, 8% from the Swedish School of Economics, 7% from the Turku School of Economics and 4% from the University of Vaasa. The rest were from the Åbo Akademi University and the University of Tampere.

Of the total group, almost half of the respondents were business graduates from Schools of Economics, a third had a Master's degree in engineering and 13% were graduates from business colleges. Of the 16 Schools/Universities or other institutions mentioned both the Helsinki School of Economics (19.3%) and the Helsinki University of Technology (17.9%) represented a clearly bigger share than the others. The third biggest group was all business colleges combined (10.7%), and the fourth was the Turku School of Economics with 8.5%

Table 2 below shows the percentages of the educational institutions from which the informants had graduated. It covers the whole sample; however, as many as 30 informants did not report the educational institution.

**Table 2. The Schools/Universities and other institutions of graduation, per cent of the total sample.**

Helsinki School of Economics	19.3 %
Helsinki University of Technology	17.9 %
Business Colleges (combined)	10.7 %
Turku School of Economics	8.5 %
Tampere University of Technology	7.4 %
Swedish School of Economics	6.9 %
University of Vaasa	5.5 %
University of Tampere	4.7 %
University of Oulu	4.4 %
Helsinki Secretarial College	3.3 %
Lappeenranta University of Technology	3.0 %
Åbo Akademi University	2.5 %
University of Helsinki	1.4 %
University of Jyväskylä	0.8 %
University of Kuopio	0.3 %
University of Tampere	0.3 %
other	3.0 %

### 6.1.1.2 Organizational status

A total of 26% of all respondents classified themselves as representing the highest, executive level of their organization; 20% were from middle-management, and also 20% secretaries/assistants. As many as 23% held various expert positions. As concerns the present precise position, 9% of the whole group mentioned that they held the highest operational post as Managing Director/Chief Executive in the company.

Of the SEFE-members, 27% were at the executive level (10% being Managing Directors/Chief Executives), and 28% in middle management, while 25% were experts and 8% secretaries. The remaining were people who identified themselves as self-employed or office employees. In TEK, the share of the executive level was even higher (31%), as was the number of Chief Executives, 14%. The share of middle management was somewhat lower (24%), the share of experts being higher again (33%).

A sizeable number of Marketing Directors/ Managers can be found in both SEFE (26%) and TEK (18%), but, as expected, the SEFE executives are more into finances and administration (Financial/Administrative Managers/Directors: SEFE 20%, TEK 5%) and TEK Executives into production, planning and ADP (Production/Planning/R&D/ADP Directors/Managers : SEFE 4%, TEK 27%).

The high organizational status of SY-members in general is reflected in their answers to the question about the level in the organization where they place themselves. As Table 3 shows, a total of 17 % stated that they represent the executive level, and only 63% chose the category of 'secretary'.

**Table 3. Organizational category in the group of secretaries. (SY)**

chief executive	10 %
executive	7 %
middle management	5 %
expert	8 %
secretary	63 %
self employed	-
office employee	7 %
other	-
	100 %

The positions held in this group were specified as either "executive secretary" or "secretary". Various secretarial titles, such as Sales Secretary, Marketing Secretary, Project Secretary, Export Secretary, etc., were also mentioned. Moreover, 8% of the respondents in the SY-group were Financial/Administrative Managers.

### 6.1.1.3 Use of English at work

The respondents were asked how many years they have used and how frequently they use English at their work. The number of years of English used in working life in the whole sample was the following: less than 5 years 21%, 6-15 years 38%, 16-25 years 20%, and over 26 years 9%. Altogether 48 respondents (12%) stated that they had not used English at their work at all. These respondents were asked to continue filling in only the information concerning their companies and disregard the questions about the needs for English and written business communication.

It was expected that a certain number of the target group (representing Finnish business people) would not need English at work at all, but it is difficult to estimate if the figure obtained (12%) gives a true picture of the whole population. It could be argued that the share of non-users may be higher among the addressees who did not reply at all, as they might have found the study irrelevant for them. However, there are other studies that indicate that among professionals, the percentage of those who do not use English at work varies, being somewhere under 10% . Latva-Kiskola (1986) conducted a survey of the foreign language needs of business graduates and showed that 96.6% of the respondents had used English at work; Jaatinen (1987) carried out a similar study in Central Finland and found that 8% of the business graduates had not used English at work. Loppela and



Paaso (1990) studied the use of English at work by graduate engineers, but did not specify the share of non-users; instead, they seem to assume that their whole target group needs and uses professional English. When the target group covers lower organizational levels, the share of non-users naturally grows, but it seems that throughout the workplace language skills are needed more than before. According to a study conducted by Pekka Huuhtanen at the Department of Psychology at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Huuhtanen et al. 1992), the number of occupational tasks in which foreign languages are needed is increasing, English being the 'official' foreign language. According to the study, two thirds of office employees in manufacturing industry now need foreign languages. It should be noted, however, that in addition to the target group itself, the formulation of questions and the extensiveness of the questionnaire certainly have an influence on the percentages that indicate language use.

Of the SEFE members, 22% had used English for less than 5 years, 31% between 6 and 15 years, 22% 16 to 25 years, and 6% over 26 years. In the present study the zero-users were the biggest group within the business graduates (19%), as compared to 7% in the group of engineers and 11% in secretaries.

The trend mentioned earlier of 'young engineers' and 'mature secretaries' being heavy users of professional English can also be seen here. In the TEK-group as many as 33% had used English at work for less than 5 years, and 46% between 6 and 15 years. Thus approximately 80% of the engineers had a perspective of up to 15 years when answering the questions, whereas the corresponding percentage for SEFE was about 50%. As many as 28% of the SEFE members had used professional English for 16 years or more. In the group of secretaries only 6 persons (6%) had used English for less than 5 years, two thirds (68%) between 6 and 25 years, and as many as 16% over 26 years; thus their views are based on a longer work experience with business English than those of the business graduates (SEFE) or the engineers (TEK), who had had the shortest perspective. Table 4 shows how frequently the target group uses English at work.

**Table 4. Frequency of the use of English at work, the whole sample.**

USE OF ENGLISH	n	%
daily	170	43
weekly	90	23
more seldom	84	21
not at all	48	12
total	392	≈100

The table shows that two thirds (66%) of the respondents use professional English at least every week, while 12% do not presently use English at their work. As was seen in the answers to the previous question about the years of use, also here the percentage of the zero-users is the biggest for SEFE (18%), the lowest for TEK (7%); among the secretaries the figure is 13%. Exclusion of the zero-users and consideration of the categories "daily", "weekly" and "more seldom" in the total sample indicates that a total of 344 respondents use English at work, and of them about one half (49%) use it daily and about one fourth weekly (26%), and one fourth more seldom (24%). As 75% of the users need professional

English weekly or more often, the conclusion is that a good command of 'workplace' English is an essential part of the professional competence of the target group.

Consideration of the three subgroups separately gave roughly the same percentages in each subgroup. Crosstabulating age by the frequency of use did not indicate any statistically significant relationship between the age group and the frequency. The daily users accounted for 50% in SEFE, 47% in TEK, and 52% in SY. The second category, "weekly", was the biggest in the group of engineers (31%), and the smallest with business graduates (21%); with the secretaries it was 26%. The third category "more seldom" was the largest with the business graduates (28%), and somewhat smaller with the engineers (22%) and the secretaries (23%). One of the factors that may influence the higher percentages in the categories "more seldom" and "not used at all" in the SEFE group (41% for the two categories combined, compared to 27% in TEK and 32% in SY) is the fact that the members of SEFE may have been more inclined to reply to a questionnaire sent to them from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, and feel the responsibility to answer the questions, even if they would not use business English at all or need it only occasionally. It seems that addressees of this kind in the other two groups, engineers and secretaries, more often disregarded the questionnaire.

## 6.1.2 Company profiles

### 6.1.2.1 Line of business, location, and size

The survey also covered information about the line of business, location, size, and foreign operations of the companies by which the informants were employed.

The majority of the informants worked in manufacturing industry (42%) or in wholesale and retail business (17%). "Financial services" accounted for 8%, "other services" for 15%, and the "public sector" for 7%. Manufacturing industry, wholesale and retail business, and other services were the three biggest categories in that order in all the three subgroups but the percentages varied. In the SEFE and SY groups the informants were fairly evenly distributed between the different lines of business; manufacturing industry accounted for 31% (SEFE) and 37% (SY), wholesale & retail for 22% (SEFE) and 13% (SY), other services for 12% (SEFE) and 17% (SY), the public sector for 12% (SEFE) and 9% (SY), and financial services for 11% (SEFE) and 12% (SY). The rest were small percentages in the categories of "hotel and catering services", "transportation and data transmission", and "other".

In the TEK group almost 60% of the informants (58.4%) worked in manufacturing industry, 17% were employed by wholesale and retail business, and 15% by other services. The public sector was not represented at all in this group as the questionnaire was only sent to the TEK members working in the private sector.

As expected, more than half of the respondents' companies were located in, or close to, the Helsinki area. Of the whole group, 54% came from the Greater Helsinki area and 4% from other areas of Uusimaa. The areas of Häme and Varsinais-Suomi were also well represented: 13% and 12%, respectively. Only two questionnaires were returned from Kainuu and five from Lapland. The tendency was the same in all three subgroups: well over 50% of the replies came from the Greater Helsinki area and other areas of Uusimaa; Häme and Varsinais-Suomi both covered about 12-14 %, there were very few cases from

Kainuu and Lapland, while the rest were quite evenly distributed among other areas of Finland. In the SEFE group Pohjanmaa with 7% stood out as a bigger category than in the other two groups, and in the SY group Keski-Suomi (Central Finland) had a higher percentage of 9%. The percentages for the different areas seem to correspond fairly well to the membership statistics given by the three associations. Of the members of TEK, 48% live in the Greater Helsinki area, and with the other areas of the Uusimaa province, the figure is 54%. The Tampere area has about 10% (in the present study Häme 12%) and the Turku area about 5% (in the present study Varsinais-Suomi clearly higher, at 12%). Of the 1,650 members of the Association of Executive Secretaries, about 800 (48%) live in the Helsinki area. In the survey the response rate from the Helsinki area was somewhat higher (56%). One area where the membership statistics and the response rate differed distinctly was Northern Finland for the group of secretaries. The section of Northern Finland has 113 members (7%), but none of the replies came from Kainuu or Lappi, and only one came from Pohjanmaa. Thus the secretaries who replied were from Helsinki and some other more densely populated areas in southern and central Finland.

As for the size of the companies represented, the percentages for different size categories look very much the same in the total sample and the SEFE group (see Table 5 below). There the first three size categories — small and medium-sized companies — all have approximately 20%, and the fourth, large companies with more than 500 employees, has about 40%. For the engineers and secretaries the picture is, however, different. A clearly smaller proportion of the engineers come from large companies (29%) and a bigger proportion (also 29%) represents small companies (personnel of under 30). As noted above, for their organizational positions the respondents represent the category of Managing Directors/Chief Executives more often in the TEK group than in the others. Thus it could be argued that one typical category of informant in the group of engineers was the Chief Executive of a small enterprise.

In the group of secretaries the percentages show a growing trend with the size of the company. Half of the secretaries come from large companies, and only 13% from small businesses. Here, again, we can find a 'typical respondent': an executive secretary / assistant to one of the Chief Executives of a large Finnish corporation.

Table 5 shows the distribution of the company size in the subgroups and the whole sample.

**Table 5. Size of respondents' companies by number of personnel.**

PERSONNEL	TOTAL %	SEFE %	TEK %	SY %
Under 30	22	22	29	12
31-100	19	17	22	19
101-500	21	21	21	20
Over 500	39	40	29	49
≈	100	100	100	100

#### 6.1.2.2 Type of foreign connections and contact areas

The respondents were asked to describe the type of overseas connections that their companies had. They were asked to choose three types of activity and also show, by

means of figures 1, 2, and 3, the most frequent activity, the second most frequent activity, and the third most frequent activity. Very many of the respondents reacted differently from the instructions by ticking more than three activities, often without giving any frequency figures; some of them ticked only one or two activities, which of course was a correct reaction, if the company is only involved with, e.g., conferences or seminars abroad. To be able to calculate the weights for the various activities the decision was made to give the ticks values, 1 for both, if there were only two, and 2, if there were three ticks. If the respondent had chosen more than three activities, the three, which all were given value 2, were picked by random selection.

The data weighted in this way cannot be said to correspond exactly to reality, but the results will certainly point to the right direction. Table 6 summarizes the various activities with overseas partners in the whole group. In the table all three values (the most frequent, the second most frequent, and the third most frequent activity) have been combined; thus the percentages show how many percent of all respondents mentioned the overseas activity in question.

**Table 6. Types of overseas activities of all respondents' companies.**

ACTIVITY TYPE	PERCENTAGE OF ALL COMPANIES INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITY (%)
(1) exporting	41
(2) contacts with subsidiaries/ affiliates/sister companies	39
(3) various projects	34
(4) importing	30
(5) purchasing	28
(6) fairs/exhibitions	24
(7) contacts with parent company	16
(8) other activity	14
(9) contacts with customers/ principals/other business associates	8
(10) international organizations	3
(11) conferences and other training	2
(12) no foreign contacts	6

Approximately 40% of the companies are involved in traditional exporting and about 30% in importing, as well as in various projects. However, the most interesting information found in Table 6, from the point of view of communication structure and channels, is the importance and large proportion of 'in-house' overseas contacts; the connections within a corporate group, between parent companies and subsidiaries, were mentioned in more than half of all replies (55%, points 2 and 7 combined).

Quite a number of "other activities" were mentioned, as can be seen in the above table. These included connections with foreign universities and research institutes, sister cities, foreign financial institutions and also occasional visitors, or transfer of technology.

The weight values given to the activity types indicate that exporting accounted for the highest percentage of value 1; 23% of all informants stated that exporting was the most

frequent activity type. The second biggest was importing with 12%. For value 2 the highest percentage was in contacts to subsidiaries/affiliates/sister companies (18%). Fairs and exhibitions was found to be the third most important activity in most replies (14%).

For the three subgroups, a few percentages stand out. Exporting was mentioned in 51% of the replies from the engineers, and only in 31% of the SEFE-group. Importing got a bigger share (37%) among the business graduates (TEK 30%, and SY 20%), whereas various projects was clearly bigger in TEK (41%), and SY (41%), as compared to only 23% in SEFE. Also the percentage that shows connections within one corporate group (between subsidiaries or affiliates and parents) was noticeably lower in SEFE than in the two other groups (36% compared to 59% in TEK and 58% in SY). The category "other activity" in the SEFE-group was distinctly higher (23%) than that in TEK (6%) and SY (14%). A look at the various activities mentioned (in 32 replies out of the total of SEFE, 143) implies that there are two big groups that account for half of the other activities mentioned: student/teacher exchange or other contacts to foreign schools and universities, on the one hand, and, international banking and finance, on the other hand.

Next, the respondents were asked about the countries or areas with which their companies have frequent contacts. Again, they were requested to pick three alternatives and also specify the frequency of the contacts by giving the countries/areas numbers. Number 1 indicated the most frequent contacts, 2 the second most frequent contacts, and number 3 the third most frequent contacts. All contacts to different countries or areas with the three weight values combined are summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7. Countries/areas with which the informants' companies have contacts. Percentages indicate the number of informants who mentioned the area in question, either as the most or second most or third most important area.**

COUNTRY/AREA	MENTIONED BY %
(1) EU excluding UK	77
(2) Nordic countries	68
(3) UK and Ireland	45
(4) USA and Canada	38
(5) Eastern Europe	16
(6) Far East	11
(7) worldwide contacts	4
(8) Switzerland and Austria	3
(9) other	5

A total of 39 answers (10%) were missing, which for the most part seems to imply that there were no foreign contacts. A few respondents did not report on foreign contacts for some other reason. The above are valid percentages calculated of the answers given.

Two areas seem to be very important for the Finnish business community: the EU-countries and the Nordic countries. Almost 80% of the informants stated that their companies have — more or less — frequent contacts with the EU area, excluding Britain, and Britain alone accounted for 45%. Two thirds of the companies had contacts with the

Nordic countries. Somewhat unexpectedly, Eastern Europe still accounted for 16 %; this figure also covers Estonia, which was mentioned separately in some of the replies.

The growing economies of the Far East are frequently dealt with in the Finnish economic discussion; 11% of the companies had such contacts. Actually, the Far East came up in the replies more often, as the respondents had again chosen more than three areas, and it seemed that in many cases the fourth or fifth area mentioned was the Far East. Also, some of those contacts are included in the category "worldwide", which was created at the coding phase, because of many comments stating "we have contacts all over the world" and because very many had ticked all the given alternatives and even added one or two areas. In the category "other", Central and South America, Australia, the Middle East, African countries and a few other areas were specified.

The information about the frequency values looks roughly the same as the above combined data. The EU and the Nordic countries both got 33% of value 1, i.e. one third had the most frequent contacts with the EU-countries and one third with the Nordic countries. The United Kingdom and the United States got both approximately 10%. Although the Far East was mentioned in 11% altogether, it was grade 1 only in 2%, grade two in 3%, and grade 3 in 6% of the replies. This could be interpreted to reflect the growing interest towards the area at present.

The three sub-groups — business graduates, engineers, and secretaries — were very similar as regards overseas contact areas. The only differences worth mentioning concerned the contact percentages of SEFE and TEK with the United Kingdom, which 51% of the business graduates mentioned, and only 39% of the engineers. Another difference was in the "worldwide" category; there, secretaries accounted for a clearly higher percentage than the other two groups (7%), probably reflecting the bigger size of the secretaries' companies.

### 6.1.3 Workplace situations where English is used

This part of the questionnaire covered various situations where English in general is used by the respondents in their work. They were requested to answer questions about the kind of English used by their addressees, and themselves, about their oral and written skills and needs, and about different situations where specifically oral or written skills are most often needed.

#### 6.1.3.1 Which English?

The first question was about the language of the addressee. The informants were asked to assess how many per cent of their addressees are native speakers of English and how many per cent speak English as a foreign language. Percentages between 0 and 100 were given for both; in the whole group the mean value indicating native speaker addressees was 38 %, and the percentage of non-natives was 62%. In the SEFE group the figures were roughly the same; in the TEK group the percentage for non-natives was slightly higher (68%), whereas the division in the group of secretaries was closer to fifty-fifty, natives accounting for 45% and non-natives 55 %. The conclusion is that the share of non-native speaker business partners is considerable, and in all groups bigger than the share of natives. This information certainly correlates with the above mentioned dominance of the

EU-countries as business partners, and also the importance of the Nordic countries and the Far East as contact areas. The same trend was also found in the interviews: a great deal of the foreign connections are with the Nordic or other European countries, but the language of communication is predominantly English. Only in the case when the person knows German or Swedish exceptionally well (as did Interviewee No 5 (see p. 92), a linguistically talented engineer, and No 9 (see p. 94), an executive secretary he/she may choose to use the language of the target country. Interviewee No 8 (pp. 93-94), a managing director of a small technical import business, whose connections were mostly with Germany, mentioned that at the "white collar level" he always uses English as he does not want to give the other party the advantage of the native language, but at the "blue collar level" he can cope with German, which is often necessary, too. Interviewee No 7 (p. 93), who is a development manager in a large conglomerate operating in many countries, said that in Scandinavian meetings, Swedish is the language as long as it is question of enhancing co-operation and the feeling of Nordic togetherness, but as soon as it is business, the language is automatically English.

The respondents were asked to consider the different types of Englishes that are used in their communication. Table 8 shows how the respondents in the whole sample estimated the distribution between the different Englishes in which they receive messages. Table 9 (p. 55) will give the same information for the subgroups separately.

