INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION
VOL. 21, NO. 1, JAN-JUN 2011

"Passed Sr. Secondary School Leaving Exam": Distinctive Features of Indian CVs/Resumes

ANITA PANDEY
Morgan State University, USA

"You work for an Am(e)rican company
and you don't even know how Am(e)ricans speak?"
(*Outsourced,* NBC, USA, Episode 3, 2010)

ABSTRACT

This paper opens by identifying two major research gaps in the field, namely, the paucity of research on professional South Asian writing – and more specifically on professional Indian writing – and the need for a comprehensive, and globally applicable framework of discourse analysis. Distinctive features of Indian CVs/resumes, the primary document employed in professional exchanges, are then identified. A corpus of 200 Indian resumes is analyzed using the STEPS framework (Pandey 2009, 2010). The findings point at noteworthy differences between Indian CVs and U.S. resumes, and consistent use of Indian English in the data corpus. The implications of the findings are discussed, and recommendations offered. The paper concludes by recommending continued research on professional writing in the Indian and other "emerging power" contexts.

Keywords: Indian CVs/Resumes, Professional Indian Writing, Indian (Business) English, Hybrid English, STEPS, Corpus Linguistics.

INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH GAP

With tech-induced geographic proximity, we can expect to communicate more in writing, particularly given the fact that e-mail, text messaging, and other forms of e-communication are generally more accessible, as well as more time- and cost-effective than face-to-face communication, phone contact, and even traditional snail mail. In short, given that technology is both a globalizer and a vital medium for increased cross-cultural and cross-regional contact (Aggarwal 2007), maximal use of technology necessitates two skills,

namely: i) global or versatile writing skills, and ii) sociolinguistic and cross-cultural know-how,[1] including functional awareness of other languages, and a sound knowledge of different Englishes (Kachru 1986, 2005) or dialects of English, including their appropriate use.

Just because we use the same language, namely, English, does not mean that we use the same organizational styles, or that we share the same interpretations of words, sentences, discourse, expectations of spoken and written communication, and of the context(s) within which messages are framed (Kirkpatrick 2010; Bolton 2008; Bowe & Martin 2007). Moreover, these communicative differences are more often the result of different dialects being used, and do not necessarily indicate that the speaker or writer "has not mastered the many nuances of words and body language that a native speaker interprets" (Olofsson 2011: 92). Arguably, given that written communication is the primary and, in many cases, the preferred medium of exchange today, the potential for miscommunication is much higher than before. Moreover, miscommunication across varieties of English is potentially higher today than misunderstandings arising from use of different languages. This is because English usage is contextually flavored and although on the surface, writing might appear to be more formal and systematic than speech, critical differences in communication styles – in both speech and writing – are easily overlooked. Olofsson (2011), for instance, hastily attributes differences in English usage to variable (i.e., native vs. non-native) competencies. Hence the present study.

Given the importance of professional writing today – both in expanding organizations' global reach and in affirming ties – a focus on professional writing styles employed in different settings is very much in order. This includes a focus on key business documents employed, such as the resume. This paper will outline the distinctive features of Indian resumes/CVs[2] with a view to familiarizing readers with these relatively unknown document types, so that they can properly evaluate the competence of prospective Indian employees and employers. Despite India's key role in the global marketplace, few textbooks and courses in business studies focus on Indian professional communication practices.

Familiarizing ourselves with differences in writing practices across major writing genres, including acquainting ourselves with the distinctive features of resumes and other business documents is a sure way to ensure our greater success. Doing so would: i) help to ensure that we do not hastily dismiss as unqualified candidates who present themselves in writing in a manner that differs from that

conventionally employed in the US; ii) minimize miscommunication, and iii) make us more marketable.

"Why familiarize ourselves with distinctive features of Indian resumes?" you might ask. Given that English is an official language in India, the likelihood of one receiving a resume from an Indian professional – in response to e-ads, in particular – is high. Indeed, more and more Indians apply for positions in technology and other fields worldwide. Most are fluent in English, and highly skilled, given the competitive training and the status English enjoys as official language and the language of prestige in India. Secondly, as an emerging economic power, India's highly skilled workforce is unlikely to serve forever as employee/outsourcee, as the next section illustrates. For these and other reasons, we would do well to familiarize ourselves with the Indian way of doing business and, in particular, with the Indian resume/CV.

U.S. INTERNATIONAL MARKETS: PROFITS AND CHALLENGES

Kentucky Fried Chicken's (KFC's) profits from markets outside the U.S. have been so high as to prompt fifty-to- seventy million-dollar expansion plans in predominantly vegetarian India alone.[3] Even McDonald's enjoys a lucrative presence in India. The following McDonald's ad, in Hindi and English, India's official languages, speaks for itself. Indian readers are invited to go ahead and eat McDonald's (i.e., to first take care of their stomachs). "*Karlo paet pooja*" is a Hindi idiom which literally translates to "worship your stomach," persuading individuals to indulge in McDonald's for a change (see Fig. 1):

Fig. 1. *Location, Pune, southwestern India*
(Photo courtesy of Will Wicker)

The language dance (i.e., code-mixing) in this customized ad serves to seduce the stomachs of India's noveau riche.

