RESUMES AND CHOICES:
ANALYZING THE DISCOURSE OF A DECISION-MAKING ACTIVITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Available research on the resume genre assumes that the communicative purpose of the resume is promotional and persuasive. While there is ample evidence that this premise is true for North American resumes, the research on resumes across cultures is limited (Popken, 1993). Yet in light of the current trends of globalization and migration of skilled workers, the resume becomes an important genre to study cross-culturally. Research Question 1 explores the communicative purposes of the resume genre to see whether they are culturally universal. The findings here add to the limited research base by investigating the resume-writing practices of North America, Japan, and Russia.

Research Question 2 is linked to Research Question 1 as it explores the issue of genre analysis: How can choice as revealed in insider accounts link genre, communicative purposes, and the social and cultural context of a genre? The study looks at the resume as a process and uses Systemic Functional Linguistics to examine language as a system of choice from which certain options are selected to achieve the desired outcomes (Halliday, 1994; Hasan, 1996). The thesis further draws on Mohan’s (2000) look at language as choices based on reasons which are rooted in socioculturally grounded values and beliefs. Taking this decision-making perspective, the study examines the “insider accounts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) of 12 groups of participants through the discourse of the resume-editing sessions and interviews. It looks at how people make decisions about the genre while writing a resume and talking about it. The participants’ explanations of the reasons behind their choices are examined to illuminate the sociocultural aspects of the resume and interpret its communicative purpose across the three cultures.

The findings show that while the broad purpose of the resume may be the same across cultures, it can be expressed differently through resume layout, content, and
language. The reasons behind each of these choices are based on cultural beliefs which can be made explicit by examining the discourse of people who are engaged in talking about their choices while constructing a genre.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The genre approach to teaching English as a Second Language has been successfully used in a variety of academic and professional settings. A genre as a text, either spoken or written, is produced to achieve a particular purpose in a society and is delivered through particular schematic structure and language features (Swales, 1990). Thus genres encompass three dimensions: linguistic, communicative, and social (Sengupta, Forey, & Hamp-Lyons, 1999). The genre approach provides teachers and students with a convenient access to an inventory of particular language and schematic features that are commonly used in the samples of a particular genre. These features are combined in a certain way to achieve the communicative purpose of the genre, such as to inform, instruct, persuade, and so on. There is, however, a growing concern in the field that to fully understand the genre it is not enough to know the inventory of schematic and linguistic features that the genre is comprised of. Genres exist for a particular audience and are directed by the norms and conventions of their discourse communities (Swales, 1990). Thus, teachers and students need to be aware of how genres function in the society and how they are related to their sociocultural context (Bloor, 1998; van Dijk, 1994).

As a social process, genres carry historical and cultural associations with them. They change over time (Kress, 1997; Salager-Meyer, 1999; Widdowson, 1998). It is likely that genres also change from culture to culture, although according to Pak’s study (as cited in Moreno, 1997) the research findings on the cross-cultural genre variances have been controversial. It has been stated in the field that more research is needed on cultural aspects of genres (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). While academic genres have enjoyed significant attention from researchers, business genres have been investigated to a lesser degree. The resume genre in particular is one of the less explored business
genres (Popken, 1993). At the same time, resumes play an important role in a working person’s life. In many countries, a person’s ability to produce a successful sample of this genre can have long-standing consequences, since resumes and cover letters provide the employer with an initial estimate of the applicant’s suitability for a job and serve as one of the crucial steps on the way to finding successful employment. As a genre, the resume has a particular set of conventions that should be followed by expert job seekers as well as novices. The available research on this genre looks at the resume as a sub-category of the broader genre of promotional literature (Bhatia, 1993; Connor, Davis, & De Rycker, 1995). Its communicative role is to help job-seekers find employment by advertising their skills to prospective employers. Thus the resume is considered to be persuasive in nature and written to advertise one’s skills, abilities, and experience. While there is ample evidence that this premise is true for North American resumes (Bloch, 1989; Krannich & Krannich, 1992; Roper, 1994), existing studies on resumes and cover letters across cultures suggest that there may be important cross-cultural differences in how resumes are written (Pibal, 1998). Moreover, the research on resumes and cover letters written by non-native speakers of English suggest that their degree of persuasiveness often does not match the North American norms and expectations (Bhatia, 1993; Connor, Davis, & De Rycker, 1995).

In light of the current trends of globalization and migration of skilled workers, there is a need to investigate the universality of the communicative purposes of the resume across cultures. It is a well-documented fact that many job seekers experience considerable difficulties while looking for employment internationally (Chiu & Kosinski, 1995; Lee & Westwood, 1996; Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991), including a struggle with understanding and adopting the North American way of presenting themselves when applying for a job in North America (Parker, 1991). These considerations explain why an
awareness of how resumes function across cultures becomes an important research area for this genre (Popken, 1993). There is, however, very limited research available on resumes in general and especially resumes across cultures, and more investigation on the cross-cultural aspects of this genre is necessary. The present study attempts to fill this gap by addressing Research Question 1: What are the communicative purposes of the resume genre? Are they culturally universal?

In order to answer this question, we need to examine the communicative purposes of the resume within the cultural contexts of the genre. The current genre research approaches the communicative purposes of particular genres by exploring genre samples as texts, or finished products. The collected samples are examined for recurrent schematic and linguistic features; this examination is followed by the analysis of the relationship between these features and the communicative purpose of the genre. The cross-cultural genre studies follow the same approach and compare the schematic and linguistic features of the samples produced by non-native speakers to the target model. This approach provides valuable data that allows us to see if and how the schematic and language features of particular genres differ from culture to culture. It is, however, better suited for illuminating the differences and similarities than explaining why the samples of the same genre may vary from culture to culture. Thus one critique of such an approach is that it is text-centered rather than writer-centered (Sawyer & Watson, 1987) and can become prescriptive (Hasan, 1996). A different research perspective—that of a genre as a process, as it is being constructed—may become a useful addition to existing research since it may reveal important considerations about writers as social agents that construct texts to achieve a particular purpose. In this process, they select particular schematic and language features out of a large number of available resources to create meaning (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The second research question of the study is
therefore connected to the issue of genre analysis: How can choice as revealed in insider accounts link genre, communicative purposes, and social and cultural context of a genre?

As noted above, this question requires a different research perspective, that of a genre as a process, as it is being constructed. Accordingly, a further purpose of this thesis is to explore ways of examining the resume genre as a decision-making process. To do this, we will collect the discourse data of sessions where “expert” and “novice” participants from different cultural groups edit resumes. We will then apply a novel approach to the analysis of these sessions as decision-making discourses where different cultural values are in play. Finally, we will suggest that these decision-making discourses illuminate the relation between genres viewed as sites of choice, in the systemic functional tradition, and the sociocultural values which are implicit in communicative purposes and which can vary between different cultures.
CHAPTER 2: THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Genre theories look at genres as social processes that carry historical and cultural associations with them. There has been significant attention to cross-cultural variances of academic genres; other genres, such as that of a resume, have been examined in less detail. Current research in the field, including the research on resumes, investigates cultural context of genres mostly by looking at them as finished products. While such an approach has yielded valuable findings for the field, using “insider accounts”, and especially "unsolicited insider accounts" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) to look at genres as a process can further enrich our understanding of the connection between genres and their sociocultural contexts.

This chapter will begin with a look at current genre theories and situate our research within their framework. We will then continue by briefly reviewing the present state of research on the cultural aspects of genre. This will not involve a detailed review of many studies on the topic since such a review is not necessary for the current argument. It will, however, show the need for investigating a less explored yet important genre of the resume with regard to the question of whether its communicative purpose (Swales, 1990) is universal across cultures.

In order to answer this question, we will need to look more precisely at how genres and social contexts are tied together. We will thus return to the current research on genres across cultures and review it by using a different focus: that of the need for researching genres as a process in addition to investigating them as a product. In order to do so, we will turn to Mohan’s (2000) analysis of the relation of discourse, choice, and social contexts through reasons.