**Table 8. The mean values of the percentages indicating the sender's type of English, total sample.**

SENDER'S ENGLISH	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)
American English	24
British English	27
'Euro-English'	44
other	4
≈	100

The term Euro-English ("euroenglantia") was not specifically defined in the questionnaire, but given in quotation marks as one of the alternatives of different Englishes, and suggested as something in between British and American English. It is a term that has cropped up in the discussion of the different varieties of English in recent years, referring to the mixture of the 'original' Englishes that is extensively used in European business by non-native speakers of English. Unexpectedly, very few of the respondents questioned the term, and the mean value of the percentages was as high as 44%. As the term was given undefined, the percentage received cannot be interpreted in very exact terms, but it certainly indicates the trend that the professional English that is used in business is increasingly seen as a combination of different elements, even as a language in its own right.

The role of culture behind the language was discussed in the interviews. The interviewees were asked if they considered knowledge of Anglo-American or other culture important in conducting business in English with non-native speakers. Half of them thought that cultural knowledge did not have any importance in everyday routine communication. They found the language used to be 'the business lingua franca', a code

system with which they are able to communicate, but which does not have any cultural basis. "It's 100% subject matter, the culture behind it cannot be seen" (interviewee No 1, p. 91) or "cultureless, pure business; only the subject matter, the text is the same, wherever it comes from" (interviewee No 2, pp. 91-92). One of the interviewees, No 7 (p. 93), made the distinction between in-house and outgoing communication: within the group it is the company culture that acts as "an umbrella" under which it is easy to operate, and national cultures have minor importance; still, in all communication with any outsiders it is essential to know the addressee's cultural background, at least to some extent. The remaining four interviewees all pointed out the importance of cultural knowledge, however, not of Anglo-American (unless the addressee is British or American) but specifically the culture of the target country. "When dealing with the Germans you have to know how the Germans behave. The language is only the medium, and what matters is the cultural norm structure of the target country." (Interviewee No 8, pp. 93-94)

The high proportion of Euro-English (Table 8) is naturally also in line with the fact that the EU-area was found to be the most important contact area for the respondents' companies (see pp.52-53).

American English and British English both accounted for approximately 25%. The category "other" got only 4.5%, but contained a few interesting remarks. "Other" was most often specified by the contact area ("Japanese English, Far East English, African English, Australian English, East European English"), but also by the industry in question ("shipping English"), or even by the company ("Ericsson English"). It is interesting to note that some respondents found the line of business, or the business itself, so dominant that they wanted to specify the language in those terms. There were also a few respondents who defined the category "other" with the level of the addressee's language skills ("bad English", "bad accent", "badly spoken English") and even gave high percentages (30-50%) for this category.

The three subgroups follow approximately the same lines as the total sample, as can be seen in Table 9 below. The importance of Euro-English was evident in all groups, but somewhat smaller (38%) in the group of secretaries, where British English was seen nearly as important (33%). The order between American and British English was reversed in the group of engineers, in which Euro-English accounted for almost one half, and American and British English together almost for the other half and "other" got 5%. Table 9 shows the results in the subgroups.

**Table 9. The mean values of the percentages indicating the sender's type of English, subgroups.**

SENDER'S ENGLISH	SEFE (%)	TEK(%)	SY (%)
American English	22	25	25
British English	30	22	33
'Euro-English'	45	48	38
other	3	5	5
≈	100	100	100

After the assessment of the other party's type of English the informants were asked if they themselves vary their English according to the nationality of the addressee, or if



they always use their "own English". The question was obviously somewhat difficult, since as many as 21 of the 345 informants, who need English in their work and continued to complete the questionnaire after question No. 12, did not answer the question, and some added question marks or wrote comments, such as "I wish I could!" or "it's difficult enough to stick to your own". A clear majority of those who reported on this matter (84%) stated that they use their own English, whatever the nationality of the addressee. Only 16 % said that they vary their language according to the addressee.

The subgroups were fairly similar in this respect. However, as expected, the secretaries, with their often better command of English, were more inclined to change their language: in the SY group 77% said that they always use their own English and 23% said that they vary the language. As mentioned above 21 persons (6%) of the total group did not answer this question; this percentage was the highest in the SEFE group (9%) and the lowest in the TEK group (2%). It seems that although only 13% of the engineers vary their language, they did not consider the question too confusing, as the case was among the business graduates, of whom nearly 10 % did not want to comment on their own variety of English.

**6.1.3.2 Oral and written language skills**

The respondents were asked to estimate and give percentages for the amounts of oral and written language skills they need in their work. The result was a fifty-fifty situation, as can be seen in Table 10.

**Table 10. The estimated amounts of the oral and written language skills that the informants need in their work (%).**

	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY(%)
oral	49	53	51	43
written	51	47	49	57

This result clearly shows that the Finnish business people consider both oral and written skills to be as important in their work, and is contradictory to the strong common belief that prevailed in the educational institutions in the late 1980s that as so much business is done over the telephone and face to face, hardly any written language skills are needed any more. To the contrary, the importance of writing came up in the interviews.

Four interviewees thought that, after the introduction of fax and e-mail, the amount of writing has increased (see also Table 36, p. 96). "I often send a fax or an e-mail message instead of picking up the phone" (Interviewee No 7, p. 93). "As you can see, this is not at all formal, this is exactly as if I was speaking on the phone" (Interviewee No 1, p. 91, about the text of a fax message she had sent). Two interviewees did not comment on this, because their work history is not longer than five years. Two of the three secretaries said that the amount had stayed the same; writing has always been a large part in a secretary's job. This can also be seen in the higher percentage of written skills in the group of secretaries in Table 10. Interviewee No 4 (p. 92) thought that the amount of

communication, both oral and written, has clearly decreased, compared to the days of slower pace in business in the 1970s and early 1980s. Interviewee No 3 (p. 92) did not see any increase in the amount of writing, but instead emphasized its importance, and the fact that technology has made it so easy to write and send a fax message that everybody can act as one's own secretary. He also took up the role of academic institutions in the teaching of written business communication. According to his experience, they are the only places which provide proper written communication studies, all private language schools and courses only stress oral skills.

The growing importance of writing skills as part of a business person's professional competence has been emphasized in several studies. It was pointed out by Sari Luoma in her Pro Gradu Thesis on business writing tasks in English and Swedish (Luoma 1993). Writing skills were also found very important by Loppela and Paaso (1990) in their study on the professional language needs of graduate engineers. Ruskelin conducted a needs analysis in the Finnish paper industry and showed that 90% of her subjects estimated the amount of written English communication to increase during the next five years (Ruskelin 1989:85).

#### Self assesment

All the subgroups were unanimous in giving themselves grades in their oral and written command of English. They were asked to use the familiar school assessment scale from 4 (the lowest grade) to 10 (the highest grade). The mean values of the grades given can be seen in Table 11.

**Table 11. Self assessment of oral and written English; average grades by the total sample and the subgroups.**

	WHOLE SAMPLE	SEFE	TEK	SY
oral skills	8.0	8.2	7.8	8.0
written skills	8.1	8.2	7.9	8.2

The table shows that the whole sample, excluding the 4% who did not report the grades, consider themselves to have a fairly good command of English. The result was unexpected, as it was anticipated that the secretaries would grade their skills clearly higher than the engineers, and somewhat higher than the business graduates. However, this kind of assessment is always relative, and the secretaries, who in most cases have the best command of the language, probably set their targets higher than the two other groups, and gave the grades in relation to those targets.

In conclusion, the whole sample seems to be fairly satisfied with their language skills as part of their professional competence. The information was confirmed in the interviews; the interviewees were all frequent users of English and regarded their English communication as a natural part of their work and, at a general level, unproblematic.

Oral problem areas

To define possible, specific problem areas the respondents were asked to specify concrete spoken and written situations in which they would like to have a better command of English. A large variety of different situations were mentioned. Most of the respondents gave one spoken and one written situation, but 46 replies contained two or more. A coding scheme with 9 categories for both spoken and written situations was created based on the answers, and the maximum of two situations from one informant were taken into account. The results concerning the spoken situations are summarized in Table 12.

**Table 12.** The spoken language situations in which the respondents would like improvement in their language skills. The figures indicate how many percent of the respondents mentioned the situation in question.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) small talk and ordinary conversation	20	20	19	21
(2) telephone	14	11	12	21
(3) presentations and other public speaking	8	10	11	2
(4) negotiations and meetings	11	10	16	6
(5) general vocabulary	3	4	2	4
(6) vocab.relating to specific industry or line of business	8	7	10	6
(7) overall improvement in spoken skills	16	13	13	22
(8) other	12	13	16	5
(9) no improvement needed	21	24	20	19

The totals in Table 12 exceed 100 %, because the two situations from the 46 informants were both included in the figures.

Table 12 shows that about 20% of the informants in all groups, in SEFE even 24%, stated or indicated that they were satisfied with their present oral skills and did not want or could not specify any situations where improvement would be needed. It seems that this information is in line with the general satisfaction (see p.57) that the informants felt about their language skills. It could be claimed that as the respondents grade themselves fairly high (8.0 in oral skills), the percentages in Table 12/category 9 could be even higher, but it has to be noted that in the questionnaire question 18 reads "In which situations would you like to have better language skills (1) in the area of oral skills (2) in the area of written skills", and no opting out is explicitly suggested, as would be the case if the question was formulated as "Are there situations in which you would like to have better language skills?"

The 'limited small talk competence' of Finnish business people, which is a matter extensively discussed, was considered a problem also in this study. One fifth of all respondents, and also of the three subgroups, mentioned small talk or ordinary

conversation or dinner conversation to be an area where they would like to improve their skills. It is difficult to estimate how much the fact that small talk is at present a hot potato, and widely covered in the media, affected the replies.

It seems that although the respondents were fairly satisfied with their oral skills, there were quite a few who thought that they could not mention any specific situations, but felt that they would like to see overall improvement in their spoken English; category 7 in Table 12 indicates that the percentage in the total sample was 16% and in the group of secretaries as high as 22%. Again, it has to be remembered that the defining of any improvement areas is an individual process where one compares one's own behaviour with the set target level and assesses if there is a gap between the two. As the secretaries' linguistic awareness is often at a high level, they are also likely to set their targets higher than people in other business roles, where the focus is more on other matters than language. The SY group got a high percentage also in category 2, telephoning (21%), which is a frequent activity in all kinds of secretarial work, whereas the percentages for presentations and negotiations (categories 3 and 4) were low (2% and 6% respectively). Spoken English negotiation skills were most often mentioned by the engineers (16%).

The category "other" included some items that could not be defined as situations, such as understanding, pronunciation, formalities and politeness. Some informants mentioned situations outside work, e.g. theatre, or political language, and some specified a situation in which the addressee is a native speaker of English. In a few replies a broad generalization, such as "in work situations" was given, and some gave a very specific situation, e.g. "a sudden situation, in which the customer does not understand technology". 'Sudden situations' were mentioned also in other replies. Humour or jokes came up several times.

The interviews confirmed the above information on oral skills problem areas; they were all mentioned by some of the interviewees.

### Written problem areas

Table 13 (p. 60) summarizes the results for written situations. The most striking feature in Table 13 is the considerable number of informants who are pleased with their writing skills, 36% of the total sample and as high a figure as 39% of the business graduates. The corresponding percentages for spoken skills were clearly lower, around 20%, which indicates that the area of writing skills is seen less problematic than the area of spoken skills. Telenius (1994:10) studied business students who had written their Pro Gradu Theses in English, and found that a great majority of the respondents were satisfied with their writing skills, a total of 62% thought that they had excellent skills. In comparison, the corresponding figure in Ventola and Mauranen's survey on researchers and post-graduate students was significantly lower, 20% for researchers and 13% for post-graduate students (Ventola and Mauranen 1991:126).

The question (No18, see Appendix 2) was formulated to cover both reading and writing, but the answers given concerned almost only text production situations or matters related to text production, and very few comments were offered about any difficulties in reading. Some of the few comments were general in nature, such as "when I read or "understanding professional text", and some concerned areas outside working life, such as "reading literature". It seems obvious that the well educated business

professionals, who frequently use English as their 'tool' to achieve their goals, consider themselves to have the reading skills they need and generally see only minor problems in text production situations.

**Table 13.** The written language situations in which the informants would like improvement in their language skills. The figures indicate how many percent of the informants mentioned the situation in question.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) formal correspondence or report writing	14	10	21	11
(2) contracts and other legal text	6	8	6	5
(3) other specific terminology	16	18	14	15
(4) general vocabulary	3	5	3	2
(5) style, grammar, spelling	8	6	10	7
(6) translation	3	1	0	10
(7) overall improvement in written skills	12	8	10	19
(8) other	13	15	16	9
(9) no improvement needed	36	39	33	34

Of the above categories, e.g. legal terminology and other specific terminology were mentioned in the interviews, but were in fact considered to be problems easily overcome: dictionaries and specialists are available. However, one interviewee (No. 6, p. 92) found writing to be all too time-consuming, which in his work was a major problem. In Table 13 categories 1 and 5 got significantly higher percentages in the group of engineers than in the other two groups; especially the fact that over 20% of the engineers found formal correspondence or report writing difficult, and also that 10% had problems with stylistic or grammatical matters, indicates that the engineers get no or very little training in business writing during their studies, and only adopt the proper business writing style and form during the work process. Loppela and Paaso (1990:11) have similar findings: writing had the biggest share in the "pie of shortcomings in English language skills" among their target group of graduate engineers.

The engineers interviewed for the present study confirmed the information on insufficient language studies in their education: No 5 did not study any English at university; No 6 took two courses and found one of them, Business English, useful; Nos 7 and 8 remembered taking a few classes, where it was possible "to play in the language laboratory" or "enjoy the forced conversation on a topic that sounds technical".

In Table 13, category 3, other specific terminology, the percentages received were clearly higher (16% for the total sample) than the corresponding figures in Table 12 for spoken skills (8% for the total sample). Specific terminology was in some replies undefined, and in other replies it referred either to technical or business vocabulary in general, and sometimes to a specific field, e.g. "ADP vocabulary" or "paper machine terminology". It seems that the lack of a certain word is not considered to be a major problem in speech, but more so in writing, which is a specific activity as such. More vagueness is tolerated in one's own and others' speech. Difficulties with general

vocabulary did not get high percentages on either side. However, in the area of spoken skills general vocabulary is closely connected with small talk and other social situations, which were seen problematic (see p. 58). Thus it would seem that the 'small talk incompetence' of the Finnish business people, and their difficulties to cope in ordinary social situations, indicate lack of general conversational skills, which might result from too strong an emphasis in our language training on 'transaction', disregarding interactional skills (for a further discussion on transaction/interaction in the teaching of business communication see pp. 104-105).

It was interesting to note the big differences between the subgroups in translation. It could be expected that the secretaries would do translation work and find it sometimes problematic, and 10% did mention translation situations. Sometimes they specified "difficult translation" or "technical translation". Interviewees No 2 and No 10 took up the situation in which the secretary does not know the subject matter and "only translates" (see also pp. 91, 94). Somewhat unexpectedly, none of the engineers mentioned translation as a problem area.

In addition to the few comments about reading situations, category 8 (Table 13, p. 60), other, included some broad generalizations ("in official contexts", "in marketing", "in British English", "problem solving") on the one hand, and some specific text production situations ("brochure text", "press releases", "minutes", "drawing up instructions") on the other. Also, the comment "nuances of negative expressions in correspondence" was included in this category, as it was considered too specific to be combined with other comments on style or grammar in category 5. Moreover, situations outside work were mentioned a few times: "reading literature" or even "as an essay writer or poet". One respondent wrote "professionals available", referring to the automatic way of solving any possible problems that arise in text production. In this respect spoken and written language situations differ dramatically; when spoken skills are needed there is usually nobody to turn to as a last resort, whereas using language professionals or other experts to help with text production has always been a normal routine procedure in businesses. In spite of the present trend of fewer language experts, and more 'self-help' (see p.96), business people seem to acknowledge the importance of language consulting in demanding written situations, and usually have 'networks' for difficult questions. This fact is probably one of the reasons that seem to make writing an 'easier' activity than speaking.

### 6.1.3.3 Use of English in different work situations

The respondents were presented with seven different work situations, and the category "other", both in the area of oral skills and that of written skills, and they were asked to choose the most important situation, the second most important and the third most important, in terms of language skills. The adjective "important" was explained to refer to the frequency of the situation in the informant's work.

Spoken situations

Table 14 summarizes the information given on spoken situations. The percentages indicate the number of those who picked or mentioned the situation in question, either as the most important, the second most important or the third most important situation.

**Table 14.** The frequency of various spoken English situations in the respondents' work. The percentages indicate the proportion of the respondents who gave the situation a frequency value of 1 or 2 or 3.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY(%)
(1) face-to-face negotiations	65	80	75	33
(2) videoconferencing	0	0	0	0
(3) informal appointments with business friends	54	50	52	60
(4) formal meetings	27	33	28	19
(5) telephoning	92	85	93	98
(6) company presentations	18	17	15	24
(7) product presentations	9	4	19	2
(8) other	8	8	5	14

It was expected that telephoning would be the most frequent activity where spoken English skills are needed, but the clearly highest percentages of all that it got exceeded the expectations. Telephoning was mentioned by 92% of all informants to be one of the three most frequent work situations where spoken English is involved, and for the secretaries the figure was almost 100%. The frequency values indicate that telephoning was found to be the most frequent activity by 65% of the total sample, and for secretaries the corresponding percentage was as high as 88%.

The second most important category for the whole group was face-to-face negotiations, amounting to 65% of the total sample. In fact, among the business graduates it was found to be almost as important as telephoning. However, only one third (33%) of the secretaries were involved with negotiations; 6% mentioned face-to-face negotiations as the most frequent activity and 22% as the second most important activity.

Formal meetings accounted for a bigger share than was anticipated. Informal appointments were considered important, but mostly got frequency values of 2 or 3. Among the secretaries, informal appointments were mentioned by as many as 60%, but none of them chose the category to be the most frequent situation; 38% found informal appointments as the second most important, and 22% gave this category the frequency value of 3. Some of the secretaries probably included "receiving visitors and small talk" in this category; some mentioned this activity separately in the category "other".

Company presentations occurred fairly frequently in all groups. The category was mentioned by 18% of the total sample, and by 24% of the secretaries, which seems an unexpectedly high figure. Product presentations, however, got a sizeable share only in the TEK group.

Videoconferencing was not chosen by anyone to be one of the three most frequent spoken situations, neither was such activity as interpreting given under the heading "other". Category 8 included, in addition to the above remarks, comments on in-house training and other seminars, fairs and exhibitions, and advising situations.

A look at the most important (frequency value 1) of the spoken situations shows an interesting picture, where telephoning stands out, face-to-face negotiations come next, and all the other activities are far behind. Table 15 indicates how many percent of the total sample and the subgroups gave value 1 for telephoning, face-to-face negotiations, and the next most important situation.

**Table 15. The highest percentages of frequency value 1 in telephoning, face-to-face negotiations and the next most frequent situation in the total sample and the subgroups.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY(%)
telephoning	65	53	56	88
face-to-face negotiations	24	35	27	6
third category	3	4	5	2

The third most frequent situation in all but the SY group was informal appointments; among the secretaries it was the category "other".

Thus, in terms of frequency, telephoning seems to be overwhelmingly the most important spoken language situation, and for all but the secretaries, also negotiations of various types take place fairly often. However, the results would probably look different if the adjective "important" in the question, instead of being interpreted as 'frequent', would refer to critical or difficult situations, which do not occur very often, but in which the stakes or risks are high.

Written situations

Table 16 (p. 64) summarizes the percentages given on written situations. The three frequency categories have again been combined; thus the percentages indicate the number who chose or mentioned the situation.

Just as telephoning stood out as the most frequent of the spoken work situations, and even more distinctly, 'exchange of written messages' was the most frequent activity in written communication. There were very few respondents who did not mention it as one of the three most important activities, and it was also ranked as number one by the clear majority in the total sample, and in the subgroups (see Table 17 below).

In all the other categories of Table 16, except 1 and 8, we can clearly see that the work situations where written English is involved are in the group of secretaries very different from the other two groups. It seems that the gap is wider between the SY group and the TEK group, but we have to take into account the fact that 8% of the SEFE group work as secretaries, which naturally makes the overall work profile of the SEFE group come closer to the work profile of the secretaries.