Some might be surprised to how much American fast food costs in India. A medium pizza at Dominos in Villa Parle, a southern suburb of Mumbai, India's economic capital costs an average of 380 rupees, which is enough to buy multiple meals for an extended family. To the average Indian, even McDonald's is relatively unaffordable. In short, American products usually cost over three times as much as Indian products, and yet are so highly coveted, by youngsters and corporate employees, in particular, that they are extremely profitable. American junk food (doughnuts, pizza, Pringles, and burgers), for instance, is not the only hot sell in India and elsewhere. The list of U.S. companies with highly profitable sales in India is long and growing. Indeed, India is a very attractive market for U.S. businesses. Disney, for instance, reported major increases in earnings after it partnered with India's UTV.[4] In April 2008, the Redskins' cheerleading squad trained an Indian team for the new Indian Premier League, further attesting to the growing demand for American goods and services in India and elsewhere. Yet, the benefits of outsourcing to America are rarely discussed when, in fact, America's economic and technical success has been fueled, in large part, through its strategic global expansion and alliances. Increased outsourcing and franchising of U.S.-owned business are prime examples. When one considers the profitability of U.S. fast-food and popular culture (e.g., music and fashion), industries gaining momentum with India's rising middle class, the benefits of outsourcing to the U.S. economy become starkly visible.

Nevertheless, India and other emerging markets are viable competitors (Friedman 2005). The sudden and massive growth in India's industry sector, its growing middle class, and the fact that it, too, is outsourcing projects such as the "people's car"[5] is a testament to its rapid growth. As more Indian companies acquire American and European businesses, it will become increasingly important for Americans and Europeans, in particular, to understand what in this paper is termed *Indian business English (IBE),* essentially Indian English (see Kachru 1983) or Hinglish (Gentleman 2007, Kachru 1988), a culture-specific style of speaking and writing that is employed by most Indians. Some might argue that the communication style of the employer generally sets the tone. In short, the employee adopts or accommodates to the employer's communication style. While this is generally the case, and U.S. corporations do still wield the lion's share of corporate power

internationally, this could change, so one must be cross-linguistically aware and adaptable. Researching and improving professional writing across geographic and cultural contexts should, therefore, be a top priority. Since writing is culturally situated (see Shin & Cho 2003; Li 1995), perceptions of good writing do vary (Pandey 2009), as this paper will demonstrate.

WHY INDIA, AND INDIAN BUSINESS DOCUMENTS?

President Obama's Nov. 2010 endorsement of India and her readiness for global ascendancy – through his announcement that India be granted permanent membership on the UN Security Council – is recognition of the economic and political power India wields today. Indeed, India, "the world's largest democracy" (*All Things Considered*, Nov. 12, NPR) is a force to be reckoned with. Not only is India a top choice for outsourcing, Indian-run-and-operated businesses are on the rise and many are buying out shares of U.S. and other non-Indian corporations. According to Communicaid, a communication consulting firm, "India is also recognized for its fiercely competitive education system and is one of the largest providers of experienced scientists, engineers and technicians, making it an attractive market for foreign business" (www.communicaid.com/cross-cultural-training). In short, India is a contender for business ventures worldwide. Even the hallmark of corporate America, Hollywood apparently agrees, as evidenced by the recent pact signed by Hollywood and Bollywood, aimed at increasing Bollywood's investment in the U.S. and at expanding Hollywood's reach in India (Martinez & Narayan 2010).

Additionally, in the U.S., the recent airing of new TV shows like *Outsourced* that are set in India, and feature varied Indian accents[6] are a testament to recognition of the changing times, and more importantly, to our increased contact with Indians, and culture blending.[7]

While some are displeased with the stereotypic portrayal of Indians and Indian culture in *Outsourced*, and other screened U.S. depictions of "east" Indians, some of which draw attention to glaring misconceptions many (Americans) harbor about India and Indian culture (see Sawhney 2010), sustained exposure to different accents, language varieties, and (sub)cultures is also likely to prompt critical changes in the communication practices of Americans and others who interact more frequently with Indians. While global understanding or

two-way sociolinguistic accommodation is desirable, it is most likely when the parties involved are made aware of the nuances of each other's communication practices, as advocated here. This includes familiarity with pragmatic dimensions of language or culturally appropriate language use in both the oral and written realms.

Given the paucity of research on Indian business communication (IBC), it would help to understand *how* and *why* many Indians communicate the way that they do (see Pandey 2009, 2010). Researching the distinctive features of Indian professional communication, as is the focus here, is, therefore, necessary. It could also help avert avoidable miscommunication, the source of monetary and interpersonal dissonance. U.S. President Obama's emphasis on workforce preparation and the development of more specialized skills (*All Things Considered*) is a response to this need and is very much in order.

GAPS IN U.S. PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION TEXTBOOKS: LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's diverse workplace, it is not enough to learn about communication styles associated with the Japanese and with the broad descriptor "Arab countries" (Locker 2006: 305), the primary cross-cultural focus of many well-known business communication texts by American authors. Also, given that written communication is increasingly frequent and decisive in this technological age, geographic differences in writing deserve greater attention. Yet, the linear American writing style is usually the only one mentioned and, unlike what is advised (see Appendix D of Locker 2006), is unlikely to guarantee success in every instance (see Boiarsky 1995).

While characteristic features of monochronic and polychronic cultures are identified in most U.S. resources on business communication (see Locker 2006), these distinctions are too broad and, therefore, minimally instructive. While the term "monochronic" is used to describe relationship-focused cultures, and "polychronic" clock-time-driven ones, these terms are rarely applicable in their pure form. To hastily characterize an entire culture as either monochronic or high-context (i.e., where much of what is communicated must be inferred) or polychronic and low-context (i.e., one does not have to bring extra contextual information to the table, as things are spelled out) is problematic. To characterize the United States as a "low-context" culture, as do many business communication texts (see

Locker 2005; Thill & Courtland 2007), for instance, is a questionable assertion, given our multicultural and multi-ethnic mix.

It, therefore, makes more sense to view cultures as predominantly high- or low-context, and to conceive of a cline of monochronicity and polychronicity or low-to-high-context cultures where one's communication preferences and practices could vary at any given point in time and could be identified on the cline, allowing for cultural vacillation and language accommodation or communication style switches, as is increasingly the case. This cline of (changing) communication is depicted in Fig. 2 where SABC refers to South Asian business communication practices (including Japanese, Taiwanese, and Chinese), IBC to Indian business communication, and ABC to American business communication. The term "bichronic" is proposed, as it resembles both low and high context cultures—at variable points.