The summary at the end of this chapter will tie together the line of argument we have presented.
Genre as a Sociocultural Process

There has been considerable interest in the genre-based approach to language in the last decade, a state which reflects increasing attention to the interconnection between language and social context. A genre as a text, either spoken or written, serves a particular purpose in a society and is delivered through particular schematic structure and language features. However, Kress (1993) suggests that there is yet to be a “unified theoretical approach” to the term “genre.” This term has acquired distinct meaning across several disciplines, such as education, applied linguistics, literary studies, ethnography of speaking, rhetoric, and folklore studies, as reviewed by Paltridge (1997) and Swales (1990). Even within the same discipline—education—there exists diversity in how genre is understood (Hyon, 1996). Hyon states that there are three distinct genre schools that conceive of genre somewhat differently: the ESP group, the Australian group of genre theory, and the New Rhetorical genre group. The ESP group mostly focuses on second language pedagogy for academic and workplace communities and follows Swales’ (1990) definition of genre as:

a class of communicative events the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of a parent discourse community, and constitute rationale for the genre. Communicative purposes shape the schematic structure of the discourse and influence and constrain choice of content and style, thus determining various degrees of similarity of genre exemplars in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. (p. 38)

The Australian school of genre is based on systemic functional linguistic theory (SFL) as developed by Halliday (1994), Hasan (1996), and Martin (1992). In this framework, language is understood as systemic because it offers systems of language choices which lead to the realization of meaning (Christie, 1999). It is also considered functional since it exists for specific communication purposes, or functions. The Australian school has
developed a complex lexico-grammatical system that has been applied mainly to
classroom settings (Derewianka, 1990; Martin, 1985; Halliday & Martin, 1993). Finally,
the New Rhetoricians take a socially oriented view of genre one step further and argue
that genres are not so much text types with their inherent textual regularities, but typified
actions that happen in response to recurring social contexts (Miller, 1994).

Although these schools differ in their definitions of genre as well as their
approach to analyzing discourse and applying the analysis to various instructional
contexts, they share the same understanding of genres as social processes in which
participants use language features to produce a text, written or spoken, with the goal of
interacting with each other in a certain social setting to achieve desired goals. The central
idea of genre theories is that communication takes place on text level rather than on
sentence level and that text exists within a broader social context that evokes and shapes
particular genres.

It is this understanding of genre as a social process that is particularly important
for the research presented here. While our research is largely based on the SFL
perspective on genres as meaning-making activities, we also borrow terminology from
the ESP approach which describes genres as a class of communicative events driven by a
specific communicative purpose which shapes and influences the genre's schematic
structure, content, style, and language. Specifically, we will appropriate Swales' phrase
"communicative purpose" as a handy term to cover the functional relation of a genre to
its sociocultural context as seen by both the ESP and SFL approaches.

As a social process, genres carry historical and cultural associations with them
(Koike & Biron, 1996). They change over time, depending on the needs of their
Research also suggests that genres may change from culture to culture, although different
studies offer us different findings on the matter, thus generating a great deal of controversy in this area of research (Pak, 1995). Cross-cultural differences within genres, however, would not be surprising, considering that, as Scollon (1997) puts it:

> strong, clear evidence, amply demonstrated across the languages of the world, shows that there are situationally, generically, or stylistically preferred compositional forms and that these are not the same from language to language or from culturally defined situation to culturally defined situation. (p. 353)

The need for research on cross-cultural aspects of individual genres has been stated in the past (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). Its growing importance reflects the increasing use of English as a well-established communication medium in academic and business circles (Crystal, 1987). How do native and nonnative speakers of English construct discourse of a particular genre when communicating in English? Are there differences and what implications might they have? While there has been noticeable attention to these questions with regard to academic genres (Clyne, 1987; Green, Christopher & Lam Kam Mei, 2000; Kubota, 1998; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Moreno, 1997; Precht, 1998), less research has been done on English for Business Purposes.

**Resumes as a Business Genre**

One of the least explored areas in business genres is that of job application letters and resumes (Popken, 1993). Yet resumes and other job-search documents comprise one genre that most people experience as important at some point in their lives. In many countries, a person’s ability to produce a successful sample of this genre can have long-standing consequences, since resumes and cover letters are one of the first steps on the way to finding successful employment. They are designed to attract the attention of hiring personnel and get the applicant shortlisted for an interview, which is the next step on the way to the ultimate goal of the job search: finding employment. Furthermore, with the increasing trend towards globalization and the use of the Internet and World Wide
Web as tools to look for an employment internationally (Pibal, 1998), the ability to understand genre conventions of a job application letter and its cross-cultural variances may soon become an important skill for many employment seekers. It is a well-documented fact that many job seekers experience considerable difficulties while looking for employment internationally (Chiu & Kosinski, 1995; Lee & Westwood, 1996; Westwood & Ishiyama, 1991), including a struggle with understanding and applying the North American way of presenting themselves when applying for a job in North America (Parker, 1991). These considerations explain why the awareness of how resumes function across cultures becomes an important research area for this genre (Popken, 1993).

However, very limited research is available on resumes in general and especially on resumes across cultures. Two studies that look into the cross-cultural applications of this genre, Bhatia (1993) and Connor, Davis, and De Rycker (1995), focussed their research on cover letters. Following Bhatia (1993), Connor and colleagues (1995) considered resumes and job application letters as one specific realization of the larger category of promotional literature, other typical realizations of which include sales promotion letters, different forms of advertisements, company brochures and leaflets of various kinds. The communicative purpose of this category is to promote something; job applicants, in their job application letters and resumes, promote themselves. Thus, the exemplars of this category are persuasive in nature. A job application letter aims to solicit a specific response from its reader, namely, a call for an interview and future employment. Yet according to Bhatia’s and Connor’s research, there are marked differences in the degree of persuasiveness between American, South Asian, and Flemish applicants.
Resumes, belonging to the same genre, constitute an important part of the job application letter, and at the same time exhibit distinct writing conventions that need to be researched in more detail. However, even less published research is available on resumes, and especially on resumes across cultures, with the exception of Pibal’s (1998) study of resumes and cover letters in the United States, Australia, Germany, Thailand, and Hong Kong. Pibal’s study investigated the importance of resume content categories in these countries; her research also showed that there are cross-cultural differences in how different content information is weighted in the five countries. Thus, the available research indicates that a job application letter is one genre that may have meaningful cross-cultural variations. Yet as we have seen, this area has been researched very little and more investigation on the cross-cultural aspects of this genre is necessary. Our first research question attempts to address this area by extending our awareness of how resumes function across cultures and whether the persuasive nature of the genre is retained cross-culturally.

Resume as a Process

In order to address this question, we will first look at other genre studies to see how they have researched the cross-cultural aspects of genres. The above-mentioned studies on job application letters and academic genres mostly offer a similar research design: they investigate certain aspects of the genre’s schematic structure and language features. Connor and colleagues (1995) examined cover letters for correctness (the absence of grammar, spelling, lexical and syntactical mistakes) and clarity (the writer’s overall sense of the writing situation as pertaining to writer, reader, subject, and purpose, as well as the content and organization of his or her message). Pibal (1998) looked at human resources managers’ perception of the importance of such resume components as career objective, education, work experience, personal details, and other areas. Moreno

Such studies provide valuable data that allows us to see if and how the schematic and language features of particular genres differ from culture to culture. They also help define the schematic structure and language features of the North American variance of these genres through contrasting it against other cultural variances. Of equal importance is raising consciousness about the variances that cross-cultural genre studies promote. At the same time, the design of such studies—looking at genres as a finished text, a product—is better suited for exploring one dimension of genres: their linguistic realizations (Sengupta, Forey, & Hamp-Lyons, 1999). Linguistic realizations of the genre include such features as rhetorical moves, content selection and structuring, choice of stages, grammatical and lexical features, and so on. Yet according to the genre theory, genres have two more dimensions: social and communicative. The social aspects refer to the process and production of genres and the role of the social context in constructing meaning. The communicative aspects refer to the purpose and audience. These three dimensions—linguistic, social, and communicative—are interrelated: genres are born because a certain social situation, such as employment process, calls for them. They evolve around certain participants, such as employers and job seekers, and reflect their relationship: Job seekers write a resume to attract the attention of prospective employers. In doing so, they select appropriate linguistic features that are shaped by the communicative purposes of the genre which, in turn, are reflective of the rules and norms of the social context revealed through their use by discourse communities. Genres, then,
need to be seen as a two-way relationship between the text and the broader social and cultural context (Eggin's & Slade, 1997).