**Table 16.** The frequency of various written English situations in the respondents' work. The percentages indicate the share of the respondents who gave the situation a frequency value of 1 or 2 or 3.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) exchange of written messages (letters, faxes, telexes, e-mail)	96	94	96	99
(2) writing reports	40	39	60	15
(3) reading professional journals and other publications	60	68	75	33
(4) translating from Finnish into English	27	19	10	59
(5) translating from English into Finnish	19	18	15	25
(6) revising English text	19	16	8	38
(7) writing official documents (e.g. contracts)	17	17	23	10
(8) other	2	2	2	2

Reading professional publications seems to be viewed as an important and time-consuming activity among the engineers (75%) and the business graduates (68%); also a considerable number of the secretaries (33%) chose this situation. Above (page 98) it was pointed out that reading did not cause any major difficulties; from the high frequency percentages in Table 16 we can see that this is not due to a minor importance of reading situations. Writing reports and writing official documents both got higher percentages in the TEK group (60% and 23%) than in the SEFE group (39% and 17%), whereas translating and text revising activities were slightly more frequent among the business graduates, which may be due to the influence of secretaries.

Translating from English into Finnish did not get a big share in any of the groups, but translating from Finnish into English was the second most important situation in the secretaries' work.

For the written situations the given categories seem to have extensively covered the various activities that the respondents encounter in their work routines, as only very few comments were given under the heading "other". These included "writing lectures or articles", "checking text translated by native speakers", "screening correspondence for the superior", and "commenting on ADP programmes".

The dominance of the exchange of messages among the written situations can be seen in Table 17 (p.65), which shows the percentages of frequency value 1 for the three biggest categories in each subgroup.

Table 17 further underlines the importance of message exchange in the written situations; it shows that the exchange of various messages is regarded as the most important, i.e. frequent, situation in which written language skills are needed, by a vast majority in each group; nearly 3/4 of all informants gave the category frequency value 1. In the total sample, as well as the SEFE and TEK groups "reading professional journals and other publications" came next among the most frequent situations, but were far

behind the first category. For the secretaries "translating from Finnish into English" ranked second, and there the gap between the first and second categories was even wider. The third category for the total sample and the SEFE group was "translating from Finnish into English", for the TEK group it was "writing reports", and for the secretaries, "revising English text".

**Table 17. The highest percentages of frequency value 1 in the three biggest categories in the total sample and the subgroups.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
Exchange of messages	71	73	61	82
Reading prof. publications	12	9	21	transl F->E 8
third category	5	6	7	4

#### 6.1.4 The structure and organization of written communication

The rest of the questions focus on written person-to-person communication carried on in businesses. It was noted above (Table 16, p. 64) that the exchange of various messages is the most frequent work situation, where written skills are needed. In question No 20 the respondents were asked to specify what kind of English language messages they most often receive and send. On the questionnaire, 13 message types were suggested, and in addition there was an open category. During the coding phase three more categories (numbers 14, 15 and 16) were added, which brought the total number to 17. Of the categories, the informants were again required to pick up three types that they most often send/receive, and give them frequency values (1 or 2 or 3).

##### 6.1.4.1 Type of messages sent

Table 18 (p.66) summarizes the results for the messages that the respondents themselves send out.

Somewhat unexpectedly the category "various inquiries" ranked distinctly the highest in the total sample (66%), and the SEFE (64%) and TEK (69%) groups. Only among the secretaries did "messages related to travel" get a higher percentage (80%), but "various inquiries" was still at the same level as in the other groups (64%). The reason for the high percentages is probably the vagueness of the concept "various inquiries"; it was seen as an umbrella, under which anything where a question is asked could be placed. An inquiry may refer to many different types of messages, from formal requests for quotation to routine in-house questions about dates and times for appointments. As the category title also had the word "various", it was even more likely that a wide range of different types of messages would be included in it.

"Messages related to travel" were the second in the total sample (49%) and the SEFE (38%) and the TEK (34%) groups; "messages related to deliveries" ranked the third in the total sample (23%) and among the engineers (33%), "monthly or other reports" was the third among the business graduates (24%), and "in-house notices" as well as "memoranda related to meetings" (both 22%) shared the third place in the SY group.

**Table 18.** Types of messages sent by the respondents in the total sample and the subgroups. The percentage indicates the proportion of all respondents who gave the type a frequency value of 1 or 2 or 3.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) requests for quotations	15	10	25	7
(2) quotations	11	13	14	5
(3) specifications for quotations	11	11	17	3
(4) orders	11	11	14	5
(5) messages related to deliveries	23	21	33	12
(6) messages related to payments	8	16	2	6
(7) various inquiries	66	64	69	64
(8) in-house notices	16	14	14	22
(9) monthly or other reports	16	24	15	10
(10) messages related to travel	49	38	34	80
(11) contracts	10	11	7	11
(12) memoranda related to meetings	16	12	14	22
(13) other memoranda	6	7	7	4
(14) frequent exchange of information with e.g. subsidiaries, project personnel or customers	6	6	2	13
(15) replies to inquiries	1	4	0	0
(16) product information	1	1	2	0
(17) other	10	10	10	10

In spite of the 16 message types in Table 18, the category "other" got 10% in all groups, including, on the one hand, such specific items as "annual reports", "brochures", "programmes for visitors", and "replies to job applications" and, on the other hand, generalizations, such as "surveys", "technical advising", "messages related to fairs and exhibitions", and "superior's personal correspondence". From the secretaries, there were a few comments that generalized even further, stating "faxes" or "letters". It could also be noted that such message types as "confirmations" or "complaints" did not appear in the replies at all, not even from the informants who, not conforming to the instructions, picked up or mentioned more than three categories. (Again, only three were, however, taken into account.)

The above information seems to suggest that it is not always easy to categorize the messages that come and go. They are part of the whole process of business transactions, and often one message sent may serve many purposes at the same time; it could be, for example, a fax to a foreign parent company which contains information about the Finnish market situation, an outline for the next project meeting, and a price inquiry. To which category this message would be placed would depend on the phase of the business transaction, and the person's focus on the matter.

In her study on business correspondence Luoma (1993) also discussed the difficulty of categorizing the business documents that she had collected from a Finnish medium-

sized company. She made a distinction between 'business transaction documents', which she found the most common, and 'updates', which were also fairly common in her sample.

From the pedagogic perspective the above results are interesting. Traditionally, in the teaching of written business communication the formal messages which usually have a certain format, such as requests for quotations, quotations, orders, invoices and complaints, are emphasized, and other, less schematic writing has a minor role. In Table 18 (p. 65) we find that in terms of frequency, the roles are clearly reversed in real life. Categories 1,2,4, and also 11 and 12 could be defined as — more or less — format-bound, and the rest as free writing. If Table 18 is presented in an alternative way, showing the percentage distribution of the times each category was chosen (n total = 892) the format-bound categories combined will get 23%, and the non-format categories 77%. Naturally, this information is not to be taken too categorically, as the extent to which the formats are followed or not certainly varies (e.g. in categories 3 or 12), but the distinctly bigger share of free writing is obvious.

#### 6.1.4.2 Type of messages received

Table 19 (p.68) summarizes the results for the messages that the respondents received. Tables 18 and 19 do not differ significantly from each other. It was often the case that the informant picked up the same three categories for the messages received as the messages sent. Thus the general statements above (pp. 66, 67) relate to messages both sent and received.

The order of the three most frequent categories was the same in the total sample (inquiries, travel messages, deliveries) and the SEFE group (inquiries, travel messages and reports). In the TEK group, inquiries still ranked the first, but incoming travel messages, which was the second in Table 18, now got only 22% , and "messages related to deliveries" (35%) and "quotations" (32%) were the second and the third among the engineers. In the SY group, the order of the first three was the same (travel messages, inquiries, meeting memos), but of the received messages the shares of travel messages and inquiries were almost equal, 72% and 71%, and the percentage of in-house notices, which shared the third place in sent messages, was now smaller (17%), ranking the fourth.

The biggest difference between the two tables can be found in quotations, which seem to be received (total sample 21%) more often than sent (total sample 11%). Among the engineers as high a proportion as 32% mentioned quotations as one of the three most frequent message types. The corresponding number of outgoing orders was almost half of the figure (14%), and in addition, it is often the case that orders are not actually 'written', but simply 'filled in' on an order form as a routine task in the office; this would suggest that the foreign sellers have been fairly successful with their offers to the Finnish engineers. The importance of quotations strengthens further with a view to the frequency values. In the total sample it was the third biggest category, after inquiries and travel messages, to get the highest frequency value; 12% placed quotations as the most frequent message type that they receive.

Among messages received the category "other" was smaller (5% - 8%) than among messages sent (10%), but similar comments were offered as mentioned above in the discussion of sent messages (page 110). Also, the ratio between format-bound (categories

1,2,4,11, and 12) and non-format (all the other categories) messages is about the same in received as in sent messages.

**Table 19.** Types of messages received by the respondents in the total sample and the subgroups. The percentage indicates the proportion of all respondents who gave the type a frequency value of 1 or 2 or 3.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) requests for quotations	11	14	12	6
(2) quotations	21	17	32	12
(3) specifications for quotations	11	7	22	2
(4) orders	5	8	5	2
(5) messages related to deliveries	23	21	35	11
(6) messages related to payments	7	13	2	6
(7) various inquiries	68	66	66	71
(8) in-house notices	20	22	23	17
(9) monthly or other reports	17	23	13	16
(10) messages related to travel	41	34	22	72
(11) contracts	10	11	9	12
(12) memoranda related to meetings	22	15	22	30
(13) other memoranda	8	8	9	7
(14) frequent exchange of information with e.g. subsidiaries, project personnel or customers	5	4	2	10
(15) replies to inquiries	2	3	2	0
(16) product information	2	2	4	0
(17) other	7	8	7	5

#### 6.1.4.3 Medium

In this section the medium by which the messages are sent and received will be discussed. The respondents were asked to estimate the percentage distribution of different media of their outgoing and incoming messages. It seems that the question was found somewhat complicated, as the number of those who did not report on the percentages was large, and also there were many replies that had to be rejected, because the respondent had misunderstood the question (giving, for example, the order of the most important media, and no percentages). For these reasons the share of missing information for question No 21 was 14% in the total sample and as high as 17% in the SEFE group. Tables 20 and 21 (p.69) show the mean values calculated for the medium categories in the total sample and the subgroups.

As could be expected, the shares of the media are roughly the same for outgoing and incoming messages. The tables show that somewhat less than one third of the messages were sent by mail, and about one third were received by mail. The reason for the higher percentages of incoming mail is probably the fair amount of English language 'junk

mail', i.e. advertisements that regularly appears on the table, personally addressed to the receiver.

**Table 20.** The mean values of the percentages given for the different types of media used in sending English language messages.

MEDIUM	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
mail	27	30	23	29
paper telefax	48	35	56	53
electronic telefax	6	8	4	5
telex	2	3	1	2
in-house mail	4	5	5	3
courier companies	2	1	1	3
e-mail	9	15	7	4
other	1	2	2	1
≈	100	100	100	100

**Table 21.** The mean values for the percentages given for the different types of media in the English language messages received.

MEDIUM	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
mail	33	35	30	37
paper telefax	45	38	48	48
electronic telefax	2	1	5	1
telex	2	3	2	3
in-house mail	6	6	6	5
courier companies	2	2	1	2
e-mail	8	14	6	3
other	2	2	2	1
≈	100	100	100	100

It is evident that the medium used most frequently was the telefax, which accounted for approximately one half of all messages. The fax seems to be most used by the engineers: 60 % (paper fax and computer fax combined) of all their messages were sent by fax, and 53% of the messages received came by fax. The business graduates made least use of the fax machine (35%), but sent more faxes directly from the computer than the other two groups, and were, contrary to expectations, the most frequent users of e-mail (15% of sent messages, 14% of received messages). It was anticipated that the engineers would be the leaders in all electronic exchange of messages. The crosstabulation of age by medium use showed that age did not affect other media than e-mail, which was used more extensively by the younger age groups. The differences were statistically almost significant.

More computer faxes seem to be sent (6%) than received (2%); in the SEFE group there is a striking difference in this respect (8% sent, 1% received). This fact was also mentioned by one of the engineers interviewed; according to him it is easy and handy to

send the message directly from the computer by fax, but nicer to receive a paper fax. Moreover, it seems that often the equipment at the Finnish end is technologically more advanced than that of the foreign addressee or sender.

Many of the companies still seem to have the telex machine, but very few messages are exchanged by telex. English language in-house mail had a share of about 5%, which represents the large companies or groups that have English as their official in-house language.

The proportion of e-mail was bigger than anticipated (9% for sent and 8% for received messages), and it also seems to be the medium that grows fastest at the moment. The e-mail users in this survey came for the most part from large international companies, which had computer networks between the various operating units in different countries and used English e-mail messages in their interpersonal communication. It was noted in the interviews that also many smaller companies have access to e-mail systems, and have frequent users, too, but often within the company in Finland, and in Finnish.

The respondents were also able to give their opinions about the future development of the different types of media. They were asked to tell whether they think that the importance of the medium in communication will increase, decrease or stay the same. The estimations of all the subgroups were very similar. The opinions were most unanimous on computer faxes: 90% thought that their importance will grow. In the respondents' view, the importance of telex will decrease (85%; 15% estimated it to stay at the present level) and the importance of e-mail increase (77%; 20% said that it will stay the same). The role of ordinary mail was seen to diminish: 67% estimated that its importance will decrease, and 27% thought that it will stay the same. The importance of paper faxes was forecast to grow by 64%. However, 17% stated that the role of paper faxes in communication will be smaller in the future. Similar future expectations were also found by Ruskelin (1989:84).

The interviewees were all frequent users of the fax machine, which was considered the norm by the majority. They used other media only if the document to be sent was very extensive, or if large enclosures or other material was to be sent along with the message. In addition to faxes, two interviewees, both engineers, also sent and received English e-mail messages every day.

#### **6.1.4.4 Work procedure in sending messages**

As was discussed above in Chapter 3.6 (p. 22), it is not very many years ago that sending a message in English from a Finnish executive to somebody abroad required several steps to be taken. It was usually either a telex message or a letter to be sent by mail. The text, which was either in Finnish or a draft version in English, was given to the secretary, who translated or edited it, gave it back for approval, then possibly changed something, and finally sent it by telex, or typed the letter (or even had it typed by the typing pool that some larger companies had), had it signed by the sender himself/herself, and mailed it. The proliferation of the fax machine and the fast growth of electronic mail seem to have changed the above procedure, and streamlined the work routines in businesses.

In the working hypothesis of this study relating to the work procedure of sending out interpersonal messages the assumption was made that a clear majority of the messages today are actually written and also concretely sent by the sender himself/herself. In

addition, it was assumed that the procedures have become simpler: messages are not 'bounced' back and forth any more.

The respondents were suggested six different work situations, and in each of them a certain work procedure was briefly described. They were supposed to determine which of the situations is the most common, the second most common and the third most common in their own work. They were also given an opportunity to indicate the situations which did not occur in their work at all.

Table 22 shows the percentages for the most common work procedure estimated by the total sample and the subgroups.

**Table 22. The most common work procedure in sending messages. The figures indicate the percentages in the total sample and the subgroups.**

WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) you write and send the message yourself			
62	62	72	48
(2) you write or draft the message in your mother tongue, somebody writes it in English and sends it			
4	7	4	1
(3) you write a draft in English, somebody edits and sends it			
10	13	13	2
(4) you write and complete the message, somebody else sends it off			
7	9	10	0
(5) you get the message or draft in your mother tongue and write the message in English and send it			
7	3	1	19
(6) you get the draft in English, edit it, and send it off			
10	6	0	28
(7) other			
1	2	0	1

It can clearly be seen that a distinct majority of the total sample (62%) consider the first alternative, writing and sending the messages themselves, the most common procedure. It is natural that the percentage is smaller among the secretaries, who have assisting roles and fewer tasks to be taken care of independently. However, the first alternative was clearly the biggest also in the SY group, accounting for 48%. The figures indicate that a considerable number of tasks in business communication is carried out by



one person efficiently and rapidly, compared to the previous multi-step model. The above view is further strengthened by the percentages for the second most common and the third most common situation. As many as 17% of the respondents in the total sample estimated the first alternative to be the second most common and 11% the third most common procedure, and only 3% said that it does not occur in their work. Thus 97% at least sometimes wrote, completed, and sent out their own messages, and 90% considered it to be one of the three most common situations.

The fourth alternative, according to which the person writes and completes the message himself/herself and somebody else carries out the technical sending, is close to the first in terms of the simplicity of the work procedure. This situation was found to be the most common by 9% of the business graduates and 10 % of the engineers, but got distinctly bigger shares as the second most common situation (33% for both SEFE and TEK), and still high percentages as the third most common situation (SEFE 13% and TEK 21%). Thus 55% of the business graduates and 64% of the engineers considered the alternative where they themselves write the message to be completely ready to be sent to be one of the three most common situations.

For the secretaries the above procedure was rarer, but occurred sometimes; 8% said that it was the second most common situation and for 14% it was the third most common situation. A little less than one half (46%) of the secretaries thought that this procedure does not take place, whereas only 15% of the engineers and 24% of the business graduates were of this opinion. It has to be remembered again that one of the reasons for the convergence of the SEFE and SY groups is the 9% share of secretaries among the SEFE informants.

Table 22 also shows that if there are two people involved in preparing a message, it is more often an English language draft that is edited by the secretary than a Finnish original version that the secretary would translate into English. Alternative 3 was considered one of the three most common situations by half of the engineers (50%) and somewhat less than half of the business graduates (43%), whereas for alternative 2, where the draft would be in Finnish or Swedish, the corresponding figure was only 23% in both groups. The same tendency, from the secretaries' point of view, can be seen in their reactions to alternatives 5 and 6. The latter, where the original text is in English, scored higher as the most common situation (28% vs. 19%), and also when the three most common situations were combined; 80% said that alternative 6 was one of three most frequent procedures and 69% said the same for alternative 5. The above phenomenon can be examined further by a look at non-occurrences of the different situations: as high a number as 72% of the informants said that alternative 2 (draft in Finnish or Swedish) did not occur in their work, and the corresponding figure for alternative 5 (draft in English) was only 56%.

It was shown that the working hypothesis for the work procedures in sending out messages was correct. The procedures have become simpler: to a considerable degree the process of interpersonal communication is carried out directly between the sender and receiver without any intermediaries, and mostly the target language is used outright, when the message is originally drawn out.

The respondents were also asked if, in their opinion, the introduction of telefax and e-mail has changed the work procedures in the production, handling and sending of messages, and if so, what the changes are. The question was probably formulated in a

complicated manner as 9% of the total group (of those who used English in their work and went on reporting after question No 12, N=345) did not report on the yes/no question and 7% of those who answered 'yes' did not specify the changes. Moreover, some respondents had misunderstood the question and reported on the change of the medium (several comments about the amount of written communication having increased compared to the amount of telephone communication, or the more extensive use of the e-mail) or the form and linguistic style of the messages ("the layout and form less format-bound", "style of writing more informal"). There were also a few comments that were even more irrelevant in this context, such as "no need to use an envelope".

Table 23 shows the yes/no replies to the question "Has the introduction of telefax and e-mail brought about changes in the work procedures of preparing / handling / sending messages?"

**Table 23. The percentages of the respondents who thought that fax and e-mail have affected work procedures (yes) and those who thought that they have not (no).**

	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
yes	54	60	57	45
no	46	40	43	55

It seems that a clear majority of the business graduates and the engineers have experienced a change in the work procedures of sending messages after the introduction of the telefax and e-mail, whereas less than half of the secretaries think that changes have taken place. It came up in the interviews several times that in many companies the number of secretarial posts has decreased during the last few years, as most people are now capable of handling their own messages. The managing director of a technical importing company (interviewee No. 5, 19 employees, 9 sales engineers) said: "Earlier we had two secretaries, but about two years ago we got rid of the other one ... as everyone now basically writes his faxes himself, we changed the organization accordingly".