High	Mid	Low
SABC	IBC	ABC
Indirect	[Has features of both: vague at pts.]	Direct
Emphasizes relationships	Prioritizes trust	Tasks & due dates
Non-linear	Semi-linear	Linear
Polychronic	Bichronic	Monochronic

Fig. 2. *Cline of Cross-Cultural Contextuality & Communicability*

METHODOLOGY: DATA AND FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The present study surveys 200 randomly selected CVs[8] (the preferred term for a resume in India) received in response to a Project Management position for The Unforgotten (www.unforgotten.org), a non-profit organization.[9] The Appendix provides a randomly selected example from the corpus under focus. The ad for the opening was placed on devnet.org, the largest portal for openings in the not-for-profit sector. For comparative purposes, 200 U.S. resumes were randomly selected from final versions submitted by students in two courses taught by the researcher at Morgan State University from August 2009 through November 2010, namely: an undergraduate course in *Business Writing* and a *Graduate Writing Project* (seminar). These documents were also assumed to contain accurate information.

The STEPS framework (Pandey 2009, 2010) was employed for the analysis reported here. The STEPS framework is premised on the

idea that most writing is two-way, turn-taking-based and as such, a *process* in multiple senses (drafting, self-editing, and feedback-driven editing, for instance). Timely, comprehensive, and robust, it merges both content or text analysis (Fairclough 2001), and pertinent contextual/ideological information (Connor & Moreno 2005). In addition, multilingual reader-writer expectations and interpretations are considered. Given that writing is a collaborative act and pre-empted (by something specific) and/or outcomes-driven, a proper analysis of any act or piece of writing must consider multiple dimensions, as follows:

- **Structure**: format, length, layout and mechanics (context-specific)
- **Theme(s)**: content: phonological, lexical, syntactic, and discourse-based (e.g., ideological)
- **Etiquette**: pragmatics: politeness conventions/goodwill renditions – not always linguistically explicit/direct but often mirrored in the sounds, vocabulary, syntax, & discourse.
- **Purpose**: both the writer's and, to the extent possible, the reader's, as well.
- **Style**: contextually meaningful sounds, vocabulary, syntax, & discourse.

These segments interact to yield distinctive *writing acts.*

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Differences were noted in resume length, format(ting), layout, content, and pragmatics or language in use in its proper (i.e., home) context. These are summarized in Table 1 and discussed in greater detail below.

Table 1. *Indian CVs vs. U.S. Resumes*

Structure	Indian CVs	US Resumes
Length	Longer than US resumes, average three pages	Short and impersonal, generally 1-2 pages
Format/Layout & Mechanics	Often provide photo (on top), employ some unique headings, rarely list career objective, include personal information, and end with	Most contain career objective, and emphasize dates. Appearance is important; typos and

	declaration/statement.	grammatical errors are kept to a minimum.
Themes/Content	Family-centric – provide info. on family and other personal details; include geographic/culture-specific content (e.g., relational addresses), differentiate between academic and professional qualifications, emphasize experience over dates, and end with an affidavit of sorts.	Customize content, and emphasize dates and visual appearance. Provide professional content alone (i.e., no personal information included).
Etiquette/Language, Purpose & Style	More abstract/philosophical and descriptive (i.e., subtly persuasive – appealing to the reader's sense of community). Passive voice more common than active. Employ formal Indian English (more formal than AE) and British spellings; and emphasize bilingualism. Personal accomplishments are downplayed; applicants are portrayed as recipients.	Directly persuasive--individual accomplishments emphasized (i.e., agent-first language common), use Plain (Standard) American English (AE); and rarely mention competency in other language varieties. Personal accomplishments are highlighted; applicants consistently portray themselves as goal-oriented winners.

Structure

Length: In general, Indian CVs were found to be longer than the U.S. resumes analyzed, as they contained more information, including personal details. As such, they averaged three pages (vs. the standard 1-2 page U.S. resume). The Indian preference for the term CV, which stands for curriculum vitae, the Latin term for career history, as opposed to *resume* which denotes a summary or précis might account, in part, for this difference.

Format, Layout, and Mechanics: Some of the Indian CVs contained pictures – and not all were passport photos. Some were (poses) of the kind one might include in one's *biodata* (Pandey 2004) or matrimonial profile.

All used headings and emphasis was signaled by way of underlining, bolding, and capitalization (in that order).

Career objectives were rarely listed on Indian CVs. When provided, they tend to be relatively lengthy, abstract, cryptic, and/or philosophical. Examples include:

1. To be a part of a reputed and growing institution wherein I could utilise my vast theoretical and practical exposure, experience in accounting and its kindred aspects for the benefit and welfare of my prospective employer, and thus accelerate the furtherance of my career to earn appreciation's (sic) and accolades.

2. To Stay close to knowledge hub and actively Participate in the process of transformation by Continuously enhancing the skills insuring their positive reflections on the life style.

A few Indian CVs started with an implied summary of qualifications. For example: "MBA with specialization in Health Management;" "MASTERR(sic) OF SOCIAL WORK(MSW) EXPERIENCE FIVE YEAR PLUS." Some (10%) used templates, usually tables (9%); and some used up to two font colors, in addition to black. Red and green – culturally favorable colors – were the most frequently employed colors after black.

Most employed 12-size font. Some used a smaller font size and the font style varied. While the majority used the Times Roman, some used Bradley, Gramond, and other script styles, including the Comic Sans, and often up to three font variations within the document.