Exploring social and communicative aspects of the genre may allow us to see why linguistic realizations of the same genre may differ across cultures. The issue of researching social and communicative aspects has been raised in the field. For example, van Dijk (1994) stressed the necessity of more research that integrates discourse analysis and social, political, and cultural analysis. Bloor (1998) also noted that researchers and practitioners should ultimately have the broadest and deepest understanding of the social context in which the discourse is generated in addition to being familiar with stages and linguistic features attributed to a certain genre, since the investigation of discrete text features is text-centered rather than writer-centered (Sawyer & Watson, 1987) and can be too rigid (Freedman, 1993). By focussing on the linguistic features of the text, genre studies can become prescriptive and lead to the uncritical socialization of language learners into dominant genres (Hasan, 1996). A different research perspective—that of a genre as process, as it is being constructed—may become a useful addition to existing research since it may reveal important considerations about communicative and social aspects of the genre. It may allow us to collect and examine evidence of cultural differences and look into the reasons for their existence.

**Choice, Decision-Making, and Sociocultural Context of Genres**

We now turn to Research Question 2: How can choice as revealed in insider accounts link genre, communicative purposes, and social and cultural context of a genre? Taking a decision-making perspective, this study asks: What choices do resume-writers discuss? How do they justify their choices and what culturally related beliefs and values do they reference? What are the implications of decision-making discourse for evidence
of communicative purpose in genres and for the functional analysis of discourse in social and cultural context?

This question only recently received close attention in the literature of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), so for review of the literature on this question we will draw extensively upon Mohan's unpublished manuscript "Discourse of Decisions." Mohan aligns choice as it is seen in a SFL view of discourse and as it is interpreted in social theory. His argument is that choice can be seen to mediate between a genre and its socio-cultural context. In particular, if we see choice as reasoned choice, we can interpret decision-making discussions as evidence of the socio-cultural context of beliefs and values surrounding a genre. To show this, Mohan takes us through three steps. He begins by drawing upon the doctoral thesis of Mickan (1999) to illustrate how choice and decision-making are a part of constructing texts (and genre). Mohan then discusses the idea of choice in SFL in more detail, raising the issue of reasons for choice. Finally, Mohan poses a question of interrelationship between choice and social and cultural context and suggests that choice and practical reasoning mediate between action and social structure.

Mohan demonstrates the role that choice plays in constructing discourse by discussing the findings of Mickan's (1999) Ph.D thesis. Mickan studied high school English-speaking students as they wrote in German. The data that he used in his study were: (1) researcher's observational notes; (2) the writers' "think-alouds" of their composing actions as they wrote; and (3) the writers' texts. Mickan made particular use of the writers' think-alouds and texts; he showed how the writer's think-alouds and texts could be specifically related through SFL analysis. Following the SFL view of writing, Mickan argued that constructing texts is a meaning-making activity "in which the realisation of meaning is a deliberative process in which writers choose appropriate
elements from the language system for the composition of particular text types or
genres" (1999, v). In other words, writers are making decisions between alternative
choices in systems and deliberating about these choices. When writers talk aloud, they
talk about the decisions they are making.

Mohan then further elaborates on Mickan's argument to show how decision-making can be connected to the specifics of discourse. He states that creating meaning is both a process of meaningful choice (Eggins, 1994) and a process of problem-solving/decision-making (Brandt 1992, Flower 1994). Choice and decision-making are linked through the specifics of discourse since in writing text writers deliberate about particular elements that they need to choose from the language system in order to compose a particular text type, or genre. Evidence of this deliberative process can be found by studying writing think-alouds (Mickan 1999: 169), or any discourse that captures the process of making meaning while creating text.

Mohan then turns to reviewing the role of choice in SFL. In SFL text is seen both as product and process, and process has a particularly strong relation to choice:

The text is a product in the sense that it is an output, something that can be recorded and studied, having a certain construction that can be represented in systematic terms. It is a process in the sense of a continuous process of semantic choice, a movement through the network of meaning potential, with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set. (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p.10)

Mohan notes that the concept of choice is ambiguous, in product-process fashion, between the options chosen and the decision-making process of choosing, which poses the following question: Does choice cover (A) only, or (A + B), as follows:

Choice:

(A) options chosen;

(A + B) options chosen on the basis of reasons.
Mohan notes that, while this analysis ignores arbitrary or random choice, arbitrary choice is not meaningful choice in the SFL sense mentioned above.

If we include reasons as a part of presenting a certain choice, we now have a research methods issue: What evidence is appropriate for (A) and what evidence is appropriate for (A+B)? Having posed this question, Mohan discusses the appropriate evidence for the two ways of looking at choice:

In the case of (A), it would be appropriate to provide analysis of genre examples to show options which were chosen (or available for choice). However, while the analysis of genre examples, such as resumes, shows the options chosen, it supplies no direct evidence of reasons and decision-making.

In the case of (A+B), it would be appropriate to provide analysis of discourses of processes of semantic choice surrounding a genre. (Mohan, 2000, p.3)

As our study will show in the Discussion chapter, a standard Japanese resume has a section for family information while a North American resume does not. If we analyze examples of North American and Japanese resumes, we will see these two different options; but looking at examples alone will not help us see why the different options exist. We will need to research the discourse of people composing a resume to understand the reasons behind choosing one option over the other. Alternatively, we can find out what these reasons may be by interviewing resume-writers after they have composed their resumes.

The next related issue that Mohan raises is the discourse analysis issue for (A+B): How do we analyze the discourse of composing a genre as the discourse of choice, or decision-making discourse? Mohan suggests that, since the decision-making discourse of creating a genre is important evidence for the genre itself, it seems only consistent to provide an adequate analysis of the decision-making discourse as well.

The third issue raised in Mohan’s manuscript is an analysis representation issue for the (A+B) case: Should the description of a genre be limited to current
representations of genre or should something else be added? Current representations of a genre, such as accounts of a genre's structure, do not show reasons for options and do not explicitly show links to cultural values, for instance. Should genres then be represented as (A) a set of options; or (A+B) options plus reasons?

Mohan continues his argument by exploring the role of choice and decision-making discourse for the functional analysis of genres in social and cultural context (i.e., for evidence of communicative purpose in genres). He states that within SFL genres are clearly seen to be related to social and cultural context and uses quotations from several researchers to illustrate this point. Kress and Threadgold (1988) argued that the notion of genre provides "an interface between the socio-cultural world and textual form" (p. 216) and also offers the opportunity for "describing ways in which texts and the social agents which produce them construct and are constructed by the social and the cultural" (p.216). For Martin, "ideology is realised by genre, which is in turn realised by register" (1993, p.37). Mohan notes that Swales' position can be read in a similar way, although Swales would not subscribe to SFL. For Swales, communicative purposes shape the schematic structure of discourse and constrain the choice of content and style and these purposes are recognized by expert members of the discourse community. For all of these scholars the questions arise: How do we provide evidence of the purposes of a genre? What kinds of evidence are there of the relation between the sociocultural world and a genre? What kinds of analysis are there of the link between the sociocultural world and a genre?

Mohan suggests that answers to these questions need to draw upon evidence of the perspective of members of the discourse community using the genre. He draws a distinction between his position and that of Eggins and Martin by discussing the following quotation from Eggins and Slade (1997):
Eggins and Martin... have defined genre as 'a theory of the unfolding structure texts work through to achieve their social purposes'. Genres are enacted as texts, and as texts have different purposes in the culture, texts of different genres will unfold in different ways, or work through different stages or steps. Martin refers to the overall staging patterns of texts as the schematic structures. These patternings are a realisation of the overall purpose of the text. (pp.56-57).

While Mohan agrees that genre structure is a realization of genre purpose, he also notes that it is not adequate evidence of genre purpose, or a sufficient account of genre purpose. Noting genre structure will not tell us about conflicting purposes or distinguish between those elements of a genre that are connected with deeply held values and those that are not. It is a deeper understanding of purpose that can lead to a deeper social explanation of genres. However, providing more adequate evidence of purpose makes, as Mohan notes, a major difference in genre research methodology, for we have to collect examples of a genre and, in addition, examples of talk or writing about the genre. Text examples of genres are valuable, but researchers should also take into consideration insider accounts. Ethnographic interviews can provide solicited insider accounts, but unsolicited insider accounts are often of particular value:

in everyday life people continually provide linguistic accounts to each other...Such talk occurs most notably when some kind of misalignment is perceived between values, rules, or normal expectations and the actual course of events...The resulting accounts may be concerned with remedying the discrepancy, or with finding some explanation for it. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.107-8)

Such accounts are not treated as automatically valid: "rather, all accounts must be examined as social phenomena occurring in, and shaped by, particular contexts" (ibid. 126).