One reason for the smaller number of yes-replies in Table 23 in the SY-group could be the fact that many of the secretaries felt that their own work procedure had not changed — they assisted their superiors in sending messages as they did in the telex/letter time — but they failed to see the changes overall, from the perspective of the whole organization. The secretaries in this study still had their posts.

It was also evident that the older generation could see the changes more clearly than the younger; in fact for the respondents who had been in business for only five years or less, it was impossible personally to refer to the time before the fax-machine, as it has been used in businesses for all their working life. Crosstabulation of age by the opinion on changes in work procedures indicated the same results: the youngest group in SEFE and TEK either said 'no' or opted out (in SY there were no respondents under the age of 30); all the other age groups in SEFE and TEK were more inclined to see change. In the group of secretaries, the shares of 'yes' and 'no' were close to 50% in all age groups. The differences received by crosstabulation were not, however, statistically significant.

This is a comment from Interviewee No. 1 (p. 91), who works as an account executive in a large multinational advertising agency: "I came to work for this company in 1987 ... since then the use fax has been the same ... I write and mostly send my faxes myself".

A total of 159 informants reported on the nature of the changes. About half of them said outright that now the message is written and sent by the sender himself/herself, and the rest of the statements also referred to the high speed, easiness and simplicity of the process, unless the informant misunderstood the question and commented on the change of medium or the language, as was discussed above (pp. 72-73). Table 24 summarizes the statements given to the nature of changes in the work procedures after the introduction of telefax/e-mail.

**Table 24. The nature of changes in the work procedures of sending messages as reported by all respondents and the subgroups.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) message written and sent by the sender himself	47	53	55	25
(2) work process rationalized; fewer drafts needed	9	11	6	10
(3) less time-consuming	25	28	16	35
(4) easiness	6	2	10	8
(5) other	13	7	13	23

The low percentages indicating easiness (Category 4) do not give the right impression, as easiness was very often mentioned as an additional feature, together with the rapid and rationalized process. In Table 24, however, only one type of change mentioned in each reply was included. The various replies in the category "other" were discussed above (p. 72).

Question No 26 was concerned with the language of the messages, and the results will be dealt with in the next chapter.

#### 6.1.4.5 The benefits and disadvantages of the telefax

In an open-ended question the respondents were asked to give an overall assessment of the telefax as a medium of communication and discuss its benefits and disadvantages. The benefits mentioned were coded in eleven different categories, and a maximum of four benefits were taken into account from one informant. There were a few who mentioned more than four; then the four were taken in the order of appearance.

The share of missing information grew larger towards the end of the questionnaire. The percentage of those who did not reply to the open-ended questions was higher all the way than the percentages at the beginning of the questionnaire, where the questions were mostly structured. The number of those who did not report the benefits was 11% in the total sample, 16% in SEFE, 9% in TEK, and 6% in SY.

Table 25 below shows the percentages of the benefits given. The percentage indicates how many percent of all respondents and members of the subgroups who reported on the benefits mentioned the benefit in question. It can easily be seen that the first advantage over the others as experienced by the respondents was the fastness of communication. There were many answers which simply stated "fast", sometimes repeating the word, or emphasizing it with pluses or exclamation marks. "Fast" often went together with "easy" or "handy", and in many replies these two were the only benefits mentioned. There was also a large number who did not specify any characteristics, but expressed a very strong general positive opinion (such as "good as hell" or "the inventor should get a Nobel prize" or "very good, no disadvantages"), which was classified in category 10. More than every fifth respondent found it important that the fax is not bound to any time limits and is easy to use in business with distant countries in other time zones, and as it is used more and more extensively, almost anybody can now easily be reached by fax.

**Table 25. The benefits of the telefax. The percentages indicate the number of the respondents who expressed the category in question as a benefit.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) fast	84	83	79	91
(2) easy	29	39	24	25
(3) produces a document	13	13	10	18
(4) reliable	8	7	7	9
(5) no time or place limits	22	19	28	18
(6) inexpensive	12	19	9	7
(7) simple language can be used	7	12	2	9
(8) pictures and charts can be sent	20	15	32	10
(9) no intermediaries needed, can be handwritten or sent directly from computer	6	6	5	7
(10) "good as hell" ( strong general, positive statement)	11	7	11	15
(11) other	10	14	10	6

The SEFE group seemed to appreciate the simple language ("ei koukeroita!") of faxes more than the other two groups. Engineers often work with pictures, charts and drawings; therefore it was expected that they value the possibility of sending them by fax, and every third engineer mentioned this as a benefit of the medium. The category "other" included diverse comments, such as "has replaced telex", "possible to avoid spelling on the phone", "often replaces telephone", "easy to add comments by bouncing the same form back", or "less room for misunderstanding".

It was evident that the telefax was overwhelmingly seen as a positive phenomenon. It could be seen in some of the comments in category 10 above, and it was also explicitly stated in such comments as "difficult to find any disadvantages", "is there anything negative?", or "merely pluses". In addition to those who clearly indicated that they could

not see any negative aspects (N=30), there were 80 informants who did not mention any disadvantages. The corresponding number for the benefits was 38. Thus there were 42 informants who mentioned something positive about the fax, but failed to mention any negative aspects. The total number of those who replied to question No 27 was 307. As many as 23% of them (30+42=72) indicated either explicitly or implicitly that using a telefax as a medium for communication does not involve any disadvantages, and several answers revealed the informants' pronounced positive opinions.

However, some disadvantages were also mentioned. It is obvious that the statements have to be considered relative: the fax was often found to be an inexpensive medium, as can be seen in Table 25, but 2% of all informants found it expensive, and even 4% found it slow. Moreover, the same feature was sometimes seen as a plus and a minus: "Texts can be sent by anyone (+), which can be seen in the quality of the text (-)".

The disadvantages suggested were classified into 10 categories, and, again, the maximum of four different statements were taken into account from one informant. However, about half of the respondents who took a stand mentioned only one disadvantage. Table 26 summarizes the disadvantages.

**Table 26. The disadvantages of the telefax. The percentage indicates the share of the respondents who mentioned the category in question as a disadvantage.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) bad print quality	34	37	36	28
(2) wrong addressee	28	30	21	37
(3) busy lines	17	19	10	24
(4) not valid legally	8	3	7	15
(5) poor language	9	14	5	9
(6) technical restrictions	21	23	21	18
(7) expensive	2	3	2	1
(8) slow	4	5	6	0
(9) flood of information; unnecessary urgency	5	3	7	5
(10) other	13	20	8	12

Of the informants who commented on the disadvantages of the telefax, one third mentioned the bad print quality that sometimes may make it difficult to read incoming faxes; this category got the highest percentages among the business graduates and the engineers. There were, however, also comments on improved paper quality and other technological advances that are taking place and making the print quality better. Almost every third secretary (28%) also mentioned the print quality, but the category 2 "wrong addressee" got the highest percentage in the SY group (37%). This category involves two kinds of statements: firstly, the uncertainty of the message reaching the addressee's machine, in spite of the confirmation report, and secondly, the possibility that because of the openness of the fax machine, an outsider might see the message. These matters were also discussed in the interviews. The uncertainty about the transmittal process was

sometimes seen slightly problematic, but the openness was not considered a real problem. Most of the interviewees said that the matters dealt with by fax are mostly not secret or confidential, and if it is important that nobody other than the addressee sees the message, it can be arranged by calling the person first about the incoming message. Moreover, one interviewee (No 1, p. 91) mentioned that if there are new products being developed, certain codes are always used for them in all communication, before the products are launched. It also came up in the interviews that sometimes it may take too long for the fax to reach the right person, if the addressee's company is large, and the messages do not move fast enough inside the house.

Busy telephone lines, especially to certain countries, were mentioned by 17% in the total sample and as many as 24% in the SY group. Having to wait for the connections seemed to irritate especially the secretaries, but as in Category 1, there were also comments here about improving conditions, e.g. the direct transmittal from the computer, when the message, and not the person himself/herself, waits for the lines to open. The third highest percentage in the total sample (21%) can be found in Category 6, "technical restrictions". It refers to other restrictions than paper quality, which was included in Category 1, as for example "cannot send colour pictures or bigger than A4 format".

For the present study it was especially interesting to note that the question of language came up frequently. It can be seen in Table 25 (p. 75) that 7% of the whole group (SEFE 12%, TEK 2%, SY 9%) mentioned "simple language" as one of the benefits of fax correspondence. They felt that as no 'officialese' is needed, communication is easier and the threshold to writing lower. The other side of the coin can be seen in Table 26, Category 5. One tenth of the whole group, and as many as 14% of the business graduates, paid attention to the "poor quality" of the fax language. This category includes statements about the language getting poorer and more streamlined, impersonal and even rude messages, and general negligence in language use. We can see that the percentages for both the positive statement about "simple language" and the negative one about "poor language" are higher among the business graduates and the secretaries, and the engineers seem to pay less attention to the language of the messages. However, at this point a question could be raised about the sincerity of the worry of the "disappearing good language", which also came up in the interviews. It is possible that the respondents and interviewees express the worry to a teacher of English, because they see it as their responsibility to do so as educated language users.

Category 9 includes statements about too much information (such as copies of brochures or other booklets that could be sent by mail as well) flooding through the fax machine, on the one hand, and the 'made-up' urgency that was considered to be the machine's fault, on the other hand. The statement that one of the interviewees used in the pre-interviews ("after the fax machine came I started to run") was discussed with the ten interviewees. None of them really agreed with it; it was confirmed that the pace in business is getting higher all the time, but they did not see a cause-and-effect connection between the emergence of the fax and the hectic pace of today's business. The fax was seen as the proper medium for carrying out the urgent tasks that are required in businesses.

The percentages for the category "other" were relatively high, but can partly be explained by the smaller number of respondents. There were several comments about the fax not being suitable for interactive communication, and also about the messy or sloppy

appearance and layout of faxes. A few informants mentioned direct mail by fax, and one stated: "Will kill letter writing".

### 6.1.5 Language of written messages

#### 6.1.5.1 Situational factors affecting language

To consider the matters that affect the kind of language used in a written message, ten different factors were suggested, and the respondents were asked to pick the three that they thought are the most decisive when formulating a written message. They were also requested to mark the most decisive, the second most decisive and the third most decisive factor. The factors listed can be claimed to overlap to some extent, e.g. the phase of the transaction and the subject of the message, but seem to have covered the area fairly well, as only five informants chose the category "other". Table 27 shows how many per cent of the whole group, and the subgroups, picked the category in question as one of the three most decisive factors.

**Table 27.** The factors that affect the language of written messages. The percentages indicate the shares of the respondents who chose the category as one of the three most decisive factors.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) phase of the transaction	28	33	31	18
(2) familiarity with the addressee	58	59	60	54
(3) medium of communication	32	35	25	37
(4) nationality of the addressee	11	11	10	13
(5) status of the addressee	31	27	29	38
(6) sex of the addressee	0	0	1	0
(7) subject of the message	64	63	65	64
(8) urgency	21	23	23	17
(9) writer's language skills	46	41	44	54
(10) other	2	2	2	2

It is evident that many factors affect the writing process and the linguistic outcome of the message simultaneously. It could also be seen in the replies to this question, since very many of the respondents picked up more than three, often all nine, categories and put them in the order of importance, which suggests that they felt the strong simultaneous influence of several factors. However, only the first three were taken into account here.

The informants were quite unexpectedly unanimous in assessing the decisiveness of the different factors. Two thirds picked up the subject of the message (64% in the total sample; highest percentages in all subgroups), and the relationship/familiarity with the addressee was ranked almost as high (58% in the total sample). One informant in the SEFE group said that it is actually only the close or distant relationship with the addressee that determines the kind of language chosen. Half of the respondents also focused on the writer's own language skills, which was the third in the total sample (46%) and the SEFE

(41%) and TEK (44%) groups, and shared the second place with the relationship with the addressee among the secretaries (54%). The higher percentage in the SY group is consistent with the perception that secretaries pay more attention to the correctness of the language and thus also consider the writer's ability to use the language to be of decisive importance for the final message.

The medium of communication ranked the fourth in the total sample (32%) and the SEFE (35%) and SY (37%) groups, but was the sixth (25%) among the engineers. One reason for the lower percentage in the TEK group could be the fact that there the telefax was so clearly the most common medium, whereas the media choice in the other groups was more dispersed (see p. 69, Tables 20 and 21). It may have been more difficult for the engineers to see the influence of the medium, if they had used the fax almost exclusively. There is probably also some overlap between the medium and the subject of the message. In many cases the subject, or the overall situation, determines the medium; it could then be claimed that either the subject or the medium is the factor that is more important for the linguistic outcome of the message.

About one third of all informants put the organizational status of the addressee (31%) as well as the phase of the transaction (28%) among the three most influential factors. The urgency of the situation was not picked up by more than one fifth (21%), which supports the information gained in the interviews that a great majority of the messages are routine-like, daily or weekly exchange of information, where the terminology and the linguistic structure do not change, however urgent the situation might be. The same could be claimed of the nationality of the addressee. It got the lowest percentage — except for the sex, which was considered totally irrelevant — in all groups (11% in the total sample). In the interviews it often came up that although the informants acknowledge the close relationship between language and culture, the nationality or culture of the addressee is not an issue that would affect the routine type of interpersonal communication (see p. 54). As was expected, the sex of the addressee was not found to be relevant; it was picked up by one member of the TEK group only as the second most decisive factor. As mentioned above (p. 77), the category "other" consisted of only five comments, such as "formal or informal message", "the addressee's language skills", or "the image of the company".

A look at the three most decisive factors separately does not change the above picture much, but brings up the importance of the writer's language skills in the SY-group and the role of the medium overall. As the most important factor the 'subject of the message' got the highest percentages in the total sample, as well as in the SEFE and TEK groups (about 30%). It also got 29% among the secretaries, but there the writer's language skills was the highest with 32%. As the second most important factor the relationship with the addressee ranked the highest (23%) in the total sample. The answers concerning the third most decisive factor were more dispersed, but in addition to the importance of the relationship, which was the first in the total sample with 17%, the role of the medium was clear: the second with 16% in the whole group, the first with 20% in SEFE, the second with 14% in TEK, and the second with 16% in SY. The above information could be seen to support the claim that in the process of message sending there are primary factors, such as the subject of the message and the relationship with the addressee, that affect media choice, and the medium is a secondary factor, which seems to affect the language.



### 6.1.5.2 Change of business language

#### Change of language as experienced by the respondents

One of the working hypotheses of the present study was the claim that the introduction of the telefax and e-mail and their present extensive use have changed the language used in interpersonal business communication. The claim was formulated in a direct question, in which reference was not made to the new media, but to a time span of ten years. Question No 28 reads "In your opinion, has the English language used in messages between businesses changed during the last ten years (or the time you have used English at work, if it is less than ten years). If it has, how?" As was mentioned earlier, the number of those who failed to report on the questions increased towards the end of the questionnaire. However, the share of missing information was the largest in the replies to this particular question: as many as 24% did not take a stand as to the change of the language. This is a sizeable number, and at least partly it must be interpreted as an opt-out reaction to a difficult question. In addition, 11% of the respondents opted out by saying "I don't know". Still we have to remember that part of all missing information at the end of the questionnaire can simply be explained by reference to the informants who got tired at a certain point and disregarded the rest of the questions altogether.

Table 28 shows the respondents' opinions about language change during the last ten years.

**Table 28. Opinions about whether the language of business messages has changed/has not changed during the past ten years. "Yes" indicates the number of those who saw the change and "no" the number of those who think that the language has not changed.**

	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
yes	65	57	55	86
no	23	28	30	10
no opinion	11	15	15	4
≈	100	100	100	100

In spite of the sizeable share of the respondents who did not take a stand, Table 28 implies that a distinct majority had experienced a change in the language during the last ten years, or during their working life, if it was shorter than ten years. Naturally, younger informants noticed less change than older informants. This was seen very clearly in the crosstabulations of age by opinion about change, and number of years English used by opinion about change. Both crosstabulations showed similar results, and the differences found were statistically highly significant: in the youngest group (under 30 years, or work experience less than 5 years) about 25% said 'yes' and 47% said 'no', the rest did not have an opinion. In all other age groups the proportion of those who had noticed change was distinctly higher, and varied between 60% and 86%. Thus we could argue that the share of those who thought that language has changed, and have worked long enough to be able to take a stand, should actually be higher than 65% (Table 28).

The business graduates and the engineers were fairly unanimous in their opinions, whereas the secretaries differed distinctly from the other two groups at this point. It seems that the secretaries were very convinced of the change, which could, in addition to their older age, again be explained by their interest in language and the developments in it while the other two groups focus on the subject matter.

### Aspects of change

To the question, how the language has changed, some respondents offered one aspect, some more than one, but very few more than three. The maximum of three aspects were taken into account for each respondent when the percentages for the eight categories of language change were calculated. The number of the informants who specified the type of change(s) was 174. Table 29 shows the percentages of the informants who mentioned the aspect in the category in question.

Three tendencies seem to arise from the information in Table 29: firstly, the less formal, more straightforward language, and secondly, the trend away from British English, and thirdly, a divergent, two-dimensional view of the level of language users' language skills.

**Table 29. Aspects of language change in business messages as experienced by the respondents during the last ten years. The percentages indicate how many per cent of the respondents mentioned the category in question.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) less attention to formalities	38	35	31	51
(2) more everyday language, trend towards spoken language	28	28	18	38
(3) language more fluent	9	4	13	9
(4) more American English	4	5	3	3
(5) more Euro-English or other mixtures	3	2	1	5
(6) straight to the point, efficiency	14	21	9	14
(7) poorer language	7	9	4	9
(8) other	9	6	8	12

The fact that the informants felt that business writing has become more informal and free ("less conservative") was mentioned above when the changes that the introduction of electronic media have brought about were discussed (page 72), and the "simple, lighter language" was dealt with in the context of the benefits of the fax machine. The same phenomenon can be seen in Table 29 in categories 1, 2 and 6, which all cover different views to the same tendency: the language used in interpersonal messages has become less formal, speech-like, brief, and to the point. The three categories are, however, shown separately in the table, because they focus on different aspects of informality. Adding up the percentages in categories 1, 2, and 6 it can be seen that as high a number as 80 % of all informants had noticed this type of change.

The first category covers the answers in which the word "formalities" (Finnish: "koukerot" or "ilman jaarituksia") was mentioned, but not always specified. It could refer to the layout and the format or to complicated linguistic phrases or, as probably often happened, to both. In the second category the replies referred to "everyday" or "normal" or "spoken" language. The sixth category is in fact very close to the first, but as the replies implied an interesting claim that was repeated in the interviews several times, it was shown separately. The respondents here, and most of the interviewees, emphasized that today's business language is very straightforward and lacks all unnecessary, wordy phrases. "Efficiency" is the key word, and the informants implied that it is achieved by brief and concise language, which deals with the subject matter only, and avoids everything else. There were many comments that stated — sometimes in a slightly apologetic manner — that it is the message that matters, not the linguistic forms.

The interviews gave the impression that the interviewees thought that a more formal and wordy type of English, with some polite phrases to hedge the message, would be preferable. At least they felt that they had to say so to a teacher of business English, and then add "but it's efficiency that counts, so this is how I write".

In the same way, some interviewees seemed to feel slightly guilty for having abandoned "pure British English". This trend also came up in the discussion of different Englishes above (p. 54). It can also be seen in Table 29, in categories 4 and 5, which can be regarded as two different views of the same issue. Most of the respondents and interviewees had studied English at school or the university at the time when the teaching of English was very much British-oriented in Finland. Against that background, some see that there is more American English in present business language, while others regard it as a mixture that has ingredients from several sources, and call it e.g. Euro-English. As many as 7% of all informants paid attention to this development.