Five contained an "About me" section, as follows:

> Like every person I have some strong as well as some weak points. **I like to do social work especially for slum children and youngsters**. We have our own organization called "**Love in Action**". I am hardworking, innovative, ambitious and a thoughtful person. **"*Every light has to search its way through the dark*."** So it is a promise that with a little motivation and direction I will work with my best efforts.

All ended with an affidavit-like declaration/statement (stated or implied by way of the applicant's signature), termed "Certification" in one, as illustrated in the following two unedited excerpts (with font and other features retained):

1. *Declaration*
   I hereby declare that all the particulars stated in this Resume are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
   Date*:* ***(Name)***

2. Certification:
   I, the undersigned, certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that this CV correctly describes my qualifications and experience;
   I understand that any willful misstatement herein may lead to my disqualification or dismissal if engaged.
   [Dr. _____]
   [Name of Expert / Authorised signatory]
   Place: Bhopal

All contained a "Personal Details" or "Personal Information" section. This generally appeared right before the closing declaration (in 99% of the data) or at the start (1%).

Some (30%) contained typos, including misspellings (e.g., "parmanet addres"), ungrammatical yet meaningful sentences ("The above mentioned all document are true in my based knowledge") and unconventional or missing punctuation. In general, these resumes did not place a premium on visual appeal; that is, consistency in formatting and other desktop publishing techniques was relatively absent, suggesting that Indian employers appear to emphasize work experience or content over physical appearance (of the resume, in this case). In short, in the case of Indian resumes, looks do not appear to be as important as content or substance.

Content/Theme(s): The opening contact information provided was context-specific or geographically variable. Most specified the "post" (akin to one's locality) and "district" (similar to a Canadian Province or U.S. State), as follows:

Vill. & Post	Narharpur
District	Ambedkar Nagar(U.P.)-224231
Contact no.	E-mail ID

UP (uttar Pradesh or northern Province), MP, and other State acronyms were employed, as in the case of U.S. resumes (e.g., MD for Maryland). Some (67%) listed Pin nos. which function much like U.S. zip codes. One had a code-mixed address; a mixture of Hindi and English, as follows: "Bichhiya (Murari lal ka bag), Post – P.A.C. Camp," followed by the town and geographic region. Here, "Murari

lal ka bag" translates to "the bag of Murari lal." It is worth mention that use of the Hindi term for "bag" (i.e., "jhola") would not convey the same meaning (i.e., refer to a postal bag). All applicants referenced a country code or set of numbers after the country (e.g., India - 272192). Many applicants used C/(O) or "care of" in the address section, and a few (2%) listed their father's name and residence in the permanent address section; for instance: "S/Mr. ___) where the "S" stands for "Shri," the Hindi term for Sir.[10] Most addresses provided were relational/prepositional in orientation, and landmark-based; for example: "*Near* Shri Masjeed" (i.e., Near Shri mosque); "*Behind* Raj colony," "near Z.P school, Nideban, Udgir, Dist Latur. Pin-413517, Maharashtra, India" [emphasis added] American readers, who are accustomed to specifics and who generally provide and expect accurate and specific information are likely to ask "Where exactly IS this place?" They are likely to interpret the Indian English term "behind" here to mean "directly behind" whereas most Indians would interpret it as being in the general vicinity of a specified landmark, X (e.g., "near the tower" in Valsad, Gujarat) and south of it. As such, they might ask: "Is it directly behind Raj colony or diagonally across from it?" In short, what exactly does the word "behind" mean in this context? "How close is the "near" referred to here?" or "How close or far is ___ address?"

96% of the Indian applicants differentiated between academic and professional qualifications. Academic qualifications are employed to refer to degrees earned, while professional qualifications were used to refer to licenses, such as "Diploma in Computer Application (DCA)," and other add-on workshops and trainings attended. An example of the former follows:

Year	Examination/Degree	Institution	Percentage
2006-08	M.A in Social Work	Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai	60%
2002-05	B.Sc (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics)	Shivaji College/Shri R. T. Marathwada Univ.,Nanded, Maharastra	56.4%
2001	Twelfth standard[11] (Sci.)	Sainik School, Satara	64%
1999	Tenth standard (CBSE)	Sainik School, Satara	68%

Information on one's work experience(s) rarely included dates. Dates, when provided (in 25% of the corpus) were generally listed in parenthesis and/or in summative terms (e.g., "five years experience in project management"). In general, dates were downplayed (e.g.,

"Pursuing M.A Public Administration") and dates of attendance and/or the location of the training were unspecified). In sum, summative or cumulative experience was consistently emphasized over and above exact dates, as follows:

1. Two week project work at block Gondlamau in district Sitapur (U.P) on the topic **Mid Day Meal Programme** by Govt. of India of Rural Sector School Students.
2. One week field work in village Jieupur at block Masoundha in the district of Faizabad (U.P) on the topic-**Mode of Employment in Rural Areas.**

A few presented their experience in reverse chronological order – highlighting where they worked and/or what they did over and above the dates and duration of individual experiences, as the following excerpt clarifies:

1) *PRESENTLY WORKING IN UTTAR DINAJ PUR ZILLA PARISHAD IN DISTRICT PUBLIC CELL AS A PROGRAMME COORDINATOR OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE (C.H.C.M.I) UNDER NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH MISSION.*
2) Having Working experience in -'HOPE KOLKATA FOUNDATION' as a Project Coordinator
3) I worked in **"GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION SOUTH CALCUTTA"** as a Programme Coordinator of 'Targeted Intervention Programme Among Community About STD/HIV/AIDS' at its field office Lalpur, Daldali,Hura Purulia. The Targeted population – the community of HURA and PUNCHA Block.
4) Before that, I worked in **Gandhi Mission Trust** (Daspur,Paschim Medinipur) as a Coordinator of 'Immunisation Programme' and 'Hospital Coordinator' of L . C. Dani Eye Hospital. The organization working in the field of Health such as Eye Care and Eye Treatment with C.B.R. concept since 1978 and organization also involving HIV/AIDS, Sanitation, and Community Health.