Mohan uses Eggins's (1994) four main claims of SFL to position the question he raises in his manuscript. Eggins distinguishes between the following claims:

that language is functional; that its function is to make meanings; that these meanings are influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which they are
exchanged; and that the process of using language is a semiotic process, a process of making meanings by choosing. (p.2)

Mohan positions his question as connecting the relation between the third claim, that meanings are influenced by social and cultural contexts, and the fourth claim, that using language is a process of making meanings by choosing. To show how choice is related to social and cultural context, Mohan draws upon the context of social science. In social science, this relation can be seen as a question about the relation of human action and social structure. In a standard social science view, choice and practical reasoning mediate between action and social structure. Mohan relates it to genre in the following way: when two people construct an example of a genre together, as when they jointly write a resume, they are acting socially. Their actions relate to social structure (i.e., the social and cultural context). When they choose and reason about their choices together, they provide unsolicited insider accounts of their actions.

Mohan continues by explaining the principles expressed in a basic map of the views of the relation of individual human action and social structure, offered by Hollis (1994, p.19) in his introduction to the philosophy of social science:

Table 2.1: Human Action and Social Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holism</td>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Holism* is the view that emphasises the understanding of societies more than individuals. It attempts to account for human action by reference to movement in the social structure and looks at society "from the top down". *Individualism* is the contrasting view that takes the actions of individuals as central and regards social structure as the outcome of previous actions. It looks at society "from the bottom up." Each view captures an aspect of the dialectic relation of action and structure. *Explanation* refers to the tradition that believes that a single scientific method will serve for all sciences, while *Understanding* refers to the rival
tradition that aims at an interpretive or hermeneutic social science that holds that the social world must be interpreted from within and emphasises the perspective of the social actor. *Explanation* and *Understanding* give us two different ways of viewing human action. The 'agents and systems' view, a characteristically economic model, "reconstructs action as instrumentally rational choice by a self-contained individual unit, with any normative or expressive elements fed in as influences on the payoffs as perceived by the agent" (Hollis, 1994, p.256). This view explicitly incorporates choice, with norms and other social elements entering through reasoning about payoffs. The 'actors and games' view, a characteristically sociological model, "reconstructs action as intelligent obedience to the rules of the game being played, in a sense of 'game' which makes the players no longer self-contained" (Hollis, 1994, p. 256). 'Games' here covers rules, social practices, and 'forms of life'. This view explicitly incorporates social elements through the notion of 'game', but the notion of choice is also implicit in it, even on a rule-following metaphor: "Obedient rule-followers need not be mechanical rule-followers... obedient rule-followers not only know how to go on but also decide to go on. They have a power to interpret individually, and still more, collectively, which is a power to construct... Even if rules come with reasons for action built into them, these reasons underdetermine rational choices" (ibid: 184-5).

Thus both views relate human action to social structure through choice. (Mohan, 2000, p.5)

Mohan notes that, looked at in more detail, the relation of human action to social structure is shown in both views through the process of practical reasoning, though the theory of practical reasoning differs between the views:

Actions are practical conclusions drawn from intentions and beliefs; 'actions' and 'rationality' are interrelated... Aristotle, in his Nichomachean Ethics, saw the rationality of an action as lying in the conclusion with leads from intentions or norms and from assessments of the situation and of the available means to immediate consequences in terms of action. (Brunkhorst, 1993, p.1).

Mohan (1974, 1976) provides analyses of the application of practical reasoning to discourse.

Mohan (2000) concludes that from a social science viewpoint a connection between action and social structure is made available when persons engage in choice and practical reasoning about what to do. This implies that decision-making discourse, when two or more persons discuss decisions together, may be an important source of evidence for this connection through unsolicited insider accounts.
As we can see, Mohan’s main argument is that choice can be seen to mediate between a genre and its sociocultural context. In particular, if we see choice as reasoned choice, we can interpret decision-making discussions as evidence of the sociocultural context of beliefs and values surrounding a genre, and as a source of insider accounts. When two people cooperate to write, they are writing in a sociocultural context, and their discussions can be a window on that context. Mickan’s work on think-alouds suggests how talk about the writing process can point "inwards" towards the language choices made in a piece of writing. Mohan is saying that talk about the writing process can also point "outwards" towards the social context, through the reasons and accounts that participants give to explain their choices.

Summary

Genres as social practices carry cultural associations with them. However, current studies on genres across cultures differ in their findings on whether genres vary across cultural contexts. One of the less explored genres is that of a resume, which is assumed to fall into the broader genre of promotional literature. Yet available research on the job application genre suggests that job application letters differ across cultures in their degree of persuasiveness. If we look at a wider range of evidence, we may be better able to see whether the communicative purpose of the resume is universal across cultures.

Current research in the field, including the research on resumes, investigates the cultural context of genres largely by looking at genres as fixed entities, or products. Such an approach has its undeniable value in showing how linguistic realizations of a genre may vary across cultures. At the same time, it is less suited for exploring the connection between texts, their sociocultural contexts, and their communicative purposes. Understanding such a connection can be enriched by looking at it through the discourse of writers as social agents who construct texts. Specifically, understanding can be
enriched by looking at discussions by writers who are engaged in composing a genre. When writers engaged in a genre discuss what they are doing, their discussions can provide insider accounts of the sociocultural aspects of a genre. This is a familiar idea within qualitative research, but it can be given greater theoretical depth within SFL.

The SFL approach to language as a resource for meaning provides us with a principled approach for researching the connection between genres and their social contexts. In this approach, text is seen as making meaning through selecting appropriate language resources. Such selection implies choosing between the available options. Yet the concept of choice also implies reasons and decision-making.

Social theory provides us with another tool for looking at genres and their surrounding social contexts: that of the relation of human action to social structure. From a social science viewpoint, a connection between action and social structure is made available when persons engage in choice and practical reasoning on what to do. Such reasoning allows them to make choices on the basis of reasons which are in turn reflective of the beliefs and values of these persons as social agents. Thus, reasons can play an important role in the analysis of genres. To understand why a person makes a certain decision, we have to look into the underlying reasons, which in turn may allow us to see the interrelationship of social context and human activity.

Constructing a genre, including the resume, is a human action; it exists because a certain social situation, such as an employment process, calls for it and provides it with a communicative purpose to carry out. Social agents, or participants, recognize such a purpose and create texts, or exemplars of a particular genre, by choosing language features that are best suited to realize the communicative purpose of the genre. In doing so they engage in a decision-making process that is based on their social values and beliefs. Thus, we can research the social aspects of the genre by analyzing the decisions
that writers make while creating texts. Such an analysis need not be solely based on genres as a product; it can draw on writers’ accounts on why and how they make certain decisions while constructing texts.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The study presented here deals with people's reasons for choices in writing resumes, the connection of these reasons to the communicative purposes of the resume across cultures, and to the relation of the sociocultural environment to the communicative purposes of the genre. Thus it is carried out as qualitative research since, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) inform us:

qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality...they seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of casual relationship between variables, not processes. (p. 4)

Furthermore, the topic under investigation—genre—requires dealing with people's words; therefore, the data used for the study is mostly discourse. In this chapter, we will first look into the qualitative methods that our research employs and describe the data collection procedure. The chapter will continue with a description of the discourse analysis techniques which were used to examine the data.