The third dimension that can be found in Table 29 can be seen in categories 3 and 7. The claims look contradictory: the level of language skills seems to have risen, on the one hand, and fallen, on the other. But a closer look shows that there are two different levels. The informants thought that generally speaking the English that is used in businesses today is at a higher level and more fluent than earlier, because the younger generation has been better educated in this respect, and they generally have a good command of English when they enter working life. The claims that refer to "poorer language" focus specifically on the frequent, brief messages that go back and forth, and especially on the fact that all personnel now write messages, not only the secretaries who are language experts. The result is that the language is "oversimplified", "engineer's English" or "bad English".

In Table 29 the subgroups differed distinctly at some points. All the secretaries who reported on the changes expressed their opinion about the more flexible, speech-like, or more concise language, whereas only slightly over half of the engineers did so. The business graduates got the highest percentage (21%) in category 6, emphasizing efficiency. The category "other" included comments about changes that have to do with the development of language over time in general and about disappearing telex language, and there were also a few statements that actually referred to the medium or some other related aspect, not language itself.

Fax/e-mail language compared to traditional correspondence

Since the medium most used for present interpersonal business communication is the telefax, and e-mail is also used fairly extensively (see p. 69), it was not unexpected that the answers to question No 29 ("In your opinion, what is the language of (a) telefaxes (b) e-mail like as compared to traditional correspondence language?") were repetition to the above information about the changes in language during the last ten years (see pp. 80-81). Table 29 (p. 81) indicated that the most striking trend is the language becoming less formal and more free, which can clearly be seen also in the replies to the question of the language of telefaxes / e-mail.

In their replies, most of the respondents failed to indicate, if they referred to (a) telefax language or (b) e-mail language, but simply offered a few comments on "the language". If it was not clear which medium they meant, the same codes were used for (a) and (b). Later it turned out that about 80% of those whose comments were considered to refer to both media did not use e-mail in their present work at all. This does not have to mean that they do not have any experience with e-mail, but it looks likely that most of these informants actually referred to faxes and fax-language only, and just failed to indicate it. Tables 20 and 21 (see p. 69) showed that the fax is the dominating medium for interpersonal business communication, and the data revealed that there were very few informants who did not use it, so practically everyone was in the position of taking a stand to fax language.

For the reason discussed above the percentages calculated for (a) and (b) were almost the same; the only real differences were in categories 5 and 8, which will be discussed below. Thus, with this data, it is impossible to compare the two media from the language point of view. Table 30 below summarizes the typical features of fax language mentioned by the respondents. Since the percentages gained for e-mail language were nearly the same, the information will not be repeated here; however, the following typical fax language features certainly give some indication of the informants' opinions about the language of e-mail as well. In calculating the percentages, a maximum of three features were taken into account from each respondent.

**Table 30. Typical features of fax language compared to traditional correspondence. The percentages indicate the shares of the respondents who mentioned the feature in question.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) more informal	44	46	41	45
(2) concise, straight to the point	50	55	48	48
(3) easier, more relaxed	23	25	20	23
(4) more linguistic mistakes	16	13	21	14
(5) language according to subject	13	9	9	20
(6) stylistically poor	14	19	14	11
(7) other	10	14	10	8
(8) no opinion/no experience	2	1	3	1

The opinions in the subgroups look strikingly similar. As was mentioned above, the same features arise from this data as emerged earlier in the replies to language change (see Table 29, discussion on pages 80-81). Half of the informants mentioned the conciseness of the language: "Only the essential points are said; no unnecessary beating around the bush, nor placing the text in the right spots" ("eikä jaaritella ja asetella tekstejä oikeisiin kohtiin"). Almost as many suggested informality, and about one fourth said that the text is more relaxed and easy, more everyday English.

The statements that formed Category 4, "More linguistic mistakes", offered interesting, divergent comments on language mistakes. On the one hand, there was the worry of the 'level' of the language that was also seen above (see page 82) ("fast food language", "in my opinion the use of faxes has lowered the level of the language") but, on the other hand, there were remarks about a more flexible atmosphere, where mistakes are tolerated, which lowers the threshold to business writing. The engineers seemed to be more aware of the possible mistakes than the other two groups (TEK 21%, SEFE 13% and SY 14%). The business graduates paid more attention to the style of writing becoming poor (19%; TEK 14% and SY 11%), which referred to such items as incomplete sentences, abbreviations, and bulletized text.

Category 5 in Table 30, 'language according to subject' did not get a very high percentage among all respondents (13%), but the replies offered interesting comments that have not come up in the previous discussion. The respondents pointed out here that a fax (or sometimes an e-mail message) does not necessarily differ from a traditional letter, but it is the subject that determines the language in it; the result may be a 'letter' or a more concise 'fax', depending on the situation. This issue was also discussed in the interviews. The interviewees were asked if they thought that the common noun 'a fax' — and the verb 'to fax' — existed as a linguistic concept which could be interpreted as referring to a certain message type characterized by certain linguistic features. Eight out of the ten interviewees gave positive answers, and two negative. It seems that for most people the linguistic concept exists; they have a picture of a certain kind of message in mind when hearing the request "drop me a fax, will you". However, it is obvious that the fax machine is also used for transmitting documents of any kind; "anything can come through the machine" was a comment by one of the interviewees who did not regard 'fax' as a stable concept. An interesting point was mentioned by three of the interviewees who thought that the concept of 'fax' existed. They referred to three different situations where this statement is true. According to Interviewee No 2, it is 'a fax' if it is written on the fax form of the company, and not the letter paper or anything else. Interviewee No 5 said that there was a distinction between handwritten and typed messages: he regarded handwritten ones as faxes in this sense. Interviewee No 6 pointed out that in-house messages are the kind of faxes that have certain common linguistic features which define the concept of 'fax'.

The category "other" comprised diverse comments, e.g. "clearly different", "more personal", "more impersonal", "includes graphics", and "better than telex".

As was stated above, the percentages concerning e-mail language were, for the reasons discussed above, almost the same as those in Table 30. The only clear differences could be found in categories 5 and 8. As for e-mail, only 6% of the respondents said that the subject matter determined the language, whereas 13% did so about the telefax. As was expected, the number of those who did not take a stand to e-mail language explicitly

(Table 30, Category 8) was larger (7%) than the number of those who did not have an opinion of fax language.

The following quotations of the answers of two business graduate respondents will sum up the discussion on fax language compared to traditional correspondence:

- (1) Fax language is concise. Often only a few sentences, and then a list. Fax is mostly used for fixing prices, delivery times, etc. Fax language is also sloppier, and the tone is often more familiar. (Original Finnish: "Faxien kieli on lyhyttä. Usein vain muutama lause ja loput luettelo. Faxilla sovitaan useimmiten hinnat, toimitusajat jne. Faxien kieli on myös huolimattomampaa ja usein tuttavallisempaa.")
- (2) Briefer, less perfect, implying, even more impolite, BUT HOWEVER: clear, includes all essentials, no unnecessary decorations. (Original Finnish: "Lyhyempää, epätäydellisempää, viitteellistä, epäkohteliaampaakin MUTTA KUITENKIN: selkeää, olennaiset asiat käsittävä, ei turhaa koreilua")

### 6.1.5.3 Difficulties in the writing process

The next open question was concerned with the possible difficulties of the writing process. The informants were asked if they thought that writing interpersonal messages in English was difficult. They were also requested to specify what exactly, if anything, was difficult, and say if it made any difference if they were writing a letter, a fax or an e-mail message. As was mentioned earlier, the share of missing information grew larger towards the end of the questionnaire. About 20% did not report on any difficulties at all, and about 50% did not take a stand to the influence of the medium on the writing process. Table 31 shows the answers to the question "Do you find writing a message in English difficult?".

**Table 31. The difficulty of the writing process as experienced by the respondents. "Yes" indicates the percentages of the informants who found the process difficult, and "No" the share of those who did not.**

	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
yes	33	35	27	39
no	46	47	50	41
sometimes	20	18	22	20
≈	100	100	100	100

The opinions of the subgroups did not considerably differ from each other. Only the secretaries found it somewhat more often difficult to produce the message than the other groups. This is obviously due to their higher demands as to the 'correctness' of the language. Overall, Table 31 shows an even situation; about one half of the informants did not consider writing difficult, and the other half either found it difficult (about 30%) or sometimes difficult (20%). It seems impossible to estimate how the informants who failed to reply would have reacted as there are no indications to the one or the other direction. However, the information from the interviews seems to confirm the above picture (see Table 36, p. 96) Therefore, in spite of the large share of missing information, the above

view of the writing process is likely to be in accordance with the opinions of the whole sample.

Overall, the opinions of the interviewees on possible difficulties of the writing process were in line with the information gained from the questionnaire survey. For a more detailed discussion, see pp. 59-60 (written problem areas).

Of the total sample, 137 respondents answered the question "What is difficult in writing?"; most of them mentioned one point, some more. A maximum of two difficulties were taken into account when the percentages in Table 32 were calculated.

**Table 32. The difficulties of the writing process as specified by the respondents (total sample). The percentages indicate the shares of the respondents who mentioned the category in question.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)
(1) lack of practice	26
(2) correct style, fluency	24
(3) grammatical correctness	17
(4) formal (letter) writing	17
(5) professional terminology	15
(6) general vocabulary	9
(7) phrases and idioms	9
(8) other	18

As the categories in Table 32 and the large share of category "other" show, the statements were varied and somewhat difficult to classify, which is certainly due to the slightly vague question "what is it that is difficult in writing?" For this reason, and also because the numbers of respondents in each subgroup were only between 40 and 50, which would have meant only few comments in one category, the above table only shows the information concerning the whole sample. The number of respondents was 137.

None of the categories really stand out, and the viewpoints differ. About one fourth of the respondents took a holistic stand to the writing situation and mentioned "lack of practice". Of different aspects of writing the category "correct style" or, as quite a few respondents put it, "fluent, present-day, efficient business style" was the largest. Professional terminology and grammatical correctness were also found to be of some importance, but the interviews, and also points mentioned by the respondents earlier about lack of skills in written situations (see p. 59), and later about focus points in the teaching of written business communication (see p. 90) confirmed that very frequently business people seem to be worried about the somewhat vague concept of 'style'. The interviewees mentioned the proper style and tone in a particular situation (as, for example, Interviewee No 7 put it: "do I have the right tone for this addressee whom I don't know"), and also the difficulty caused by the new media: "what is the right style for fax/e-mail?" 'Style' was also found important by Telenius (1994) in her study of academic writing among business students. The category of "style and adaptation to scientific context" was the largest (together with the "use of idioms and phrases") of the weaknesses the students had in their writing.

Considering the subgroups separately does not change the picture given by Table 32 above. The differences seem to lie between the engineers and secretaries; the TEK group is more worried about style and grammar, whereas the secretaries find professional terminology difficult. This information was confirmed in the interviews with the secretaries. Especially interviewee No 10 expressed her frustration in the situations where the secretary does not know about the subject matter enough to be able to find the correct professional terminology (see also p. 95).

The category "other" brought up some very general statements, such as "the change of language" or "no business language in my studies" and some specific ones, e.g. "the layout of documents" or "being polite in negative messages".

A total of 165 informants reported on the influence of the medium on the difficulty of writing. Table 33 shows the results.

**Table 33. The influence of the medium on the difficulty of the writing process. "Yes" indicates the share of those who think that the medium affects the process and "no" refers to the number of those who think that it does not.**

	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
yes	59	67	53	57
no	41	33	47	43

It is obvious that the majority of the respondents in all groups see the process differently, when they are writing a letter or a fax or an e-mail message. However, there were big differences between the subgroups, especially between the business graduates and the engineers. On pages 68-70, in the discussion about the media, it was found that the range of media is the most limited among the engineers, the fax being the most common medium, and most varied among the business graduates. In addition, the engineers had the shortest work experience of all the groups. The differences between SEFE and TEK in Table 34 could be explained by the more narrow range of media and the more limited experience of the TEK group.

In the whole sample 102 respondents offered their views of the influence of the medium. Over 80% said that it is more difficult to write a letter; many added the word "naturally", as in "writing a letter is naturally more demanding". About 5% explicitly referred to the e-mail being the easiest medium, and there were several comments also combining fax and e-mail: "I am not so 'worried' when I write faxes or e-mail". Some respondents indicated at this point that it is the addressee or the subject matter that are the relevant factors influencing the writing process in general (as was discussed above, in Chapter 6.1.5.1).

### 6.1.6 Opinions of business communication studies

The last question was concerned with the teaching and studying of English business communication in universities and other institutes of higher education. The respondents, who had reflected on their own communication environment and needs in the previous answers, were now offered an opportunity to suggest what the studies of English business communication should comprise, and how the students should be trained for their future



jobs in business. Comments were requested separately for oral and written communication and the question was open-ended. The respondents were very willing to offer their views of teaching; about 80% commented on spoken communication and about 70% on written communication, and very many wrote several sentences and suggested several different viewpoints. In calculating the percentages for Tables 34 and 35 the maximum of four suggestions were taken into account from each informant.

### Oral communication

Table 34 summarizes the focus points for oral communication suggested by the respondents.

**Table 34.** The focus points in the teaching of oral business communication as suggested by the respondents. The percentages indicate the shares of the respondents who mentioned the category in question.

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) small talk and ordinary conversation	57	58	58	55
(2) negotiation skills and the language of meetings	18	21	18	13
(3) encouragement	15	16	14	16
(4) cultural differences	22	21	17	29
(5) real business situations	21	17	27	18
(6) presentation skills	11	14	7	12
(7) telephone language	12	15	7	17
(8) pronunciation	6	3	7	7
(9) comprehension of different varieties of English	7	12	5	3
(10) special terminology	13	7	24	7
(11) general vocabulary	3	3	3	3
(12) other	35	34	31	39

The above result was expected: small talk and general ordinary conversation ranked clearly the highest in all three groups. Cultural differences are another popular topic in the present discussion in the mass media, and got here the second place among all respondents, and in the SEFE and SY groups; the engineers placed it slightly lower (fourth). About one fifth (21%) of all respondents did not specify any particular topic or subject, but vaguely referred to "real business situations", which in fact can be seen as a broad view of the approach to teaching, including elements of all the other categories. Especially the engineers stressed this point, and several of them offering concrete examples, e.g. "it should be something like the Bellcrest story, not any chatting about uninteresting, made-up topics". This information could be seen as criticism of the courses that the respondents had taken, and is in line with the opinions of the engineers interviewed. Another different viewpoint was presented in the comments that, often very strongly, with capital letters and exclamation marks, emphasized the fact that most of all

the students should be encouraged by the instructor, everything else can be learned later (Category 3), as in "they need more encouragement to get their mouths open" (Finnish: "rohkeutta avata suunsa!!").

Negotiations and meetings were mentioned by 18% of all respondents. Many of them stressed the importance of negotiation and argumentation skills and the experience of debating. This aspect was very much emphasized by Interviewee No 1 ("You have to learn how to get your point through in the negotiations, that's what matters most"). Somewhat unexpectedly Category 6, telephoning, did not get more than 12% in the total sample, and only 17% of the secretaries mentioned it. As pointed out above (see Table 12, page 58), it was seen as one of the major problem areas in the discussion of the situations where the informants would like better language skills. Since the engineers assumed a holistic approach towards teaching more often than the other groups, stressing the importance of real life situations, their percentages in most of the other categories were lower. Category 10, (Table 34) "special terminology" is, however, an exception: the engineers emphasized specific terminology more often than the business graduates or the secretaries. By "specific terminology" they referred as often to business as to technical vocabulary. General vocabulary was classified separately, as a contrast to category 10, but a question might be raised if it should be combined with the first category as part of ordinary conversation.

As was mentioned earlier (p. 59), it could, however, be claimed that the large differences between Categories 1 and 11 (Table 34, p. 88) indicate that the fact that English small talk or ordinary conversation is considered problematic by native speakers of Finnish does not seem to be a question of vocabulary, but the problems lie at the discourse level (for a discussion on this subject see Charles 1994).

The Category "other" was very large, because the scope of comments offered was wide. There were remarks on, e.g. body language, native speaker teachers, other subjects taught in English, video filming, and studies abroad. Five respondents said that they were quite pleased with the teaching they had had, so the same lines should be followed.

### Written communication

Table 35 (p. 90) summarizes the focus points for written communication suggested by the respondents.

Again, the answers were so varied that it was difficult to classify them. In the coding phase, 27 different categories were created, and Table 35 is the result of mergers between many of the coding categories. Forming fewer categories was necessary to see any general lines in the suggestions, but it also made Category 9 very large. There were some wide general remarks, such as "written communication in general", "no need to teach written communication at all", "not too much correspondence", "the importance of communication in reaching objectives", and "much reading", and also very specific viewpoints, such as "dictating letters", "reports and exams in other subjects in English", "translation", "summary writing", and "ability to make use of dictionaries and the new technology".

**Table 35. The focus points in the teaching of written business communication as suggested by the respondents. The percentages indicate the shares of the respondents who mentioned the category in question.**

CATEGORY	WHOLE SAMPLE (%)	SEFE (%)	TEK (%)	SY (%)
(1) lucidity, fluency, efficiency of expression	25	26	21	25
(2) real-life writing tasks	10	9	10	12
(3) basic document types in correspondence	44	31	55	40
(4) specific terminology	25	13	38	16
(5) general vocabulary	6	5	7	7
(6) grammar and spelling	11	9	8	19
(7) style in general	11	17	5	9
(8) cultural awareness, including levels of politeness	15	14	10	21
(9) other	39	47	31	44

The most striking feature in Table 35 is the importance of the basic models for the different document types that are needed in a business transaction. Some respondents specified e.g. quotations or invoices, some referred to the opening and closing of a letter, and a few mentioned the special phrases that they considered to belong to a certain letter type. This Category (No 3) was the largest in all groups, but the percentage was distinctly higher among the engineers than the other two subgroups. This fact is in line with the previous information about engineers lacking business communication instruction in their university studies (see p. 59). The matter was also discussed in the interviews, and all the engineers said that a course in business communication in general, and business writing in particular, should be included in their curriculum.

The two second biggest categories in the total sample were "lucidity, fluency, efficiency of expression" (25%) and "specific terminology" (25%). As for the first category, the subgroups were fairly unanimous, about one fourth of each subgroup mentioned lucidity or efficiency (see p. 86 about 'the proper style'). In Category 4, specific terminology, the engineers again had a distinctly higher percentage (38%) than SEFE (13%) or SY (16%). This category covers terminology relating to general business, agreements, or technology. Of the 38% in the TEK group, 23% referred either to business vocabulary in general or agreements, and 15% to technical terms. Specific terminology was also discussed in the interviews. The engineers interviewed found common business terminology to be a more important area in teaching than technical terminology; they thought that the students learn the technical terms anyway, as most of their course books are in English, and they also considered it to be impossible to cover all different areas of technology, whereas the need of business terms and phrases was obvious.

As in the previous discussion about the teaching of oral communication, many respondents (10% of the total) mentioned that also in written communication the instruction should focus on real-life tasks. Of the other categories, grammar and spelling, as well as cultural awareness, were considered more important by the secretaries than by the other subgroups, whereas 'stylistic aspects' — whatever the term refers to — were more valued by the business graduates.

It was expected that as focus points in teaching the respondents would suggest the areas where they themselves felt they needed better language skills. This connection can be seen, when Tables 34 (p. 88) and 12 (p. 58) (oral communication) on the one hand, and Tables 35 (p. 90) and 13 (p. 60) (written communication) on the other hand, are compared. All the specific aspects mentioned in Table 12, Categories 1 -6, can be found in Table 34 as well. The order of importance is also roughly the same, telephoning being the only exception; it was the second highest situation where the respondents wanted better language skills, but was only the seventh category in the suggested focus points. The categories in Tables 13 and 35 are very similar, the main emphasis being in specific terminology, basic document types, and stylistic aspects. Thus it is evident that the areas where the respondents felt less confident in their writing were also suggested as points that should be focused on in the teaching of written business communication.