97% included information regarding high school(s) attended and "marks" earned. Marks were listed instead of the preferred U.S. term GPA; and these were sometimes implied; for instance: **"MBA** from "Institute of Management Sciences" University of Lucknow (2006-2008) *(67.47%)."*

All contained personal details, including age, gender, marital status ""married with two children"), number and names of children (1%), names and gender of immediate family members (2%), "salary

drawn" (in rupees, per month), and even bank accounts (1%). Most (98%) provided this information by way of the heading "Personal Details" or "Personal Profile," and this was usually the penultimate section of the resume (i.e., right before the declaration). An example follows:

Father's Name:	Mr. Aditi ____
Mother's Name:	Mrs. Monika___
Gender:	Male.
Date of Birth:	22nd November, 1983.
Languages Known:	English, Hindi and Bengali.
Marital status:	Bachelor
Conveyance:	Yes (two wheeler)

Religion was listed on six, caste on one ("OBC"), and "Blood Group" on one ("A +ve"). One even listed the applicant's zodiac sign. Other noteworthy features of the corpus examined are summarized below:

- The father's name was mentioned on most of the CVs (94%) for identification and security purposes, as few applicants (1%) had middle names.
- Three listed their mother's name, as well.
- A few (5%) provided their "passport no.," evidencing their international mobility or passport/ability to work outside India.
- Some (36%) listed applicant's nationality, further evidencing their mobility or willingness to work abroad
- All emphasized job titles and range of experience over # of years/timeline; exact dates and time spans were generally unspecified.
- All but one mentioned "languages" (i.e., bilingual competency), suggesting that bilingualism is a valued skill in India. Those that mentioned their bilingual skills listed up to three languages. Hindi and English were the most frequently mentioned, followed by Marathi, and Bengali.
- All (100%) listed computer skills.
- Those that listed references generally listed four. Some wrote: "Can be produced on request."

Primary linguistic tools employed to convey the writer's message or intent (i.e., content and purpose) are analyzed below, in ascending order:

Words: The term "standard" vs. "grade"; "X" and "XII" for "10th," and "12th" standard, respectively, **"**secondary school" vs. "high school"; "intermediate (i.e., A'Level training, generally two years); PG for postgraduate work (i.e., graduate school), "post" (position), "flat no." (apt.), "Hobbies," "Interest(s)" or "Past times" vs. "Extracurricular activities," "mark(s)" vs. "score" or "grade" (e.g. "Master of Social Work (M.S.W) from Dr. R.M.L. Avadh University in 2008 with 65% mark"); "Mobile" or "M(ob)" vs. "cell," "unmarried" for "available," "salary drawn" (i.e., earned); "conveyance" (i.e., transport); "correspondence address" vs. "current address"; "Passed" vs. "completed" (e.g. "Passed Sr. Secondary School . . . Exam"), "leaving exam" vs. "exit exam," "particulars" (details, as in the declaration "[A]ll the particulars furnished are true to best of my knowledge"), "marksheets" (scores and/or gradesheets), and "Co-Curricular Activities" (which listed noteworthy engagments, alongside one's training and/or other qualifications). Several used acronyms for exams, such as "SSC Board exam" (Second School Certificate,[12] interestingly also termed the "STD X"), FYBA (First Year BA exam), and TYBA (Third Year B.A. exam), pointing at a shared (cultural) schema.

Examples of hobbies listed included: "Listening music, making cartoons, reading Russian writers, and traveling."

Sentences: The definite article was often omitted as in the following Career Objective: "To pursue career with an organization which provides stimulating and challenging work environment." The (more) frequent use of the present tense for ongoing and past performance(s), in addition to reflecting the use of Indian English, created a sense of immediacy; for instance: "Securing 58.21 % Marks (U.P. Board)." "Having Working experience in - 'HOPE KOLKATA FOUNDATION' as a Project Coordinator" is another example of the use of a stative verb (have) in the continuous tense. Achievements, when listed were worded in a deferential tone, generally by way of the past tense or the passive voice with dates inclusive rarely specified. These features (e.g., tense and aspect) serve to downplay the agent or do-er, unlike in the U.S. where the agent is consistently emphasized, and mirror an individualistic, goal-oriented culture:

- Participated in State Level Annual **NCC** Camp.
- Participated in Legal Awareness program conducted by **Orissa State Legal Authority**, Cuttack, Orissa.

- Received best **debater** award twice in **Vision Paradise** (All Orissa Youth Festival) at Balasore, Orissa.
- Got best student award in Inter College **NSS** camp.
- Got best **debater** award twice in College Annual Function.
- Got first prize in **debate** competition in dist. Level competition.
- Got runner up prize in college level **Badminton** competition.

In contrast, most U.S. resumes listed Honors and Awards, and these were generally worded more compactly and directly, as follows:

- Dean's List, Spring 2010-2011
- Who's Who in America's Top Colleges?: fall, 2008

Discourse Features: Indian Etiquette and Style: One resume mentioned the applicant's membership in WWF India, which assumed that the reader was familiar with this non-profit dedicated to environmental conservation. Bombastic language or what some might describe as unPlain English was frequently observed in these documents. One (Chemistry professor), for instance, listed "Titration Skills" he possessed, and used the section heading "Career Contours." The diction employed was consistently abstract/philosophical. The relative absence of the Career Objective arguably reflect the workings of Indian politeness where one neither commands the shots, nor overtly state one's preferences. This might explain why few were directly or overtly persuasive, as evidenced by the absence of a "Summary of Qualifications." Assurance-providing non-egalitarian language was frequently employed; the desire to serve (as in a military command or hierarchic organization) is exemplifed by the following Career Objective:

> OBJECT:
> Serve you at my best level
> I shall do my best to give you every satisfaction

Unlike in the U.S., legalese was frequently employed in the Indian CVs/resumes, through affivadit-like endings where applicants voched for the accuracy of the information provided. As such, terms like "herein" and "wherein" were frequently employed in the "Objective" and "Declaration sections. In providing numbers, the British acronym for "number" was consistenly employed, namely, "no." E-mail ID was observed to be the preferred term for "E-mail (address)." Moreover, British spellings were consistently employed in all of the

Indian CVs reviewed (e.g., "Programme" vs. Program" and "Honours").