Part 1: Methods and Procedure

The study uses two basic qualitative methods: observations and insider accounts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Since the research undertaken here is concerned with genre, observations are mostly understood in terms of examining genre samples provided by the participants. The insider accounts, according to Hammersley and Atkinson, fall into two categories: They can be solicited or unsolicited. A typical example of a solicited insider account is an interview in which the researcher pursues a line of questions connected to the research focus of the study. With unsolicited accounts, the researcher collects a naturally occurring discourse where the participants engaged in a certain activity discuss that activity.
As we have seen from the literature review, the existing genre studies mostly use observations of the genre samples as finished products where the researcher examines the samples and interprets the findings. Insider accounts, on the other hand, are used to a lesser extent. Such accounts, however, may provide us with a valuable perspective on why people make certain choices and illuminate the connection between choices and the sociocultural aspects of a genre. Thus, our study will make wide use of insider accounts, solicited as well as unsolicited. Unsolicited accounts in particular will be used as the primarily research method, since such accounts allow us to see how people construct meaning while writing resumes and how they select appropriate resources in this process.

In addition to the insider accounts, the study will also make limited use of observations of the participants' resume samples. The design of the study, therefore, follows a multi-method approach which includes unsolicited insider accounts (the discourse of the resume-editing sessions), solicited insider accounts (the discourse of interviews), and observations (the examination of the participants' resume samples). Using three sources of data will help the researcher avoid relying on initial impressions as well as help in correcting the researcher biases, which Goetz and LeCompte (1984) list as possible pitfalls in conducting qualitative research.

**Unsolicited Insider Accounts: Resume-Editing Sessions**

While looking at samples of the resume genre allows us to notice discrepancies, if any, between a particular sample and what we see as the resume-writing norm, such a research technique may be less suited to show us what is involved in writing a resume and why such discrepancies may occur. We felt that the accounts of the resume discourse community members as they engaged in writing resumes would offer insights into the process of writing, with its inherent choices and decisions, and suggest why and how certain resources are selected and certain norms exist.
Since our Research Question 1 was concerned with the universality of the communicative purposes of the resume across cultures, we chose to look into the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds as they are working together. This can be contrasted with think-alouds (see Mickan, 1999): Instead of one writer talking aloud while writing a resume, we chose to audio-record a naturally occurring discourse of two people collaborating to edit a resume. Since almost all research literature on resume genre is based on North American resumes, we chose the North American resume as a variance against which the resume-writing practices of other cultural groups were to be projected. Our goal was to see whether the practices of other cultural groups would conform to or differ from the resume-writing traditions of North America. It should be noted that while for the purposes of this study the North American resume is considered as one homogenous category, there exist various differences within this group. Some considerations, such as American versus Canadian resumes and business resumes versus academic resumes, are described in the Limitations section of the Conclusions chapter. The other two cultural groups involved in the research were Russian and Japanese participants. They are described in more detail in the Participants section of this chapter. The selection of these particular cultural groups was based on the researcher’s degree of familiarity with the resume-writing practices in these countries, a factor that could play a role in the research. This consideration is explained in more detail in the Researcher section of this chapter.

In the editing sessions, the North American participants were expert members of the North American resume-writing discourse community who were coaching their partners (apprentices) as to how their resumes needed to be adjusted to ensure a successful employment search in North America. Our assumption was that such editing sessions would allow the participants to explain their choices in selecting appropriate
language and other resources when writing resumes and thus allow us to see how the participants expressed the communicative purpose of the genre in their resumes.

The editing sessions ranged from one hour to two-and-a-half hours in length, depending on the amount of editing the resumes needed. During the sessions, the North American participants (NAPs) typically spent a few minutes reading their partner's resume and then offered editing suggestions. The Japanese participants (JPs) or the Russian participants (RPs) responded to the suggestions by either accepting, declining, or negotiating them. The researcher informed the participants at the beginning of the session that she would only observe and take notes during the editing session. The flow of the session was fully dependent on where the participants felt they needed to take it. The role that the researcher played in the editing sessions minimized the risk of the researcher influencing the group interaction in an attempt to keep the session focussed (Morgan, 1997). The notes that the researcher took during the editing session followed the general direction of the session. Some of the questions asked in the interviews which followed the editing sessions were based on these notes.

The sessions were audio-recorded and then transcribed for analysis. No pre-instruction was done for either participant in the pair. The NAPs were told that they would be helping a JP or RP with the editing of their resumes to make them work for the North American job market. Each JP or RP was asked to bring the latest version of his or her resume to the session.

Solicited Insider Accounts: Interviews

The interviews were the second source of the data in the study. This source presented us with solicited insider accounts in which the participants answered the researcher's questions about their joint resume-editing session, their resume-writing experiences in North America and their countries of origin, and the general job search
practices of their cultures. The interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to just under an hour. Both participants from each editing session where interviewed at the same time; the participants were encouraged to ask each other questions that interested them with regard to the resume-writing and job-search practices of their partners. Most JPs and RPs took this opportunity to ask their North American partners about job searches and hiring in North America. The interviews were mostly centered around general job search techniques that included but were not limited to resumes.

In this sense, the interviews used in the study were focus groups, as Morgan (1997) describes them:

Focus groups are basically group interviews...based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes the role of moderator. The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. (p. 2)

According to Denzin (1989) and Morgan (1997), there are three principal uses for focus groups. As a data collection method, they can be used as the principal source of data, as supplementary resources used in conjunction with the primary resource that lies elsewhere, and as one of several means of data collection. In this study, the focus groups were used as a secondary method of data collection, following the resume-editing sessions. They were used to clarify and expand on some of the topics broached during the editing sessions. They also allowed the placing of resume-writing in a broader field of job search.

The interviews were semi-structured (Bernard, 1994; Fontana & Frey, 1994). The researcher had an interview guide which started with questions of a general nature:

- How do you look for a job in (North America, Russia, Japan)?
- Do you use a resume?
- Are resumes important in the job search in your country?
• What is important when you look for a job in your country?
• In your opinion, are resumes different in Japan/Russia and North America?
• What do you find different?

The researcher then proceeded to ask more specific questions based on the notes she had taken during the editing session, such as:
• When you said that there are no resumes in Russia, what did you mean?
• You said that family information is important in a Japanese resume. Could you tell us more about this?
• Did you find writing a North American resume easy or difficult?
  Why was it easy/difficult?

This part of the interview differed from one interview to another according to the issues brought up in the editing sessions. The interviews were also audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Observations

The final data source in the study were observations of the participants’ resumes and other resume-writing materials that they brought with them to the sessions. This method was used to a small extent to support the findings of the editing sessions and the interviews. The resumes that the JPs and RPs brought to the editing sessions were scanned to mark the areas which instigated rewriting suggestions offered by the NAPs. The original resumes were then compared to the edited resumes that resulted from the sessions. These observations were used as a supporting argument in the process of analyzing the discourse of the editing sessions and interviews.

Other materials that the participants brought to the sessions included traditional Japanese resume forms and job search materials used in Japan. These materials were later used to support the information about the general job search culture in Japan as it
was described by the Japanese participants during the interviews and editing sessions. No additional materials were provided by the North American participants or the Russian participants.

The data collection methods are visualized in Figure 3.1:

**Figure 3.1: Data collection design**

![Diagram](image)

**The Participants**

To limit the study to a manageable focus, we chose three resume-writing cultures: North American, Japanese, and Russian. Altogether, there were 24 participants who volunteered to take part in the study (see Table 3.1): 12 North American participants, six Japanese participants, and six Russian participants. Out of these 24 participants, 12 were males and 12 were females. The one criterion for selection was for the participants to have enough resume-writing and working experience in their own countries to qualify as members of their respective discourse communities. Their degree of expertise, however, varied: The youngest participant, a 20-year-old Japanese exchange student, only had six months of working experience while the oldest participant, a 43-year-old Russian immigrant to Canada, had worked for close to 20 years. The average working experience of the participants was 8.3 years.