## 6.2 Interviewee profiles and summary of interview results

### 6.2.1 Interviewee profiles

#### Business Graduates

(1) Interviewee No 1 is a 29-year-old business graduate, who works for a large multinational advertising agency as an account executive. She got a Master's degree from the Turku School of Economics in 1987. She is a real advertising professional: after having majored in advertising she has worked in advertising all the time after graduation, and for five years at this agency; first in media planning and from the year 1990 she has had responsibility for certain accounts. Her clients are large multinational companies in consumer goods business. She uses English daily, on the phone or by fax, mostly in her communication with the other offices within the group in other countries, sometimes with foreign representatives of the customers. The account executive is a determined, confident professional, who finds English communication to be a natural part of her job. She pointed out that there was no difference to her if she used Finnish or English in her daily oral or written messages.

(2) Interviewee No 2 is 46 years old. She got a Bachelor's degree (academic secretary) from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration in 1968. She works as an assistant to one of the export managers in a large Finnish pharmaceutical company. She has worked for 25 years in various, mostly secretarial, positions in car importing, plastic exporting, and pharmaceutical business. About ten years she has been involved in the export of medicines and related products to many different countries in the world. Her present area covers Eastern Europe, Africa and some Asian countries. She assists the export manager in her communication, which is mostly English faxes and phone calls. The interviewee has a long work experience and a 'born' interest in language use. When asked about difficulties in communication and language use she commented on the relationship between the subject matter and language. (Interviewee No 10 took up the same issue, see p. 94) Now that she knows the pharmaceutical business, communication does not cause any problems, but during the first years knowing the language did not help, nor did the

instructions from the superiors: "you don't have to know anything about this, just translate it as it stands". According to the interviewee, "once you have something to say, you do find the words for it".

(3) The third interviewee graduated from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration in 1991. He studied for 13 years, working simultaneously all the time. He is 48 years old, working as Managing Director for a small consultancy and training business, which he also partly owns. His earlier work experience is from computer business, and he has used English all his working life. In his present post he uses English at least weekly, often also on a daily basis, depending on the projects going on. Spoken English is used in negotiations and phone calls with foreign lecturers; also many of the seminars are conducted in English. Offers and seminar programmes are in that case written in English, and also contracts and other written communication with the foreign lecturers and experts. The interviewee stressed efficiency and speed in all communication and pointed out the importance of written language skills: "in today's international business, with the new technology, we are all correspondents and secretaries".

(4) Interviewee No 4, also 48 years, got a Master's degree from the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration in 1969. He has worked for 22 years in market research for a large multinational consumer electronics company. His present title is Market Research Manager. He has used English all the time in his work, but stated that the amount of communication in general had clearly decreased from the 1970s and 1980s. In his view the decrease is partly due to some organizational changes within the group — a regional office has been established in Stockholm — and partly to the very rapid pace of present business. Routine telephone calls and brief fax messages are exchanged daily, but the amount and quality of communication differ from the active interaction with the headquarters in the Netherlands and other group outlets all over the world which took place earlier.

### Engineering Graduates

(5) Interviewee No 5 is a 50-year-old graduate engineer. He graduated from the Helsinki University of Technology in 1967. All his work experience is from power plant technology, from four different companies in foreign trade. The last seven years he has worked as the Managing Director of a small import business in this field; he has nine sales engineers and 10 other employees working for him. The interviewee has used professional English all 25 years, of which 6 years he worked in the United States. He seems to be a language-oriented personality, seeing himself as a "communication worker" ("20% of my job is management, the rest is communication; 40% oral, 40% written"). He uses English every day in contacts with the suppliers in several European countries. Most of the frequent communication is telephone calls and telefax messages. The interviewee wanted to emphasize the importance of writing skills; according to him, in most situations it is possible to choose between a phone call and a fax message, and very often the choice is the fax, as it minimizes misunderstanding and also leaves the sender with a document at hand.

(6) The sixth interviewee also has an engineering degree from the Helsinki University of Technology. He is 30 years old and graduated in 1988. He has worked as a financial analyst for the same employer, the financing arm of a large Finland-based power plant boiler producer, for five years. The interviewee studied in the industrial management programme, which explains his qualifications for the financial position ("we are located somewhere between engineering and business graduates"). He uses English daily in his contacts with British and American colleagues, on the phone and by fax and e-mail. For two and a half years he worked in the London office, which added more self-confidence to his good command of professional English.

(7) Interviewee No 7, 38 years old, has a Doctor's degree from the Tampere University of Technology (1986). He is the only one of the interviewees who had had an academic career before entering business in 1987, when he was recruited by a large Finnish conglomerate to plan and run the company's postgraduate study programme. Since then he has worked for the same company, but in various positions. His present title is Development Manager in the mobile phones division; according to him, the title refers to the development of organization, personnel, and information systems.

The Development Manager used a lot of English when working as assistant and associate professor at the Tampere University of Technology. At that time it was mainly "academic English" in the field of technology; writing papers and other publications and attending conferences. However, in his present work the need for English is even more obvious; the conglomerate operates in many countries and the official corporate language is English, which means that all the issues to be decided are prepared in English, almost every document is written in English and most of the negotiations and conferences, in Finland or elsewhere, are carried out in English. His written communication is daily fax or e-mail messages, and oral communication consists of frequent discussions, meetings, negotiations, telephone calls, and occasional presentations. The interviewee pointed out that in his work both oral and written communication are as important ("as a communication worker you do both all the time") and in the multicultural environment where he works the language is always English, although it often happens that the addressee's native language is Finnish or some other language.

(8) Interviewee No 8 is a 37-year-old engineer, who graduated from the Tampere University of Technology in 1980. His work experience is from companies engaged in technical wholesale business, and for about one year he has worked as the managing director of a small enterprise that he, together with his partner, owns. The two owners are the only personnel and they import machines and other engineering supplies from some European countries, the most important being Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. As most of the other interviewees, also the Managing Director has used English throughout his career. In the present job most of the contacts are with German principals. He knows some German, but prefers using English with their export managers and other office personnel ("then we are both at the same level"). With the production people, who often do not know English, he communicates in German. He needs written English every day and spoken skills mostly for telephone calls a few times a week. Except for some occasional extensive reports or other large publications sent by post, written

communication consists of fax messages that are mostly sent off directly from the computer.

### Secretaries

(9) Interviewee No 9 works as a secretary/assistant to the chief executive of one of the divisions in a large Finnish technical import and wholesale business. Her position within the company changed between the questionnaire and interview. In her present job she has more connections with the German speaking countries and the Nordic countries, and as she knows also German and Swedish well, they are the most important foreign languages in her workplace communication at the moment. However, she also uses English a great deal, especially now on the phone, and she has experience with professional English from 1976, when she graduated from the Helsinki Secretarial College. She is 39 years old and her earlier work experience is from a Finnish medium-sized manufacturing company, where she worked as the secretary/assistant to the Managing Director for 10 years. During that time English was the most important foreign language in her work. The interviewee is an experienced professional, whose daily routine consists of "fixing things" over the telephone, by fax or mail, or arranging negotiations and conferences, all this in four different languages, and at a pace which she describes as "unnecessarily hectic sometimes" (the comment was offered when we discussed the efficiency of communication; it may be even too efficient, in fact lowering the efficiency level, if she, speaking on the phone and making notes in her calendar, at the same time writes a fax and winking the eye tries to take care of a visitor, who just arrived). The interviewee is overall very pleased with the language studies she has had, and she does not see any major problems in her use of English. The two areas she mentioned as causing some difficulty were legal terminology, such as contracts, and everyday "dinner table" conversation.

(10) The last interviewee, No 10, is an executive secretary working in the secretariat of the Board of Directors of a large Finnish construction group. She is 38 years old and graduated from a business college in 1975. She has experience of secretarial/assistant positions at a bank, a medical company, and a ministry; now she has worked in this position for eight years. She has used English in all her posts extensively, and uses it daily also in the present job. The interviewee is a "language freak", who is very keen on improving her very good command of English. According to her, she has attended a huge number of courses during her working life, privately and also provided by the employer. She has also had individual tutoring, which she found useful. She finds oral and written skills as important in her work. Most of the speaking is telephone calls or speaking to some native speakers working in the company; in the written sector she does quite a lot of translation. She was the only one of the interviewees who mentioned the word "correspondence": PR letters, messages related to travel, and thank-you letters. However, the messages often go by fax, only occasionally by mail; the choice of the mode depends on the length of the message and also on the number of possible enclosures. During the interview it came up several times that the largest problem in communication from her point of view does not have anything to do with language as such. But problems arise, because it may happen that the secretaries do not know the subject that the matter is about. They might get a message that they should reply to, but have no background

information as they have not been involved in the matter before. She says that the range of different issues that secretaries deal with is so large that they often feel that the lack of knowhow in a certain field also affects their own language skills. They are the language experts but, according to the somewhat frustrated comment by the interviewee, "the subject matter experts . . . although it often happens that their English isn't good, it seems to be good anyway, because they do know the subject; so language doesn't seem to matter so much . . ."

### 6.2.2 Summary of interview results

Table 36 (p.96) summarizes the most relevant results of the interview study. The opinions of all ten interviewees are given on eight selected issues. For technical reasons the answers of Interviewee No 8 could not be given on items (7) and (8).

All the other issues in Table 36 (1 - 7) have been dealt with in connection with the corresponding results from the questionnaire survey, but the considerations on 'efficient written communication' are still worth a comment. As the word 'efficiency' had come up in the questionnaire forms very frequently (often underlined and capitalized), it was explicitly discussed with the interviewees. In addition, throughout the interviews it was implicitly evident that efficiency is the prime criterion for any analysis of business writing situations. The interviewees were asked what 'efficient communication' is, and they were suggested such aspects as grammatical correctness, spelling, and different tones and nuances to be considered as contributing to efficiency. The main points mentioned can be seen in item (8) in Table 36.

According to the interviewees, efficient communication is brief and clear, "and it doesn't do any harm if it's grammatically correct and the spelling is ok" (Interviewee No 5), but many of them pointed out that the most important thing is to get the message through, and in fact this seems to be the primary criterion for efficiency. In addition, the time spent on writing was emphasized.

Interviewee No 7: "There's always an aim for the writing. Often the aim is to make the addressee do something, and if the message fails to achieve this aim, the language in that particular situation was somehow wrong. The language doesn't have any intrinsic value of its own, separated from other human activities; not that gods somewhere would be pleased if correct sentences were produced. . . . Also, it's important that time is not wasted. It is question of the balance between the time spent on writing and the achievement of the aim."



**Table 36. Summary of interview results.**

Interviewee number	Issue							
	(1) English studies vs. work requirements?	(2) Role of cultural knowledge, if English used as lingua franca?	(3) Has writing increased with fax and e-mail?	(4) Medium of written messages?	(5) Sender of message?	(6) Does a linguistic concept 'fax' exist?	(7) Difficulties in producing / interpreting written messages?	(8) Efficient written communication?
1	no real use	no role in everyday communication	--	fax	self	yes	none	exact; brief
2	solid basis	no role in everyday communication	no	fax	superior and self	yes	sometimes (new terms)	clear; brief
3	very useful	culture of target country	no	fax	self	no	very rarely	correct; 'business genre'
4	solid basis	no role in everyday communication	no	fax	self	yes	sometimes	message through
5	no English studies at university	culture of target country	yes	fax	self	yes (if hand-written)	none	correct; right tone
6	very little at university	minor role in everyday communication	--	fax and e-mail	self	yes (if in-house)	time-consuming	message through
7	no real use	in-house: minor role outgoing: crucial	yes	fax and e-mail	self	yes	sometimes	message through
8	no real use	culture of target country	yes	fax	self	yes	--	--
9	very useful	minor role in everyday communication	no	fax	brief from superior	yes	sometimes	correct
10	solid, but narrow basis	culture of target country	yes	fax	brief from superior	no	sometimes	correct

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Major findings in relation to the research questions

When formulating the research setting the main problem areas were defined as follows (p. 10):

- (1) What are the general characteristic features of the present environment where English business messages are exchanged?
- (2) What communications media are used?
- (3) What are the messages?
- (4) How do the users see the language? Have they noticed changes along with the more extensive use of the new electronic media?

The areas were explored by means of a questionnaire survey and related interviews to complement the quantitative results. All the above problem areas were adequately covered and the following information found out:

(1) Throughout the Finnish business community, not only in export/import - oriented companies, English is used very frequently among business professionals in spoken and written communication. The study showed that half of the users need English at work every day, and 25% at least every week; therefore it is evident that a solid command of professional English is generally required. Language skills are not seen apart from the other professional qualifications of the person, but form an essential part of the professional competence and are used as tools to achieve the aims set for the company. Similarly, Ruskelin (1989:88) found that 84% of her respondents considered that a good command of written English is a very significant management tool.

It was shown that today in business, English is needed both in spoken and written situations and, in terms of frequency, both are considered equally important; the amount of writing seems to be increasing. Of the written situations 'message exchange' was very clearly the most frequent, and the majority of the messages were faxes, although the proportion of e-mailing seemed to be growing fast. The study also showed that today messages of all types are mostly exchanged directly between the sender and the recipient, without secretaries, translators or other intermediaries. This can be seen as a result of technical advances; using a fax machine or the computer is in fact easier and faster than turning to other people for assistance. Therefore, the 'subject specialist' now also has to take the role of a 'language specialist'. It is also evident that the 'self-help' tendency has affected the organizations of companies; there are large-scale restructuring programs going on in all business sectors at the moment. The reasons are naturally diverse, but the 'electronic revolution' in the office is certainly one.

One typical feature of the communication environment is the fact that in most cases written messages are exchanged between two non-native speakers of English, even between two Finns, which happens when English is the official language of a Finnish company operating in many countries. By the users, the language was then described as 'a cultureless code system'; they pointed out that in the hectic work routine they resort to the code, without paying any attention to the connections that lie between the English language and Anglo-American culture. One of the most interesting results was the

information that 54% of the respondents had contacts to other countries 'inside the house', i.e., their communication in English is not along the traditional import/export lines, but between a parent company and a subsidiary, or affiliates within the same group. This is a result from the rapid internationalization process of Finnish companies in recent years, and produces different messages — and different language — from those between buyers and sellers.

Thus the present environment where English business messages are exchanged in the Finnish business community could be characterized by: hectic pace, frequent exchange of faxes between the sender and the recipient directly, English more often used as a *lingua franca* than with native speakers, a great deal of English written communication conducted 'under the same roof'.

(2) As already stated above, the most frequently used medium for written communication was the telefax. Paper faxes dominated the scene, but computer faxes were also used. The younger generation used e-mail more eagerly than the older groups. E-mail seemed to be the growing medium, as to some extent were computer faxes, too. The interviewees quite unanimously said that fax is the norm, and only if there is a special reason, such as large enclosures sent or original signatures needed, they use ordinary mail.

(3) It was obviously very difficult for the informants to categorize the messages they send and receive. The concept 'letter' had been abandoned at the outset of the present study, as the pre-interviews and the pilot study had indicated that along with the diminishing use of mail, the traditional correspondence model of communication and letter writing norms seemed to be disappearing from the conceptual setting of the communicators. Letters of different types existed only in textbooks, while in real life faxes were sent back and forth (often literally: the reply was written with a few words — "yes", "agreed", "ok!", even "?" — on the fax form received, and it was returned to the sender). It seems that 'letters' have turned into 'faxes' at a rapid pace. Yli-Jokipii (1994) collected her corpus in the middle and the end of the 1980s, and then the object of analysis was 'a letter', "a type-written text addressed to a recipient outside the immediate organization, bearing the exact date of writing, naming the writer in the signature, and ... identifying the recipient in the greeting" (Yli-Jokipii 1994:46). The letters in her corpus were transmitted either by mail or via a fax machine, she speaks about 'postal letters' and 'telefax letters'. Luoma's (1993:10) material consisted of 220 'business documents', which she divides into letters (57), telex messages (14), and telefax messages (149); she found the telexes and telefaxes similar to letters in their linguistic forms and layout. In the light of the previous surveys, and the results of the present study, it can be seen that the adaptation to the new medium is a gradual process. After the arrival of the fax machine, at first, the old letter writing norms were followed just as before, only the document was sent immediately by fax. In addition, the fact that faxes were often used to replace earlier telex messages also had an impact on the new document type. Then, along with the fax forms that companies took into use, and growing experience of the possibilities of the medium, the layout and the linguistic forms started to change. There was a change from 'fax letters' to 'faxes'.

But, as the present study showed, an increasing amount of interpersonal business communication is now conducted by e-mail; therefore the concept 'message' was taken as the object of analysis in this study. Figure 7 (p. 99) illustrates the development and summarizes the above discussion about the distinction Letter/Message.

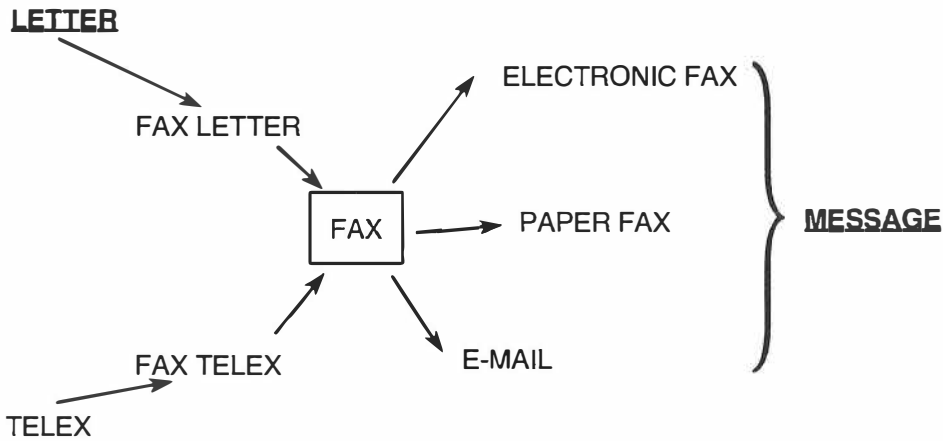


Figure 7. The development from 'letter' to 'message'.

When the focus was on the content of the sent and received messages, the study showed that a wide range of different messages are exchanged, and in many cases categorization is difficult. One message can serve many purposes at the same time, the situations vary rapidly, and the strive for efficiency characterizes all activities. However, although the major part of message writing was shown to fall outside any clear formats or patterns, quotations, orders, contracts, and other formal documents are also written, and it was evident that the writers felt a need to have adequate knowledge of the basic document types involved in a business transaction.

(4) The study clearly showed that the users who have experience with communicating in English for more than five years have noticed changes in the language. The most distinctive change was the trend towards more informal, and speech-like language, away from rigid norms related to layout and phraseology. In addition, the informants paid attention to the 'different Englishes' used in business, to a large extent acknowledging the concept of 'Euro-English' as the most extensively used variety. As stated above (p. 97), in connection with the first research question, the informants seemed to conceptualize the language they were using as separated from British or American cultural values and norms; they were using something which was called, for example, "present-day international business English", and the cultural values related to that language were a combination of the cultures of the country of the recipient, the norms of the business sector, and the corporate culture. An important aspect affecting the linguistic outcome of the message was the distinction between in-house and outgoing messages. The third dimension that emerged from the replies concerning changes was 'the level' of language that the informants often referred to; it was considered to have risen, on the one hand, due to better linguistic qualifications of young people entering business, and fallen on the other hand, because "now everybody acts as his/her own secretary", and the result is "poorer" and "less correct" language than earlier, when language experts were used frequently, also in everyday routine communication activities.

The working hypotheses formulated for the present study (p. 10) were thus found to be correct, and the major findings of the present study were :

- (1) emergence of Euro-English;
- (2) spoken skills 50 % - written skills 50%;
- (3) "exchange of messages" the most important situation requiring written skills in English; larger proportion of free writing;
- (4) extensive amount of in-house communication;
- (5) fax the dominating medium;
- (6) messages written and handled most often by the sender alone; intermediaries used rarely;
- (7) the language has changed: less formal, to the point, speech-like.

## 7.2 Main results in relation to the theoretical framework

The present study investigated written business communication as professional discourse, within the concept of workplace communication, as part of the wider, more static environment of Business English. The two specific elements taken into account in the theoretical framework were 'change' and 'purpose' (Figure 3, p. 25).