The use of Indian English in the Indian resumes analyzed is noteworthy.

This resume (type) was observed to function more like an employee profile or HR document, as evidenced by the personal details provided. Not merely occupationally relevant information, but also personal details were listed. As such, these CVs are not only designed to inform a potential employer of the professional aspect(s) of an applicant, but also give them a glimpse of the person as a whole, whether married, religious, and so on. In contrast, the American resume focused specifically on the individual as an employee alone.

As regards US professional writing, including journals, the distancing of business from family is evident in the linguistic and pragmatic content and in the organization (tied to the former).[13] This is designed to give the semblance of objectivity, and by extension, greater credibility.

Noteworthy differences in literacy practices – including writing instruction – in the geographic contexts under focus deserve mention. First, differences regarding the importance and role of writing must be recognized. In the U.S., for instance, much more time is invested in writing by way of formal instruction and informal, everyday exposure to written text ranging from billboard and TV advertisements to junk mail and e-mail. Arguably, the last-mentioned example falls roughly at the nexus of traditional speech and writing (Pandey 2002). A host of U.S.-based organizations, including the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Modern Language Association (MLA), Association for Business Communication (ABC), and Society for Technical Communication (STC), have helped both promote and structure U.S. academic, technical, and professional writing. The number of journals devoted to writing instruction in the U.S. is evidence.

In short, reading and writing or literacy is a vital cultural behavior or practice that most Americans imbibe as early as in second grade. To most Americans, writing is generally faster or more convenient and time-efficient than face-to-face or phone exchanges, and often more cost-effective (in the case of off-shore outsourcing). Writing is also a vital project management tool – by way of periodic reminders and status checks – and it fulfills a critical record-keeping

function in legally backed (i.e., sue-happy) societies. This, however, is not the case in India and many other locations.

For instance, while many Americans view the bulk of (intercultural) corporate exchanges as negotiations, others might view them as merely rapport-building and relationship affirming.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Few would deny that India's multilingualism has enabled her active participation in the international arena, as evidenced here. Yet, further research is needed on reader and writer expectations; and multilingual, multimodal, and multicontextual writing practices, including (e-)exchanges involving variable and hybrid English, and mixed media. A focus on writing acts and reading acts – on analogy with speech act (Harrah 1994) is most advisable. We must carefully research reader expectations and interpretations of specific language(s), including numbers,[14] words, sentences, and organizational styles, and provide our students with more specific and tangible information in this important area, so that both the writer and the reader are familiar with each other's expectations regarding the purpose and content of the exchanges in which they engage, as well as with the interpretations they each assign to the writing in question.

Another research need this study has drawn attention to is the need for more (globally) representative and comparable professional writing corpora (see Moreno 2008). While corpus linguistics has provided us access to larger and more representative data samples, including the International Corpus of English (ICE) and ICELite (see Biber, Conrad & Reppen 1998), its applicability to professional writing is still relatively restricted. We should research how to mine more contextual data or more culturally imbued written corpora. In short, corpus analyses should be more expansive in breadth and depth. Not only should their focus be expanded to cross-geographic settings, and beyond academic writing (Sii 2004), more contextualized and linguistically distinctive automated analyses are in order. In short, key words alone are insufficient in capturing significant cross linguistic and (sub)cultural nuances. We must carefully research how variable language units are used in culturally appropriate ways in different settings. It would, for instance, be helpful to have access to a comprehensive list of phonemes, terms, expressions, sentences, and discourse units frequently employed in

business exchanges in different parts of the world and the most common interpretations assigned to them.

Ultimately, we must accommodate to (sociolinguistic) differences in writing, as well – that is, in addition to spoken and non-verbal linguistic accommodation. To this end, critical modifications in writing instruction are advisable. A working knowledge of linguistics and culturally appropriate writing rubrics and/or assessments is, therefore, proposed. The STEPS framework of writing utilized in this paper, for instance, is international in scope (i.e., globally applicable) and grounded in linguistics, the science of language. We must endorse new tools, such as this one, to offset culture-specific and potentially biased and questionable preconceptions regarding professional writing in the international arena.

Given that hybrid or culturally diverse writing are increasingly common (as in India) than purely or distinctly monocultural writing in this day and age – which is particularly conducive to cultural meshing – the term "intercultural" may be inapplicable in a growing number of contexts. Given the diversity of today's exchanges, we, therefore need to reconceptualize audience needs – beyond vague terms like "reader expectations" and "attitudes." We need to investigate and provide more specific information in this critical area, and to remember that both the writer and the reader must be familiar with each other's expectations regarding specific features of the written exchanges in which they engage, as well as with the interpretations each party applies to the writing in question.