In addition to having working experience in their own countries, 12 out of 24 participants had also worked internationally. Out of these 12 participants, six were
NAPs, with an average of 2.4 years that they had spent working abroad. Five out of these participants gained their international work experience primarily in Japan, ranging from one to seven years. For the JPs and RPs, the international working experience mostly came from North America: Three JPs had worked in Canada with an average of 3.1 years, while two RPs held previous employment, also in Canada, for five and two years respectively. In addition, one RP also worked in Japan for 18 months. Another factor that played a role in the participants' familiarity with the North American resume-writing practices was their length of residence in North America which ranged from just a few months to six years, with an average of 2.4 years. Some participants were complete beginners, with no job-search experience in North America and no resume-writing experience. On the other end of the spectrum were the non-NAPs who were quite advanced in their knowledge of the North American resume-writing, having successfully worked in North America for close to five years. At the same time, they all considered themselves apprentices rather than experienced members of the North American discourse community, as evidenced by their eager response to the research as an opportunity to improve their resumes. Their motivation, however, was different. Some of them were Canadian landed immigrants, professionals in their fields who had gone through a long and unsuccessful period of looking for employment. Others were graduate students preparing to enter a North American workplace. Others were planning to return to their own country but wanted to know how to write a North American resume in case they ever wanted to apply for an employment with a North American company.
Table 3.1: The participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Working experience in own country (yrs)</th>
<th>Working experience in North America (yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North American</td>
<td>24—39</td>
<td>M: 7</td>
<td>4—20</td>
<td>(same)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F: 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>20—34</td>
<td>M: 2</td>
<td>0.5—8</td>
<td>0—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>27—43</td>
<td>M: 3</td>
<td>2—15</td>
<td>0—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F: 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While adding the richness of the participants’ multiple perspectives to the study, such diversity also had limitations which may have influenced the findings of the study. These constraints are discussed in the Limitations section of the Conclusions chapter.

The Researcher

The researcher’s position in the study provided both advantages and disadvantages in collecting and analyzing the data. If we extend van Lier’s (1989) description of the ethnographer to qualitative research in general, the qualitative researcher “walks a fine line between naïve observation and externally imposed interpretation” (1989, p.43). In this study, the researcher was familiar with both Russian and North American job search norms and conventions. While this familiarity could be used to verify the data and add another layer to the data analysis, it could also prompt the researcher to attach her subjective interpretations to the data analysis and inadvertently provide a bias during the data collection sessions. Such a possibility, however, was mitigated by the fact that the researcher had no prior knowledge of the job search process and resume writing in Japan and could neither confirm the themes that were coming out of the data analysis nor interpret them according to her preexisting knowledge. Yet the
data collected during the JPs/ NAPs editing sessions were consistent with the interaction during the RPs/ NAPs sessions, which allowed the researcher to draw parallels between the two groups and use her knowledge of the cross-cultural differences in resume writing to further benefit the study.

**Part 2: Discourse Analysis**

After the editing sessions and interviews were transcribed, they were examined using discourse analysis. Two types of discourse analysis were employed in the study: informal and formal. In this part, we will look at the two types of discourse analysis as they pertain to the study.

**Informal Discourse Analysis**

A standard qualitative procedure of discourse analysis was used for both interviews and editing sessions. The transcripts were analyzed for broad themes that were then divided into several categories (Sanjek, 1996). The analysis of the interviews was based entirely on informal discourse analysis. The data were analyzed to establish how the job search was conducted in the three countries and what role the resume played in this process. These themes were used to provide the background and supporting evidence for presenting the main part of the data analysis, that of the editing sessions.

The transcripts were also examined for possible explanations of the participants’ editing decisions, since such explanations often surfaced in the interviews as the participants were answering the researcher’s questions based on the notes taken during the editing sessions.

The editing sessions were analyzed using both informal and formal discourse analysis. On a broader level, the researcher looked for the recurrent themes which were labeled according to the areas that the NAPs’ suggestions fell into. There were three broad themes: resume layout, content, and language. Each of the broad themes was then
divided into sub-categories; for example, the layout themes included the categories of bullet use, spacing between the lines, use of fonts, and others. Simple counts were then used to see how many suggestions fell into each sub-category. The participants' interactions within each theme were then analyzed by using formal discourse analysis.

**Formal Discourse Analysis**

At a detailed level, the editing sessions raised a novel problem for the analysis of discourse. Since one of the assumptions of the study was that investigating how people engage in making choices would provide a valuable addition to looking at the finished products—in our case, resumes—we needed to coordinate the analysis of insider accounts with the analysis of observations. Systemic Functional Linguistics analysis has provided the most detailed analysis of the texts of a genre in terms of the choices selected by the writer. To match this concept of choices in the finished texts, we scanned the editing sessions for episodes of decision-making that led to the choices shown in the finished resumes. We then analyzed these episodes as the discourse of decision-making or choice. In doing so, we drew on Mohan's (2000) framework for the formal analysis of decision-making discourse. Mohan aligns a knowledge structure of decision-making or choice with Slade and Eggins' (1997, Ch. 5) description of the discourse structure of casual conversation (negotiating support and confrontation) to arrive at a three-part model for a formal decision-making discourse analysis. The following description of the framework is based on Mohan's unpublished manuscript "Discourse of Decisions."

Mohan starts his explanation of the framework by providing an example of group decision-making which he analyzes as a case of choice/decision-making and as a knowledge structure. This example is then used to explain how Eggins and Slade's (1997) analysis of casual conversation as interaction can be aligned with the
choice/decision-making knowledge structure to arrive at a three-part formal discourse analysis framework for choice/decision-making discourse.

The example of group decision-making comes from N. Poliakoff's (1994) data which she used in her UBC M.A. thesis. It is a shortened dialogue from a group in a writing class who are deciding whether to revise the title of a jointly written story. In the dialogue, R sets the stage for the discussion of the title. S1 proposes that the current title stay the same and no action be taken. S3 offers a reason against the current title, and R. offers a reason for the current title. Then S2 rejects the current title.

(1) R: So, now we have to discuss the...Is the title OK?
(2) S1: Title's OK? “Drunk Man”?
(3) S3: But finally he not drunk.
(4) R: But when I started the story he was drunk.
(5) S2: I don’t know...for me “The Drunk Man” is not quite suitable with your composition.

Mohan (2000, p.12) analyzes this dialogue as an example of decision-making discourse which includes choices, reasons that explain why certain choices are proposed, and response to the proposals:

**Table 3.2: The formal analysis of decision-making discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHOICE/PROPOSAL</th>
<th>REASONS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) R. Is the title OK?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) S1: Title's OK? &quot;Drunk Man&quot;?</td>
<td>(3) S3: But finally he not drunk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4) R: But when I started the story he was drunk.</td>
<td>(5) S2: I don’t know...for me “The Drunk Man” is not quite suitable with your composition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mohan uses the provided example as a bridge that shows the reader how the discourse of choice/decision-making is aligned with choice/decision-making as a knowledge structure. To show the connection, Mohan uses the analysis of the discourse structure of casual conversation as interaction given in Chapter 5 of Eggins and Slade (1997), which is summarized in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Speech roles and commodities in interaction.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Role</th>
<th>Commodity Exchanged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 (Slade & Eggins, p. 181) is based on Halliday (1994, p.69). Halliday views dialogue as a process of exchange involving two variables:

1. A commodity to be exchanged: either information or goods and services.
2. Roles associated with exchange relations: either giving or demanding.

Mohan notes that there are important differences between knowledge structure analysis and interaction analysis:

When we analyse choice/decision-making as a knowledge structure:
(a) we are strongly concerned with the commodity to be exchanged. i.e. we analyze the semantics of the decision that is being constructed. Our focus is the decision being made.
(b) we put questions of role relations in the background.

By contrast, Slade and Eggins:
(a) allow for semantic relations in general but are not strongly concerned with particular semantic structures.
(c) focus on the role relations associated with exchange relations. (Mohan, 2000, p.14)
Mohan follows by discussing another notion that Eggins and Slade (1997, p.183) use to analyze the discourse of casual conversation as interaction: speech function pairs:

### Table 3.4: Speech function pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiating speech functions</th>
<th>Responding speech functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4 is adapted by Eggins and Slade from Halliday (1994, p.69). It shows the four basic speech functions of English (offer, command, statement and question) and the basic speech functions which respond to them. For example, a speaker makes an offer and a listener is called on to respond if they want to interact. Offers and commands give or demand goods and services; statement and questions give or demand information.

Mohan aligns these speech functions with the decision-making knowledge structure by suggesting that if we take the most basic case of choice/decision-making as where people are deciding what to do, we can take offers and commands and their responses as a basic model of choice. A speaker makes an offer or command, thus proposing a choice (i.e. an action), and a listener accepts/complies or rejects/refuses. In the process of this little interactive exchange, a choice has been accepted or rejected.