BE was, as also in Yli-Jokipii 1994, understood very broadly as "the language used in transactional situations in business enterprises", and Yli-Jokipii's figure defining business language was presented (p. 26). Figure 8 below suggests a modified viewpoint to looking at the various areas within Business English.

In addition to Yli-Jokipii's basic distinction between 'interactive' and 'non-interactive' language, which seems justified, BE could be approached from another direction, where text is divided into the categories of 'primary' and 'secondary'. Instead, on the basis of the present study, the divisions between spoken/written language (for a further discussion, see pp. 101-102) and the method of transmitting the message have been omitted as less relevant.

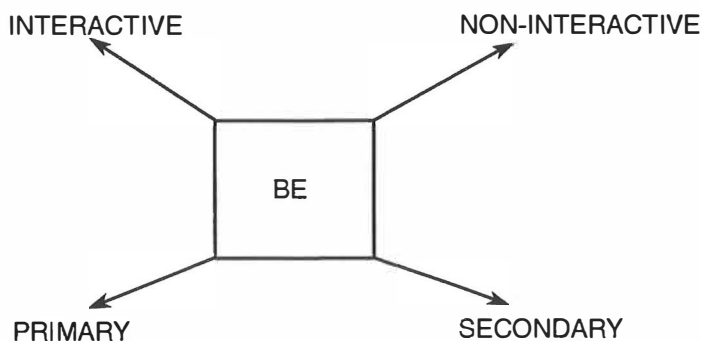


Figure 8. The area of Business English.

In Figure 8 'interactive' refers to situations where there is a clearly defined audience who are supposed to react somehow, more or less immediately, in most cases verbally, but non-verbal reactions are also possible. The category covers such instances as interpersonal messages in letter, fax, e-mail or telex form, face-to-face encounters, negotiations, meetings, telephone contacts (including teleconferencing and voice-mail), and video conferencing. 'Non-interactive' contains the communicative situations in which the audience is less clearly specified, and there are no expectations of immediate feedback that would affect the message being sent, as opposed to the production of interactive texts which is influenced by the awareness of the more or less immediate reaction by the addressee. Reactions are, however, often expected in the long run, but in most cases in the forms of various acts, not verbally. Non-interactive instances of BE include, for example, advertisements, press releases, Annual Reports, and articles in business and financial papers. Naturally there are instances, such as presentations, that can fall in either category, depending on the specific situation (e.g. product presentation to a group of potential buyers, or presenting company history on a company presentation video shown to various visitors).

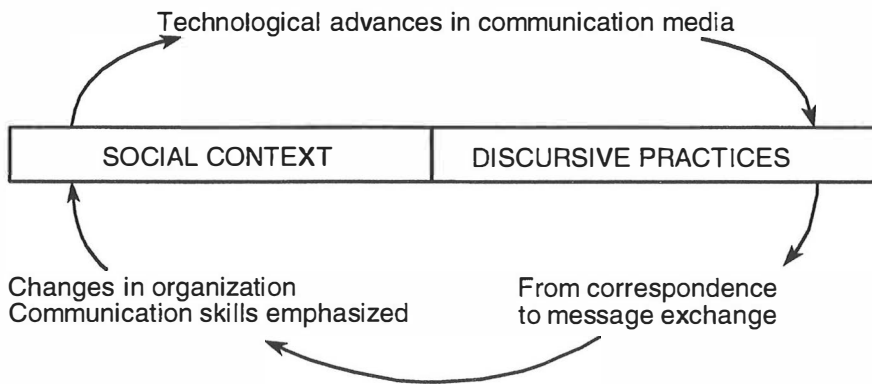
In agreement with the arguments put forward by Gunnarsson (see p. 14) it seems that for the purposes of covering the most relevant viewpoints from where to look at BE, the separation of the language into spoken and written modes is not necessary. The spoken/written distinction is still often made in teaching and course design, but as Gunnarsson puts it, it may lead to a fragmentation of our knowledge of professional communication, as the artificial separation is far from the communicative reality in which professional texts are formed. In the present study, however, the separation was made in the questions presented to the informants, since it was assumed that the informants are used to thinking of language skills in these terms, and also because the present study clearly focuses on written messages. The interviewees were directly asked if they considered oral and written language skills to be separate. As expected, the majority thought they were separate ("yes, that is how we have been trained to think", Interviewee No 2), two were hesitant about the question, but stressed the fact that the skills are anyway very much intertwined; Interviewee No. 5 said "especially now with the computer they have become totally equal opportunities for me; actually, I often rather choose writing a fax than making a phone call for two reasons: it leaves me a document at hand, and it is much less probable that I would be misunderstood."

The distinction primary/secondary in Figure 8 refers to the process of text production. 'Primary' covers all original text created within BE by the writer/speaker himself in a certain situation. 'Secondary' refers to texts that have been produced on the basis of other texts, such as translations and summaries, as the most distinctive examples. In the category 'secondary' there is always some interpretation involved, the ideas presented in the first text(s) are interpreted and reproduced by the writer/translator. It could, naturally, be argued that all texts are based on some other texts, i.e. intertextuality at its extreme sense is always present. Fairclough (1992:101) quotes Foucault: "there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others", and says that texts are inherently intertextual, constituted by elements of other texts, but it is, however, question of a continuum, varying degrees of dependence and independence (Fairclough 1992:104). Similarly, the categories 'primary' and 'secondary' in Figure 8 do not have a clear-cut borderline between them, texts should in fact often be placed somewhere

between the two categories, closer to one or the other end. ('A monthly report' could be an example of a text that in a certain situation clearly belongs to the category 'primary', in another situation is a document drawn up totally on the basis of previous documents, for example, reports by various departments.)

The present study approached business communication under the umbrella of 'workplace communication', or more specifically 'professional discourse'. The focus was on the whole workplace, the processes going on in the actual real-life context of the changing work environment. It was shown that BE used in interpersonal messages is part of a dynamic setting where all parts are interdependent and under constant change; for example, the technological advances have affected business writing both linguistically and as a process, which again has influenced the whole corporate organization, often leading to streamlining and restructuring measures. The study showed that for an analysis of professional discourse, it is necessary to know the processes that shape it.

Fairclough's theory of discourse and change was chosen as one of the two specific viewpoints from where to look at the present study. He speaks of the two-dimensional relationship between language and its context at a general level. Discursive practices and social context both affect one another (see p. 30). On the basis of the results of the present study this can clearly be seen in the business environment, as Figure 9 shows. The technological advances are changes in the social context which have changed discursive practices from a 'correspondence model' to 'self-help message exchange', which again has changed the social context, leading to, e.g., fewer language expert positions and new job qualifications with more emphasis on communication skills.



**Figure 9.** An example of the two-dimensional relationship between social context and discursive practices.

Fairclough claimed that the origins and motivations of change in the discursive event lie in the problematization of conventions for producers or interpreters; people are faced with contradictory or inconsistent elements, mixtures of formal and informal styles, markers of authority and familiarity, more typically written and more typically spoken syntactic forms, etc (see p. 29). Only gradually does a new convention become solidified and accepted. It seems that the new conventions of a fax/e-mail message are still in the

process of getting formed. The study indicated that many BE users are puzzled to some extent, some search for "the present-day style", others ask questions about "the correct layout/salutation/ complimentary close of a fax message", or "the netiquette of e-mailing".

The changes in general cultural values presented by Fairclough (pp. 33-34) were to a large extent found to accord with the results. Fairclough claims that workplace discourse is one of the domains that have become more fragmented, and thus permeable by the general tendencies of informality, speech-like forms, personalization, democratization and commodification. Informality and speech-like forms have been discussed several times above. Personalization of communication was evident, it is partly included in the concept of informality, partly it is result of the direct communication links between sender and recipient. As a result, people also experience the language more personally, and it is impossible to separate the sender from the message. Thus roles have also changed: the language "knower" is disappearing, and 'substance' and 'language' have to be mastered by one person. Fax, and especially e-mail, have brought along democratization in the form of easier access to the channel, and commodification is a tendency inherently involved in business activities.

The other specific point of view chosen to the theoretical framework was the perspective of genre analysis (pp. 34-39). The concept of a discourse community in a business environment was defined (pp. 35-37), and Swales's and Bhatia's considerations of the concept of a genre discussed. It was pointed out that in a business setting it is possible to identify the ultimate purpose for the messages; thus 'a business letter', 'a business fax', or in fact any business message type, can be regarded as an overarching pre-genre, under which more specific genres operate. In the light of the present results this seems to be the way the users of the language, i.e. the members of the discourse community, also conceptualize their communication. The members employ genres to realize the goals of their communities communicatively, the 'purpose' being the principal property of a genre. However, similarly to the multi-layered systems of a discourse community (p. 36) and a genre (p. 38), 'purpose' has to be seen to operate at many levels. For example, in one message the purposes of the entire company (to achieve a certain financial result) and the department (improve the sales figures from the previous quarter by 10%), the writer's more distant aim (to get a new client), and the writer's immediate purpose (to meet Ms Hoffman on Wednesday at 9 o'clock) are present. According to Swales, such properties of a genre as form, structure, and audience expectations operate to identify to what extent an exemplar is prototypical of a particular genre. The results showed that the majority of BE users now have a certain picture in mind, when referring to 'a fax' (a message written on a fax form, typed or handwritten, following certain polite linguistic norms, but avoiding unnecessary, wordy, 'old-fashioned' structures). Since electronic mail has been in use for a shorter time, it seems that except for the purpose of a business message, which was discussed above, there is no agreement yet on the other properties that would identify prototypicality.

Thus it can be concluded that there are certain audience expectations after the reprieve "drop me a fax, will you", but in accordance with what Rosch (quoted in Swales 1990:51) said about birds, it is certainly true that "some faxes are faxier than others".



### 7.3 Implications for teaching and course design and suggestions for further research

The starting point for the present study was pedagogical: the contents and methods of business communication courses for advanced learners of English. As was mentioned in the Introduction (p. 9), the present study is the first phase of a more extensive project. Thus it did not aim at finding final answers to the basic research question (p. 10), but is to be regarded as a survey of the environment where authentic business messages are exchanged. However, the results certainly give rise to some considerations of teaching and course design.

The study clearly shows that written skills are needed and valued among business people and that there are good grounds for business communication courses. Another question is whether the distinction often made in course design between oral and written communication is any longer a reasonable way to approach the subject. Since operating in English in business contexts is increasingly seen as part of the person's professional competence, and not as a separate skill, it should also be the leading idea behind all English teaching and especially the teaching of business communication. The aim should be to give the students access to an environment where they can get acquainted with the discourse communities and genres that they will face when entering business and give them an opportunity to practice the vocabulary, styles, media, etc. in a setting that would be as close to reality as possible. It seems that the jump into the real world, into using the language as a tool, is easier if students during their studies were given assignments with a real purpose, if they learnt the language and assumed communication skills by 'doing something', instead of learning words, grammar and phrases in isolation (see also Tammelin 1994).

In addition to the general, basic philosophy, some more concrete aspects emerge from the results. The fact that, to a growing degree, professional English is the code language for non-natives to achieve their goals should also be seen in the teaching of business English. Attention should also be paid to possible cross-cultural difficulties. The word 'culture' should here be understood more widely than as 'national culture'; in fact it comes near the idea of a discourse community. There can be cross-cultural problems between two different lines of business, for example.

The study shows that a large proportion of business writing consists of non-format-bound messages. However, it was evident that the informants regard certain basic format-bound message types as very important, and are of the opinion that the courses should cover "the basic document types". It seems that the courses should focus on both types of messages, and in addition to the traditionally extensive coverage of quotations, orders, invoices, etc., a larger element of free writing should be added to many syllabuses. Also, an important aspect stressed by many informants is the time constraint that is always present in real-life situations. The students should also practise writing under pressure, within a certain time limit, as for example is often done in courses that follow the case method. Case analysis also allows practicing 'primary writing' (see p. 100) instead of the "translate the following"-method.

One interesting aspect to be considered in the teaching of writing business messages is concerned with the change from letters to faxes. When the functions of discourse were discussed (ch 4.4.4) the distinction between the transactional and interactional functions was made. On the basis of the present study we could ask if the

relationship between the two functions has changed. It seems possible that the interpersonal function gets more importance in fax language than it did in letter writing, as it is not customary any more to resort to a store of set impersonal phrases and idioms and as the language of the message comes directly from the writer in person. This indicates that the 'critical language awareness' (CLA) element that Fairclough calls for is essential in BE education. Students should be made more conscious of the practice that they are involved in as producers and consumers of text: they should be made aware of the different functions of a text, and the linkages of text to the forces, interests, power relations, and processes of the environment.

The present study aimed at describing the present workplace environment where English business messages are exchanged, finding out what the messages are and surveying business people's opinions on business communication. The research method was a combination of a quantitative questionnaire survey and a qualitative interview study. The research was designed to look for trends, and as the questionnaire data was received from a sample that adequately represented the population and as the quantitative analysis was complemented with qualitative data from detailed interviews of informants, the results should be regarded as reliable. In this research setting, the fairly low response rate did not significantly affect the results. In the questionnaire, several different questions were used to cover a certain area, and for each question the reply categories were formed independently, which increases the reliability of the study. Initially, the present study aimed at finding an answer to a pedagogical question ("what should the studies of written business communication include?"), and for that purpose the present results should not be regarded as completely valid yet, as the focus has been mainly on the environment and structure of business communication; the language used and various pedagogical aspects have been touched only at the surface level. As for trends in written English business communication, the results are certainly applicable throughout the Finnish business community and probably to a large extent elsewhere, too.

In the Introduction of her dissertation Yli-Jokipii (1994:21) writes:

Electronic media have brought along outward changes into business communication practices. Professional 'correspondents' are rare and companies are employing fewer and fewer secretaries ... All this entailed changes to the profile of the language used, so that the heavily formulaic 'commercialese', which was long thought typical of business writing, may have given way to simpler and less ornate language. At the same time, the requirements placed on interactive business writing remain unchanged, viz. it still has a specific audience and a practical purpose, and it relies almost entirely on language for conveying the purpose ... We therefore need to know how these outward changes have affected the language of today's business organizations.

The present study should be regarded as one step in the kind of research Yli-Jokipii calls for. Trends in business writing were found, but several interesting questions remain. The most natural continuation to this study would be to examine if the tendencies found here can be found from actual examples of written communication. Material could be collected from a certain number of Finnish companies and their foreign counterparts, or

a case analysis could be conducted dealing with one multinational Finnish company and its global communication. If more emphasis is put on cross-cultural differences, in addition to Finland, material should also be collected systematically in other non-native countries and, for example, Britain and the United States. It would be interesting, although certainly difficult, to get hold of some examples of earlier correspondence and use authentic messages as reference material. Textbooks, old and new, are another source for reference material.

There are several alternatives for structuring future projects of this type. One would be to concentrate on attempts to define 'a business communication genre', one to focus on pedagogical aspects and course design, and one to emphasize the role of the media, for example comparing the writing process, and the language between fax and e-mail. Also, the holistic approach to business communication would be an inspiring field to be investigated: a case study of a business professional's day (or week or month) and all communication, spoken and written, conducted during the period.

In business language research there is plenty of room for new projects. Today, in the rapidly changing environment, follow-up research to this study is more than needed.

## THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bakhtin, M. 1986. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eds. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bhatia, Vijay 1993. *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Longman.
- Brown, Gillian, and George Yule 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Candlin, Christopher 1993a. New Directions for ESP: Workplace Communication. Part I in a lecture series given at the 14th Finnish Summer School of Linguistics, Jyväskylä.
- Candlin, Christopher 1993b. Genre Theory and the Teaching of ESL Literacy. Part II in a lecture series given at the 14th Finnish Summer School of Linguistics, Jyväskylä.
- Charles, Mirjaliisa 1994. *Layered Negotiations in Business: Interdependencies between Discourse and the Business Relationship*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK.
- Dubin, Fraida 1991. Checking out E-mail and the Fax, *English today* 25, 47-51
- Fairclough, Norman 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Firth, Alan 1991. *Discourse at Work: Negotiating by Telex, Fax, and 'Phone*. Aalborg: Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies, Aalborg University.
- Grindsted, A. and J. Wagner (eds.) 1992. *Communication for Specific Purposes / Fachsprachliche Kommunikation*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Gunnarsson, Britt-Louise 1993. *Studies of language for specific purposes — a biased view on a rich reality*. Keynote address at the AILA World Congress, Amsterdam, August 9-13, 1993.
- Haegeman, Patricia 1991. Needs Analysis and Conversation Analysis in Business English, in C. Braecke and H. Cuyckens (eds.) *Business Communication in Multilingual Europe: Supply and Demand*, Proceedings of the 1990 ENCoDe Conference at UFSIA, University of Antwerp.
- Halliday M.A.K. (1978). *Language as a Social Semiotic: the social interpretation of language and meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K., and Ruqaiya Hasan 1985. *Language, context, and text: aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, Craig J. 1992. Communication Technologies in Corporate Settings, *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, Volume LV, Number 4, 3-9.
- Hirsjärvi, Sirkka, and Helena Hurme (1979). *Teemahaastattelu*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Holden, Nigel 1989. The gulf between language studies and management studies: introducing communication competence as an interfacing concept, in Silcock, P. (ed.), *Language Learning in Business Education, Proceedings from the 1st ENCoDe Conference*, Barcelona, 33-46.
- Howard, Tharon 1992. Wide-Area Computer-Mediated Communication in Business Writing, *The Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication*, Volume LV, Number 4, 10-12.

- Hutchinson, Tom, and Alan Waters 1986. *English for Specific Purposes: learning-centred approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huhtanen, Pekka, Anna-Liisa Elo, Taina Paananen, and Arja Ahoniemi 1992. *Kansainvälisyyden haasteet teollisuuden toimistoissa*. Helsinki: Työterveyslaitos, Psykologian osasto
- James, Carl 1993. What is applied linguistics?, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3, 17-32.
- Kalaja, Paula, and Sirpa Leppänen 1991. Transaction and interaction in writing: the case of electronic mail, in K. Sajavaara (ed.), *Proceedings of the 3rd Finnish Seminar of Discourse Analysis*, Reports from the Department of English, Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Källberg, L. 1987. *Englanninkielisten teleksisanomien syntaktisia piirteitä*. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. Department of English, University of Turku.
- Kansi, Raija-Liisa, and Irma Malmiranta 1983. *All Set for Business English*. Helsinki: Otava.
- Kogen, Myra 1989. *Writing in the Business Professions*. Urbana, Illinois: The Association for Business Communication.
- Lampi, Mirjaliisa 1986. *Linguistic Components of Strategy in Business Negotiations*. Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun julkaisuja B-85. Helsinki: Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulu.
- Lampi, Mirjaliisa 1992. Rhetorical Strategies in 'Chairman's Statement' Sections in the Annual Reports of Finnish and British Companies, in P. Nuolijärvi, and L. Tiittula (eds.), *Talous ja kieli 1*, Helsingin kauppakorkeakoulun julkaisuja D-169, 127-141.
- Lankamp, R. 1993. There is No Such Thing As LSP. Paper read at the AILA World Congress, Amsterdam, August 9-13, 1993.
- Loppela, Sari, and Aila Paaso 1990. *Englannin kieli suomalaisen insinöörin työvälineenä*. Helsinki: Suomen Teknillinen Seura STS ry.
- Luoma, Sari 1993. Correspondence - Korrespondens : Writing tasks in English and Swedish in the marketing section of a middle-sized Finnish manufacturing company in K. Sajavaara and S. Takala (eds.), *Finns as learners of English: Three studies*. Jyväskylä Cross-Language Studies 16, Jyväskylä, 1-88.
- Marjosola, Iiris (1979). *Yrittäjyys tahtona ja mahdollisuutena*, Jyväskylän yliopiston taloustieteen laitoksen julkaisuja n:o 49, Jyväskylä.
- Moran, M.G., and D. Journet (eds.) 1985. *Research in Technical Communication: A Bibliographic Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Painter, C., and J. Martin (eds.) 1986. *Writing to Mean: Teaching Genres across the Curriculum*, ALAA Occasional Papers, 9 62-97.
- Pietiäinen, Jukka-Pekka 1988. *Suomen Postin historia, osa 2*. Helsinki: Posti- ja telelaitos.
- Roberts, Celia, Evelyn Davies and Tom Jupp 1992. *Language and Discrimination*. Harlow: Longman.
- Ruskelin, Tuija 1989. *A Needs Analysis in ESP: a Study of Written Communication in the Finnish Paper Industry*. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. Department of Languages, Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration.