Few would deny that successful communication – corporatese, essentially – is the cornerstone of corporate success. Not surprisingly, business communication is rapidly becoming a core course at universities across the world. Courses in business communication and/or administrative communication are currently offered through various departments, including management, leadership, linguistics, communication, and English, yet instructional approaches tend to be largely prescriptive and lacking in cross-disciplinary theory.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

As this paper has attempted to demonstrate, for success in today's highly diverse and fluid workplace, a focus on Indian and other major players' communication practices is essential. While English has become an international language, we can expect our English

(dialect) needs to vary from time to time, and even within a specified time frame, so a certain degree of flexibility or writing accommodation is advisable. Familiarity with more than one type of English, including the nuances of Indian English is, therefore, critical to our success, and highly advantageous. In as much as non-Western outsourcees might feel obligated to conform to U.S. communication styles, the onus of understanding and working with India, China, Korean, Taiwan, and other non-Western partners, including Latin America and eastern Europe, rests squarely on each and every one of us, including U.S. and other employers and employees.

Based on the findings reported here, (e)writing fluidity or accommodation in the written realm is a valuable skill today. In short, we should be able to (re)format our resumes to meet the needs of the Indian context relatively easily – and at all linguistic levels, not merely lexical. This is the sort of audience-specific customization we should aim for, so that we can adequately prepare our students for today's workplace diversity. Similarly, professionals in India, China, Brazil, Russia, Kenya, and elsewhere would do well to familiarize themselves with professional writing practices in those contexts with which they are likely to engage.

This paper has provided insights on culture-specific or context-specific professional writing, specifically Indian CVs--primary documents provided to potential employers. As is demonstrated, there are multiple benefits to understanding Indian business English (IBE) and the peculiarities of resumes/CVs and other business/professional documents authored by Indians. First, it is so much easier to train one's staff to speak and write in accordance with one's (sub)cultural) expectations when we have a clear understanding of differences in communication styles, including distinctive features of World Englishes in use in different parts of the world. Second, one never knows when the tables might turn. After all, Indian corporations are rapidly expanding and, as more Indians born and/or raised in India occupy top management positions, they could call the shots. As such, we have an obligation to help create instructional resources that are timely and that present pragmatic content reflective of our dynamic and global world. Whether current corporate and communication trends will positively influence perceptions of indigenized and hybrid Englishes such as those employed in Indian CVs remains to be seen. In the interim, one cannot help but ask: "Is it time for a fourth Circle of English – a hybrid one perhaps?"

NOTES

1. Arguably the term cross-cultural is relatively narrow and insufficient, since, from a linguistic standpoint, (sub)culturally salient information is linguistically encoded. Hence, language is the mirror we view.
2. The resume is generally referred to as the CV in India and many ex-British colonies.
3. KFC targets India's wealthy Available online: <www.scribd.com/doc/19080033/Kentucky-Fried-Chicken-KFC-Marketing-Mix-four-Ps>.
4. Available online: <www.varietyasiaonline.com/content/view/5816/>.
5. Available online: <finance.yahoo.com/family-home/article/102865/the-next-peoples-car>.
6. For instance, northern vs. southern accents discernable in *Outsourced*, as opposed to the so-called generic one on *The Simpsons.*
7. These would include Kumar in *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*, and other TV shows with Indian characters.
8. Roughly five percent were accompanied by cover letters.
9. We wish to thank the Director, Amit Kapadia for access to the data presented here.
10. The equivalent term for a woman is "Shrimati" (i.e., "Mrs.").
11. Patterned like the British system; in this 10+2 delineation, 10^{th} standard signals completion of the O'Level; and twelvth Standard of the "A" or "Advanced Level."
12. Many States test for language competency in up to 24 languages, including English, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Russian, French, and German. Most students are tested in three languages: Indian's official languages and a regional or State language.
13. This includes minimal to zero information provided about the owners of publishing presses (i.e., they are to be seen as organizations, not as individuals). Hence, the way Indian publishing houses like Bahri might embrace and acknowledge or pay homage to family members could be misconstrued.
14. In tonal languages, vital messages could be conveyed through numbers (see Boiarsky 1995).

REFERENCES

Aggarwal, R. 2007. Technology and international business: What should we know and teach? *AIG Insights*, 7/1, 8-14.

Agmon, T. 2007. Comments from the editor. *AIG Insights*, 7/1, 1-1.

Biber, D., Conrad, S. & Reppen R. 1998. *Corpus Linguistics, Investigating Language Structure and Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boiarsky, C. 1995. The relationship between cultural and rhetorical conventions: Engaging in international communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 4/3, 245-259.

Bolton, K. 2008. English in Asia, Asian Englishes and the issue of proficiency. *English Today*, 94/2, 3-13.

Bowe, H. & Martin, K. 2007. *Communication Across Cultures. Mutual Understanding in a Global World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Connor, U. & Moreno, A. 2005. Tertium comparationis. A vital component in contrastive rhetoric research. In P. Bruthiaux, D. Atkinson, W. G. Eggington, W. Grabe & V. Ramanathan (Eds.), *Directions in Applied Linguistics* (pp. 153-164). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Connor, U. 1996. *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural Aspects of Second Language Writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N. 2001. *Language and Power*. New York: Longman.

Gentleman, A. 2007. 'The Queen's Hinglish' gains in India. *New York Times*, 21 Nov.

Harrah, D. 1994. On the vectoring of speech acts. In S. Tsohatzidis (Ed.), *Foundations of Speech Act Theory: Philosophical and Linguistic Perspectives* (pp. 374-392). London: Routledge.

Kachru, B. B. 2005. *Asian Englishes beyond the Canon*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

——. 1986. *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions and Models of Non-native Englishes.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

——. 1983. *The Indianization of English: The English Language in India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kachru, Y. 1988. Writers in Hindi and English. In A.C. Purves (Ed.), *Writing Across Language and Culture* (pp.109-137). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kirkpatrick, A. 2010. English as a lingua franca in ASEAN: A multilingual model. *Asian Englishes Today Series.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Locker, K. 2006. *Business and Administrative Communication.* 7th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Martinez, M. & Narayan, A. 2010. Hollywood, Bollywood sign cooperative pact. *CNN.* 11 Nov. Available online: <www.cnn.com/2010/ SHOWBIZ/Movies/11/11/hollywood.bollywood/indexhtml?section=cnn _latest> .