Mohan is particularly interested in choices where speaker and hearer discuss reasons and other considerations that enter into their decision. He therefore expands this basic model by adding the reasons that the speaker and hearer bring to bear on the
proposed action. The three-part model that results—choice/proposal, reasons, response—is the model that Mohan initially uses to analyze N.Poliakoff’s (1994) example of group decision-making.

Mohan continues by relating the three-part model to Eggins and Slades’ overview of the speech function network (1997, p.192):

Table 3.5: Overview of speech function network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. move</th>
<th>1.1 OPEN</th>
<th>1.2 sustain</th>
<th>1.2.1 CONTINUE</th>
<th>1.2.2 react</th>
<th>1.2.2.1 RESPOND</th>
<th>1.2.2.2 rejoinder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Mohan’s comparison of the decision-making three-part model and the overview of the speech function network shows how the three-part model relates to interaction:

The CHOICE/PROPOSAL is set up by an offer or command, which would be an OPENING move for Slade and Eggins. REASONS would often be a kind of CONTINUING move, particularly where a speaker adds to their contribution by enhancement, where “a move qualifies or modifies the information in an immediately prior move by providing temporal, spatial, causal or conditional detail” (Slade & Eggins, 1997, p.198). REASONS would provide causal or conditional detail which offers a reason for (or against) the choice/proposal. They could be made explicit by conjunctions such as “because”, “so that”, but not necessarily so. RESPONSE would typically be a RESPOND move, which moves the exchange towards completion, as when a listener accepts or rejects an offer. (Mohan, 2000, p.16)

Mohan notes that the focus of his analysis is different from Eggins and Slade’s. While Eggins and Slade are concerned to explore the speaker and hearer roles associated with exchange relations, Mohan is interested in all proposals for action, such as joint action, and not just those which call for action by the listener alone. His framework is concerned with all reasons discussed, regardless of whether a reason was offered by the person who set up the choice/proposal, or by the listener. Additional considerations for
Mohan's framework are whether a choice was accepted or rejected, whether it was accepted jointly or just by the listener.

Mohan notes that his three-part model is very broad and should be understood to cover all sorts of finer detail. As ways of setting up the proposal, offer and command should be understood to cover all variants of speech function, including proposing, recommending, advising or suggesting. Reasons should be understood to include all further complexities such as reasons for and against reasons and so on. Response should be understood to cover all variants of accepting or rejecting, plus ways of putting off the decision. Thus in the initial dialogue that Mohan analyzes, (5) is treated as a Response rather than a Reason. S2 rejects the title by saying it is not suitable, but does not say why it is not suitable:

(2) S2: I don't know...for me “The Drunk Man” is not quite suitable with your composition.

Mohan then returns to Eggins and Slade's analysis of speech roles and commodities in interaction to suggest that a number of subcategories provided in Table 3.3 serve as helpful reminders of the complexity that underlies the three-part model of choice/decision-making. One point of Eggins and Slade's analysis, in particular, also applies to Mohan's framework: Moves in discourse do not necessarily appear in their most explicit and "congruent" form, and the analyst must take this into account. The CHOICE/PROPOSAL is not necessarily set up by offer and command (and their more straightforward variants). Mohan provides the following example from the analyzed dialogue:

S1: Title's OK? “Drunk Man”?
S1 does not use a form of command/request, such as “Let us keep the title as it is”. S1 uses a statement, which is not straightforward, explicit and congruent. Nevertheless, in
the context of a discussion of revising the title, it can be read as a proposal to the group that the title be unchanged.

Mohan’s analysis of choice/decision-making discourse provides us with the formal discourse analysis framework to investigate the discourse of the resume-editing sessions. These sessions were in essence a conversation interaction which involved decision-making. In the editing sessions, the NAPs provided editing suggestions which fall into Halliday’s (1994) category of Goods-and-Services: They were offering advice and therefore carried out the giving speech role. They initiated the exchange by offering their suggestions which were in turn accepted, declined, or negotiated by the JPs and RPs. The JPs and RPs were in the responding role. In the speech function network, the NAPs offered an opening move of proposing an editing option. The interaction then continued by exchanging reasons for or against different editing options. Finally, the response was presented as a choice based on the evaluation of the reasons that the participants provided for their editing options. We also regard postponing decision as a possible response. Thus, the three-part model of the decision-making discourse allows us to analyze the editing sessions with regard to the instances of decision-making and choice:

**Figure 3.2: A model for the analysis of the decision-making discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This model is used in the *Discussion* chapter to analyze the discourse of the editing sessions for the episodes of decision-making.
Summary

The present study uses three qualitative methods to collect the data: unsolicited insider accounts (editing sessions), solicited insider accounts (interviews), and observations of the resumes and other resume-writing materials. Three groups of participants were involved in the study: a North American group, a Japanese group, and a Russian group. The editing sessions and the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The resulting discourse was analyzed using formal and informal discourse analysis. The informal discourse analysis was used to find broad themes in the interviews and the editing sessions. These themes were labeled and further divided into sub-categories which were later used to provide the background information on how the job search is conducted in the three countries and what role resumes play in this process. The interaction regarding the themes that arose from the editing sessions—those of the resume layout, content, and language—was then analyzed for the decision-making episodes using formal discourse analysis. The observation data were used to supplement the findings of the discourse analysis.
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The data presented in this chapter surface from the analysis of the discourse samples collected during the resume editing sessions and interviews which followed them. The participants' resumes and other job-search materials that they brought with them to the sessions are used to support the findings of the discourse analysis. The chapter is divided into three parts. First, we will present the reader with the general context of the job-search cultures in North America, Japan and Russia and establish the role that resumes play in these counties. To do so, Part I will use the participants' accounts collected during the interviews as well as the participants' resumes and other job-search materials that they provided. We will then use this context as a background against which the main part of the analysis—the participants' resume-editing choices as a decision-making activity—will be projected to interpret the participants' reasons for certain choices. We will use the analysis of participants' decisions to examine the cross-cultural universality of the resume's communicative purpose. We will also examine the participants' choices and especially the reasons that they reference for their decisions to see whether choice links communicative purposes to genres and whether it provides us with a useful means for genre analysis. Part II will be based mostly on the interaction between the participants during the editing sessions. Finally, Part III will return the reader to the interviews and use the participants' voices one more time to summarize the major themes of this chapter.

Part 1: Resumes in the Three Cultures

In this part, we will look at the resumes in North America, Japan, and Russia, and determine how the resume genre is used in the respective discourse communities of these three cultures. We will do so by applying informal discourse analysis to the accounts which the participants provided during the interviews. In this analysis, we will look for
the themes that repeatedly surfaced in the participants’ stories. We will also use our observations of the participants’ resumes and other job-search materials to further illustrate the themes.

**Resumes in North America**

Resumes are used extensively in employment searches in North America. They present a concise summary of one’s employment history, education, and other job-relevant characteristics, and together with cover letters serve as a written communication of the applicant’s skills, abilities, and job objectives to a potential employer. Resumes function as an employment seeker’s calling card and are used to convey one’s availability, suitability, and interest in a position. Resumes are used as the first step in a variety of job search strategies, be it applying for an advertised position or searching through the hidden job market through unsolicited calls and contacts with potential employers. Although only one of many tools used in the job search, a resume is seen in current commercial employment literature as a vital document to which the whole job search process is tied (Corwen, 1988; Krannich & Krannich, 1992) and an absolute must for any employment seeker (Bloch, 1989; Faux, 1992; Gieseking & Plawin, 1994; Roper, 1994).

The importance of resumes in North America resurfaced numerous times in the descriptions of the NAPs’ experiences of looking for a job in Canada and the United States. Resumes were invariably mentioned as an integral part of their job search process. One of the most representative examples is that of Daniel, a university student in the final stages of his graduate program, who described several employment search options that he would use to maximize his chances for success. A resume was prominently featured as the first step in every option:
If I was looking for a job in Canada and specifically in Vancouver, I would first make a bunch of resumes and give them to anyone I know in the field. You know, I'm looking for a job, and if you know anything that comes up, could you mention my name, and here is my resume. And just get the word out, because they are going to talk to a hundred people, you know, and I can only talk to a few. So I'd put the information in the pipeline, I hope, and I'd also go door-to-door, dress up nicely, and I'd come by and face-to-face and say hi good morning, I don't know if you're hiring or not but I'm very interested in the position, I wonder if you'd take my resume. Well, we're not hiring right now but we'll keep you in mind. Thank you, well that's something. [...] If I went to a new city, it would be a lot more difficult. I'd probably try to do the face-to-face, and if I couldn't visit I'd mail them something or make a phone call. I wonder if you're hiring. No. OK, I would like to send you my resume.