- Scott, James Calvert 1991. British efforts to upgrade business foreign language skills: preparing for participation in the single market of the European Community, in G. M. Voght and R. Schaub (eds.), *Languages and Cultures for Business and the Professions*, Selected Proceedings of the Tenth Annual EMU Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, Ypsilanti, 143-152.
- Swales, John 1990. *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tammelin, Maija 1994. *Korkeakouluopiskelijan englannin suullisen viestintätaidon harjoittaminen simulaatioon perustuvassa oppijakeskeisessä ympäristössä*, kasvatustieteen sivulaudaturtyö, Helsingin yliopisto.
- Telenius, Johanna 1994. *Authorial Presence in Master's Theses: The Use of Metatext in Master's Theses Written in English at the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration*. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. Department of Languages and Business Communication, Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration.
- Thompson, Roger 1991. *"The Richness of a Letter and the Utility of Telex " : Discourse Features of Business Faxes*. Unpublished dissertation for MSc in teaching English. Aston University.
- Ventola, Eija, and Anna Mauranen 1991. *Tieteellinen kirjoittaminenenglanniksi: tekstilingvistinen näkökulma opetukseen*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, Korkeakoulujen kielikeskus.
- Väänänen, Pirjo 1992. *Need of English in Mechanical Engineering: A Target Task Identification*. Unpublished Licentiate Thesis. University of Jyväskylä.
- Victor, David A. 1992. *International Business Communication*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Wagner, J. 1993. A provisional bibliography of foreign language business interaction. Published as *Newsletter 1993 of AILA Scientific Commission 4: Discourse Analysis*.
- Yli-Jokipii, Hilikka 1991. Running against Time and Technology: Problems in Empirical Research into Written Business Communication, in K. Sajavaara, D. Marsh and T. Keto (eds.), *Communication and Discourse across Cultures and Languages*, AFinLA Series 49, Jyväskylä, 59-72.
- Yli-Jokipii, Hilikka 1992. *Requests in Professional Discourse: A Cross-Cultural Study of British, American and Finnish Business Writing*. Unpublished Licentiate Thesis. University of Turku.
- Yli-Jokipii, Hilikka 1994. *Requests in Professional Discourse: A Cross-Cultural Study of British, American and Finnish Business Writing*, *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum* 71. Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia.
- Zak, Helena 1985. *Business Correspondence by Telex: An Analysis of the Discourse Structure and Features of Word Abbreviation and Omission*. Unpublished Master's Thesis in Applied English Linguistics. University of Birmingham.

## APPENDIX 1

**OUTLINE FOR FOCUSED RESEARCH INTERVIEWS**

Emphasis on

- \* subjectivity, the interviewee's own experience and opinions
- \* perspective of the interviewee's whole working life

## (1) Basic information on the informant

- age
- education, graduation year
- brief work history; companies and positions
- use of English at work

## (2) University/ college studies in English in relation to the requirements of working life

- what were the studies?
- were they enough? were they relevant?
- have you had any additional training in English?
- did you learn at work?

## (3) Different Englishes and the role of cultural knowledge

- do you notice differences between different Englishes?
- which English (British/American/Euro/International etc.) is the most important?
- is the other party a native or a non-native speaker of English?
- has the situation changed during your work history?
- do you vary your own English?
- is cultural knowledge important in business communication?

## (4) Need for oral and written language skills

- are oral and written skills separate ?
- in what type of situations do you use oral/written skills?
- describe situations where you would have liked a better command of English; what did you do?
- what is the share of oral/written communication in your work?
- has the amount of writing increased after the fax machine/e-mail?

(5) Medium and language of written person-to-person communication

- what is the medium? Are different media used for different countries/ topics/ addressees etc. ?
- describe the change during your work history. Time before the fax? Introduction of the fax?
- how do you see future developments?
- benefits/disadvantages of the fax machine?
- what is the work procedure in sending out messages?
- do you recognize 'fax' as a concept which is linguistically interpreted in one way; if so, what is typical of 'a fax'?

(6) Difficulties in producing or interpreting written messages

- do you have any difficulties? If so, in what kind of situations?
- do you remember any misunderstandings? Any difference between different nationalities/ different media ?
- how do you react to linguistic mistakes (your own/others')?

(7) Efficient written communication

- what is it? Should it be 'correct'?
- is your own business communication efficient?

(8) Effects on teaching

- what should the studies of English business communication (oral/written) be focused on? For example: general knowledge of language/ writing skills/ professional vocabulary/ stylistic aspects/ etc.



## KYSELYLOMAKE

## LUOTTAMUKSELLINEN

## ENGLANNINKIELINEN VIESTINTÄ YRITYKSISSÄ

Ympyröi mielestäsi oikea vaihtoehto tai kirjoita vastauksesi sille varattuun tilaan. Jos tila ei riitä, käytä paperin kääntöpuolta.

VASTAAJAN PERUSTIEDOT

## 1. Sukupuoli

- 1 mies  
2 nainen

## 2. Ikä

- 1 - 30 v  
2 31-40 v  
3 41-50 v  
4 51- v

## 3. Koulutus (viimeksi suorittamasi tutkinto)

## Tutkinnon suorittamisvuosi

- 1 ekonomi (vanha) \_\_\_\_\_  
2 kirjeenvaihtaja/skat. siht. \_\_\_\_\_  
3 KTK/TTK/ekonomi (uusi) \_\_\_\_\_  
4 DI \_\_\_\_\_  
5 HSO-sihtööri \_\_\_\_\_  
6 yo-merkonomi \_\_\_\_\_  
7 merkonomi \_\_\_\_\_  
8 muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

Korkeakoulu/opplaitos, jossa tutkinto suoritettu \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Mikä on nykyinen / viimeisin tehtävänimikkeesi?

## 5. Mikä seuraavista luokista vastaa parhaiten asemaasi työpaikassasi?

- 1 ylin johto  
2 johto (esim. markkinointi-, henkilöstö-, talousjohtajat)  
3 keskijohto (esim. osasto-, konttori-, myynti-, aluepäälliköt)  
4 asiantuntija (esim. tarkastajat, johdon assistentit)  
5 sihteeri  
6 itsenäinen elinkeinonharjoittaja  
7 toimihenkilö  
8 muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Kuinka monta vuotta olet käyttänyt englantia liike-elämässä?

- 1 - 5 v  
2 6-15 v  
3 16-25 v  
4 26- v  
5 en lainkaan

## 7. Käytätkö englantia työssäsi

- 1 päivittäin  
2 viikottain  
3 harvemmin  
4 en lainkaan

Jos vastasit kysymyksiin 6 tai 7 "en lainkaan" toivon sinun täyttävän vielä yritystäsi koskevat perustiedot (kohdat 8 - 12) ja sen jälkeen palauttavan kyselyn. Muut vastaavat kaikkiin seuraaviin kysymyksiin.

YRITYKSEN PERUSTIEDOT

## 8. Yrityksen toimiala

- 1 teollisuus  
2 kauppa  
3 kuljetus ja tietoliikenne  
4 majoitus- ja ravitsemustoiminta  
5 rahoitus- ja vakuutus toiminta  
6 muut palvelut  
7 julkinen hallinto  
8 muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. Toimipaikkasi sijainti

- 1 pääkaupunkiseutu  
2 muu Uusimaa  
3 Häme  
4 Varsinaisa-Suomi/Satakunta  
5 Kymenlaakso  
6 Etelä-/Pohjois-Karjala  
7 Keski-Suomi  
8 Pohjanmaa  
9 Kainuu  
10 Lappi  
11 Ahvenanmaa

## 10. Yrityksen henkilömäärä

- 1 alle 30 henkilöä  
2 30-100  
3 101-500  
4 yli 500

## 11. Minkälaisia yhteyksiä yritykselläsi on ulkomaille?

Merkitse vaihtoehtoa edeltävälle viivalle kolme tärkeintä numeroilla siten että 1 = eniten, 2 = toiseksi eniten jne.

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ vientitoiminta  
2 \_\_\_\_\_ tuontitoiminta  
3 \_\_\_\_\_ projektit  
4 \_\_\_\_\_ yhteydet tytä- tai osakkuusyhtiöihin  
5 \_\_\_\_\_ yhteydet ulkomaiseen emoyhtiöön  
6 \_\_\_\_\_ messuihin/näyttelyihin osallistuminen  
7 \_\_\_\_\_ ostotoiminta  
8 \_\_\_\_\_ muu, mikä?  
9 \_\_\_\_\_ ei yhteyksiä ulkomaille

12. Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät alueet, joihin yritykselläsi on yhteyksiä? Merkitse vaihtoehtoa edeltävälle viivalle kolme tärkeintä aluetta siten, että 1 = eniten yhteyksiä, 2 = toiseksi eniten yhteyksiä jne.

- 1  Britannia/Irlanti
- 2  muut EY-maat
- 3  USA/Kanada
- 4  Pohjoismaat
- 5  Itä-Euroopan maat
- 6  muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7  muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8  muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

KIELENKÄYTTÖTILANTEET

13. Kun puhut tai kirjoitat viestejä englanniksi, onko toisena osapuolena englantia äidinkielenään puhuva vai englantia vieraana kielenä puhuva henkilö? Arvioi jakauma suunnilleen prosentteina.

- |   |                            |         |
|---|----------------------------|---------|
| 1 | englantia äidinkielenä     | _____ % |
| 2 | englantia vieraana kielenä | _____ % |
|   | yht.                       | 100 %   |

14. Arvioitko saamiesi englanninkielisten viestien olevan enemmän amerikanenglantia vai brittienglantia vai katsotko kielen olevan jotain siltä väliltä, esim. "euroenglantia". Arvioi jakauma prosentteina.

- |   |                   |         |
|---|-------------------|---------|
| 1 | amerikanenglantia | _____ % |
| 2 | brittienglantia   | _____ % |
| 3 | "euroenglantia"   | _____ % |
| 4 | muuta, mitä?      | _____ % |
|   | yht.              | 100 %   |

15. Käytätkö itse aina samaa "omaa englantiasi" vai vaihteletko kieltäsi tietoisesti vastaanottajan kansallisuuden mukaan? (esim. brittienglanti/amerikanenglanti)

- 1 käytän "omaa englantiani"
- 2 vaihtelen kielenkäyttöäni vastaanottajan kansallisuuden mukaan

16. Paljonko (prosentuaalisesti) työsi käyttämästä englanninkielestä edellyttää

- |   |                    |         |
|---|--------------------|---------|
| 1 | suullista taitoa   | _____ % |
| 2 | kirjallista taitoa | _____ % |
|   | yht.               | 100 %   |

17. Minkälaiseksi arvioit oman englanninkielen taitosi vanhalla kouluasteikolla mitattuna (4 - 10) ?

- 1 suullinen kielitaito \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 kirjallinen kielitaito \_\_\_\_\_

18. Millaisissa tilanteissa toivoisit kielenkäyttövalmiutesi olevan paremman

- 1 suullisen kielitaidon alueella  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2 kirjallisen kielitaidon alueella  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Miten arvioit englanninkielen käytön jakautuvan eri työtilanteiden välillä? Merkitse seuraavista seksä suullisista että kirjallisista tilanteista vaihtoehtoa edeltävälle viivalle kolme tärkeintä siten, että 1 = tärkein, 2 = toiseksi tärkein, 3 = kolmanneksi tärkein. "Tärkein" tarkoittaa tässä tilannetta, jossa useimmin kyseistä kielitaitoa tarvitaan.

A Suullista taitoa vaativat:

- 1  face-to-face neuvottelut
- 2  videoneuvottelut
- 3  epäviralliset liiketuttavien tapaamiset
- 4  viralliset kokoukset
- 5  puhelin
- 6  yritysesitykset
- 7  tuote-esitykset
- 8  muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

B Kirjallista taitoa vaativat:

- 1  kirjallisten viestien vaihto (kirjeet, fakit, teleksit, sähköposti)
- 2  raporttien laatiminen
- 3  ammattilehtien ja -kirjallisuuden seuraaminen
- 4  kääntäminen suomi-englanti
- 5  kääntäminen englanti-suomi
- 6  englanninkielisen tekstin muokkaaminen
- 7  virallisten dokumenttien (esim. sopimustekstit) laadinta
- 8  muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

KIRJALLINEN VIESTINTÄ

20. Minkätyyppisiä kirjallisia englanninkielisiä viestejä omassa työssäsi lähetät ja vastaanotat? Merkitse molempien kohdalle erikseen numeroilla kolme tärkeintä siten että 1 = lähetän/vastaanotan eniten, 2 = lähetän/vastaanotan toiseksi eniten jne.

A. Lähetettävä viestit

- 1  tarjouspyynnöt
- 2  tarjoukset
- 3  tarjouksiin liittyvät täsmennykset
- 4  tilaukset
- 5  toimituksiin liitt. viestit
- 6  maksuliikenteeseen liittyvät viestit
- 7  erillaiset tiedustelut
- 8  yrityksen sisäiset tiedotteet
- 9  kuukausi- ym. raportit
- 10  matkoihin ja vierailuihin liittyvät viestit
- 11  sopimukset
- 12  kokousmuistiot
- 13  muut muistiot, mitkä? \_\_\_\_\_

B Vastaanotettavat viestit

- 1  tarjouspyynnöt
- 2  tarjoukset
- 3  tarjouksiin liittyvät täsmennykset
- 4  tilaukset
- 5  toimituksiin liitt. viestit
- 6  maksuliikenteeseen liittyvät viestit
- 7  erillaiset tiedustelut
- 8  yrityksen sis. tiedotteet
- 9  kuukausi- ym. raportit
- 10  matkoihin ja vierailuihin liittyvät viestit
- 11  sopimukset
- 12  kokousmuistiot
- 13  muut muistiot, mitkä? \_\_\_\_\_

14  muut, mitkä? \_\_\_\_\_

14  muut, mitkä? \_\_\_\_\_

21. Millä välineellä kulkevat lähettämäsi ja vastaanottamasi kirjalliset englanninkieliset viestit? Arvioi molemmat erikseen seuraaviin taulukkoihin prosentteina.

**A. Lähettämäsi viestit**

- 1 \_\_\_ % posti  
 2 \_\_\_ % paperi-telefax  
 3 \_\_\_ % telefax suoraan päätteeltä  
 4 \_\_\_ % telex  
 5 \_\_\_ % yrityksen sisäinen posti  
 6 \_\_\_ % kuriirifirmat  
 7 \_\_\_ % sähköposti  
 8 \_\_\_ % muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_  
 100% yht.

**B Vastaanottamasi viestit**

- 1 \_\_\_ % posti  
 2 \_\_\_ % paperi-telefax  
 3 \_\_\_ % telefax päätteelle  
 4 \_\_\_ % telex  
 5 \_\_\_ % yrityksen sis. posti  
 6 \_\_\_ % kuriirifirmat  
 7 \_\_\_ % sähköposti  
 8 \_\_\_ % muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_  
 100% yht.

22. Merkitse alla olevaan taulukkoon kyseisen viestintävälineen kohdalle + jos uskot sen merkityksen viestinnässä kasvavan ja - jos uskot sen merkityksen viestinnässä vähenevän

- 1 \_\_\_ posti  
 2 \_\_\_ paperi-telefax  
 3 \_\_\_ telefax suoraan päätteeltä  
 4 \_\_\_ telex  
 5 \_\_\_ yrityksen sisäinen posti  
 6 \_\_\_ kuriirifirmat  
 7 \_\_\_ sähköposti  
 8 \_\_\_ muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Minkälainen on tavallisesti työn kulku kun lähetät englanninkielistä viestiä? Merkitse kolme tavallisinta msnettelytapaa siten että 1 = tavallisoin, 2 = toiseksi tavallisoin ja 3 = kolmanneksi tavallisoin.

- 1 \_\_\_ kirjoitat ja lähetät viestin alusta loppuun itse  
 2 \_\_\_ kirjoitat viestin tai teet luonnoksen suomeksi (tai ruotsiksi), joku muu laatii englanninkielisen version ja lähettää sen  
 3 \_\_\_ kirjoitat luonnoksen englanniksi, joku muu viimeistelee ja lähettää  
 4 \_\_\_ kirjoitat viestin lähettämiskuntoon valmiiksi, joku muu lähettää  
 5 \_\_\_ saat viestin tai luonnoksen suomeksi (tai ruotsiksi), kirjoitat viestin englanniksi ja lähetät  
 6 \_\_\_ saat luonnoksen englanniksi, kirjoitat lopullisen viestin ja lähetät  
 7 \_\_\_ muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Merkitse vielä ylläolevaan taulukkoon numeron eteen sellisten vaihtoehtojen kohdalle X), jotka eivät esiinny omassa työssäsi lainkaan, jos niitä mielestäsi on.

25. Onko telefaxin/sähköpostin käyttöönotto mielestäsi aiheuttanut kysymyksessä 23. mainittuun työkuuluun (viestin tuottaminen/käsittely/lähetäminen) liittyviä muutoksia?

- 1 on  
 2 ei

jos on, niin millaisia? \_\_\_\_\_

26. Mitkä asiat vaikuttavat mielestäsi eniten viestin kieliasuun? Merkitse seuraavista kolme tärkeintä siten että 1 = vaikuttaa eniten, 2 = vaikuttaa toiseksi eniten jne.

- 1 \_\_\_ kaupantekotilanne  
 2 \_\_\_ tuttavuustaso  
 3 \_\_\_ viestintäväline  
 4 \_\_\_ vastaanottajan kansallisuus  
 5 \_\_\_ vastaanottajan asema  
 6 \_\_\_ vastaanottajan sukupuoli  
 7 \_\_\_ viestin aihe  
 8 \_\_\_ kiira  
 9 \_\_\_ kirjoittajan kielitaito  
 10 \_\_\_ muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

Käytä seuraavien avointen kysymysten vastauksiin paperin kääntöpuolta, jos tila tässä ei riitä.

27. Miten arvioisit telefaxia yleisesti viestintävälineenä? Hyvät puolet/huonot puolet?

28. Onko yritysten välisten viestien englanninkieli mielestäsi muuttunut viimeksi kuluneiden 10 vuoden aikana (tai jos olet käyttänyt työssäsi englantia lyhyemmän ajan, arvioi sitä aikaa)? Jos, niin miten?

29. Millaista on mielestäsi a) telefaxien b) sähköpostin kieli verrattuna perinteiseen kirjeenvaihtokieleen?

30. Koetko englanninkielisten viestien tuottamisen vaikeaksi?  
Jos, niin mikä kirjoittamisessa on hankalaa? Onko sillä eroa,  
kirjoitatko kirjettä/telefaxia/sähköpostiviestiä?

31. Mitä sinun mielestäsi tulisi korkeakouluissa/opistoissa opiskeleville  
opettaa englanninkielisen viestinnän alueelta, jotta heitä parhaiten  
valmennettaisiin tuleviin työtehtäviin liike-elämässä?

a) suullisen viestinnän alueella

b) kirjallisen viestinnän alueella

LÄMPIMÄT KIITOKSET!  
MIELIPITEESI JA ARVIOSI OVAT TUTKIMUKSELLE KORVAAMATTOMAN TÄRKEITÄ!

Jos olet halukas vielä jatkamaan asian tiimoilta ja antamaan  
aikaasi haastatteluun syksyn kuluessa,  
kirjoita tähän nimesi ja koti- ja työpuhelinnumerosi. Kiitos!

nimi: \_\_\_\_\_

kotipuh.: \_\_\_\_\_

työpuh.: \_\_\_\_\_