McCrum, R. 2010. *Globish: How the English Language became the World's Language.* W. W. Norton and Company.

Moreno, A. I. 2008. The importance of comparable corpora in cross-cultural studies. In U. Connor, E. Nagelhout & W. Rozycki (Eds), *Contrastive Rhetoric: Reaching to Intercultural Rhetoric* (pp. 25-41). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Olofsson, G. 2011. International communication and language. In K. Harty. (Ed.), *Strategies for Business and Technical Writing* (pp. 92-115). New York: Longman.

Pandey, A. 2004. Culture, gender, and identity in Indian matrimonial ads. *World Englishes*, 23/3, 403-428.

—. 2005. A cyber stepshow: E-discourse and literacy at an HBCU." *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies: An International Journal*, 2/1, 35-69.

——. 2009. Same language, different meaning(s)?: Towards a global framework of business writing. *Business Discourse Conference Proceedings*, Available online: <www.businesscommunication.org/conventions/Proceedings/2009/ABC2009Proceedings.html>.

—. 2010. On internationalizing our business communication practices. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics*, 3/1, 25-62.

Sawhney, K. 2010. NBC's *Outsourced* perpetuates stereotypes. *The Stanford Daily.* 8 Oct. Available online: <www.stanforddaily.com/2010/10/08/nbcs-outsourced-perpetuates-stereotypes/>.

Sii, H. G. J. 2004. Genre analysis and cultural variations: Comparative analysis of British and Chinese TEFL/TESL application letters. Paper presented at the *9th Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics Conference*, Seoul, Korea, Aug.

Thill, J. & Courtland, B. 2007. *Excellence in Business Communication.* 8th ed. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson/Prentice-Hall.

APPENDIX
An Indian Resume

AJAY ____ (Passport photo)
H-__/__, Garhi ____, Shahganj
Agra-2____, Uttar Pradesh
Phone: M-_____/ _____
Email ID: _____

Professional Profile

- ✓ Master of social work (MSW) with specialization in Community development & Industrial relations
- ✓ More than 3 years of experience in Social/ development sector bearing various responsibilities of Mass mobilization, journalism, teaching, health & rural development.
- ✓ A keen communicator with the ability to relate to people across all hierarchical levels in the organisation. Possess ability to motivate people to achieve organisational objectives.

Organizational Experience

Since May 08 to Aug 08 with Nestle India Ltd. as trainee

- ✓ Corporate social responsibilities
- ✓ Project Planning & Implementation
- ✓ Community development
- ✓ Vendor management

- ✓ Recruitment, Selection and Induction
- ✓ Welfare/ Rewards and Recognitions
- ✓ HR Audits/ Legal compliances
- ✓ Managing contract workers
- ✓ Planning & Execution of all major plant visits, events, Get together

Since Aug 06 to till date with Amar Ujala, Agra as Sub editor/ Reporter

- ✓ As a desk in charge responsibility of full proof edition
- ✓ Responsible for editing articles, creating and designing pages, and writing articles in order to bring out the edition of the paper on a daily basis
- ✓ The work will involve copy-fitting, correcting grammar errors & giving attractive headlines, subheads, captions and so on.
- ✓ Reporting on Higher education, medical, politics, business, sports & feature related stories like food, environment and lifestyle
- ✓ Content development, website management and designing

Community work

- ✓ Worked with Indian Dream Foundation in slum areas as community mobilizer
- ✓ Worked with Population foundation of India for project on Reproductive child health in Rural area of Agra district as master volunteer
- ✓ Educate 10 children in National literacy mission of U.P. Government
- ✓ Participated in Pulse Polio immunization campaign

Areas of Expertise

Brand Management, Vendor Negotiation, Policy Intervention, Strategy Design, Corporate social Responsibility, public relations, writing, database management, writing case studies, presentations, Rural development, livelihood promotion, participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation, enterprise development, Relief and Rehabilitation, Good Interpersonal Relationship, strategy planning, Corporate Communications, Media Planning & Management, Team Management, External Affairs, Liaison, Strategic Planning, Donor Relations, communication with diplomacy and output driven, Mass mobilization, Coordination with various Govt. authorities, Press laws

IT Credentials

- Diploma Course from Academy of computer management, Agra.
- MS word, excel, power point, SAP, Quark express, News pro
- Hindi & English typing on computer
- Knowledge of Internet related techniques

Co curricular activities

- Actively participation in National service scheme (N.S.S.)
- N.C.C. (Army Wing) 'C' Certificate with Grading 'B'
- Freelance writing in Various Newspapers/ magazine & blogs
- Participated in N.C.C. Republic Day Parade camp
- Represented Dr. B.R.A University, Agra in All India Inter-university Boxing Championship
- Winner of University level Lecture & debate competitions

Education

- Master of social work (M.S.W.) from Institute of Social Sciences
- Master of Journalism & Mass communication From Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Agra
- Bachelor of physical education (physiology & anatomy) from University campus
- Bachelor of Arts & humanities from R.B.S. College, Agra
- Currently pursuing M.B.A.

Personal Details

Date of Birth	:-	24th December, 1982
Sex	:-	Male
Marital Status	:-	Bachelor
Nationality	:-	Indian
Languages Known	:-	Hindi, English, Regional
Father's Name	:-	Shri R. _____

ANITA PANDEY
MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY,
BALTIMORE, MD, USA.
E-MAIL: <ANITA.PANDEY@MORGAN.EDU>