The participants repeatedly mentioned that a resume is one of many steps in the employment search and in itself does not provide the job seeker with a job. It is face-to-face contacts with employers that play the decisive role in whether the job seeker will be selected for a position. In a personal contact during an interview, an employer can get a real sense of what it would be like to have the job seeker as an employee:

Janet: What makes a dynamite resume? Um, well, it’s tailored to the employer, and the person who’s sending it knows that it’s a- it’s a tool to get an interview.

Daniel: The resume was just a foot in the door; you had to talk you way to the job after that.

Resumes serve as a door opener in this process, allowing the employer to choose the candidates that will be shortlisted for an interview. Used together with cover letters when applying for a position, resumes often become the first impression that a potential employer forms about the job seeker. Qualifications, experience, education, and personal suitability for a position are all derived from a resume before the job seeker is given the opportunity to personally present his qualifications in an interview. Therefore, a resume often becomes the ultimate factor in whether or not such an opportunity is granted, and the self-presentation that the job seeker has created in a resume may play a crucial role in whether or not he/she will receive an employment.
One of the participants, Kevin, uses a metaphor of a doorknob on the door to employment to summarize the role that the resume plays in a job search in North America:

It's as important as the doorknob on a door. It opens the door. It gets your foot in. But you are the most important [thing?] to walk through the door. It's the door- it's the key to the door that gets you in, it's your first step. It's very important. This is- kids in grade 12, they are taught how to write resumes.

Kevin's comment not only shows the crucial role that the first impression provided by a resume can make but also highlights the fact that socialization into the resume-writing culture begins in Canada as early as school years. Resume writing is suggested by the Ministry of Education as one of the important activities in Career and Personal Planning IRP guide to prepare high school students for the future employment search (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm). Student services at universities frequently offer resume-writing workshops for the students who are ready to join the workforce. Since current North American employment trends signal an increasing frequency of job changes and career changes (Fox & Morton, 1997), the need to improve one's resume-writing skills does not disappear after the first job is found and individuals may find that there is a continual need to update their resumes throughout their working years. The importance of these skills is reflected in the abundance of books and brochures on resume writing as well as the high number of commercial resume-writing services that offer professional help.

As an all-important key that unlocks the door to employment, a resume serves its role in informing potential employers whether a job applicant possesses desirable qualities required by a certain position or working environment. Discussions with the NAPs illustrate what these qualities may be and consistently stress the importance of
such factors as training and skills. At the same time, as Kevin notes, the personal qualities of an applicant also play a significant factor in the employment process:

Because once you’ve got your foot in the door, once you’ve got an interview, the next most important thing is, can they work with you? Can they get along with you? Are you a positive person?

According to the participants, the person that employers would like to see behind the training and skills is enthusiastic, confident, and displays a positive attitude as well as an emphasized interest in the position:

Janet: In Canada I need to show my enthusiasm, my interest, through language as well.

James: So I tried to make sentences more direct, and of course a lot of stuff talking about what a great person I am. You know, stressing two or three times that I am the person for this job because I have these skills, because I can do this, because I have this experience you should hire me, that kind of language, very direct. And it felt strange, writing it, because I don’t like to sell myself that way, but I got the job, so ((laughing)) I guess maybe it worked. But I guess it’s important to show confidence.

The importance of showing enthusiasm and interest in a job is further emphasized in another participant’s sketch of the competitive labor market in North America where it is imperative that a job seeker promote himself in an almost forceful way:

Dennis: In North America, you fight for the top. The employers want you to be begging for a job, even if you might not even want to take it a month later. But they want you to look like you want this job so badly that no one else is suitable for that job except for you. And that’s the game because everybody else that’s applying for that job is doing the same thing, thinking that that’s the only job in the market and that’s the only job in their life that they want to take. And that’s how they express themselves.

North American employers want to be convinced that the job seeker is worthy of an interview, and applicants try to market their skills, abilities, and qualifications in a way that shows that they are the best candidates for the job. They are expected to use sales techniques to advertise and sell the product—themselves. An apprentice into the North American resume-writing culture is continually exposed to the concept of a job
search as a sale where the job seeker is the product. This message is exemplified in the titles of the job-search books: "Resumes that work: How to sell yourself on paper" (Foxman, 1993), and "Dynamic cover letters: How to sell yourself to an employer by writing a letter that will get your resume read, get you an interview, and get you the job!" (Hansen, 1990). The job seeker must package and advertise his experiences to respond to what his potential employer wants to buy (Roper, 1994), sell his education (Corwen, 1988), and use an interview to close the sale (Gieseking & Plawin, 1994). In the North American employment-seeking culture, a resume is a selling tool the most important function of which is to persuade a prospective employer that an applicant possesses the necessary qualifications to be of value to the company to which he is applying.

This message was continually repeated as the North American participants explained to their Russian and Japanese partners what would strengthen their chances for successful employment search:

James: I guess it's a big thing about, like, here you're really trying to sell yourself.

Pamela: But it's part of it, the job search in North America, you have to make yourself sound really good.

Tina: But they [employers] are judging it, it's your sales tool.

The NAPs' accounts, as they were presented in the interviews, confirmed the assumption that the North American resume is a sales tool. It is expected to be persuasive, and its main function is to promote the applicant as the best candidate for a position.
Resumes in Japan

Similarly to North America, resumes in Japan serve as one of the first steps in searching for employment. Their role, however, is not entirely the same as in North America. The process of the job search itself also involves stages that are somewhat different from those expected in North America.

Japanese students start looking for a job well in advance of their intended graduation date, often as early as in their third year at university. The job search becomes increasingly more competitive as the students approach the final months of their studies and available positions become fewer and fewer while the companies are also actively recruiting and competing for the best candidates:

Shoichi: So recently Japanese students do job hunting right in third year. So before November and December in third year they begin to think about job hunting. Students can assure around May or June, but of course perhaps around half students cannot get jobs, cannot secure job promise before, even though summer break it [has?] be done. So fortunate students can enjoy their summer holidays without no anxiety for job. Some people- some companies assure- not officially but unofficially assure their position in May or June, perhaps April. So some companies secure good students for company, it's kind of competition. Because all the students begin their- most students begin their job hunting simultaneously, and companies also begin recruiting simultaneously, so company in competition. Students also in competition, but for companies it kind of competition. So company try to secure good students as much early as possible.

Pressure builds because it is considered important to start working soon after graduation. According to Johnson and Dillon (1996), most Japanese begin their working lives right after finishing school and continue working without a break, and any lapses of time between graduation and beginning of employment are undesirable. According to one of the JPs, people who take a couple of years off may be considered "lazy":


Chizeru: I wonder if it doesn’t matter if they are old to apply jobs? I mean, I don’t know how to explain, some people waste one or two years before go to university, it doesn’t matter?

Karen: Yeah. It doesn’t matter here. A lot of people like maybe they’ll graduate from high school and then they’ll go travelling, or maybe they don’t know exactly what they want [to

Ch: Don’t[ they think they are, they are lazy?

Since the job search begins at the same predictable time for many Japanese, companies respond with very targeted recruitment techniques. Every year the students who are about to begin looking for employment receive unsolicited materials which contain information about different companies. Such materials are compiled by recruitment agencies and are distributed to the students in form of liberal-size brochures that one participant described as being “as thick as Vancouver White Pages.” While the companies advertised in the brochures are charged a fee, this service is free to the students. The brochures include information on dozens of companies describing the relevant details of the company’s history, number of employees, financial reports, starting salary, and benefits:

Chizeru: It’s called Recruit company. They send us the pile of information, this is only one, but this is ((shows a page from the booklet)) company name and this is about this company, this company founded in 1994, and capital? And represent number of employee and conditions of work, the offices in Japan, and the profit in the year 1998, they sell, if they sold this amount of money, and company that has some relation with this company, and about stock, and this is the [first?] salary and other benefit.

The students can then choose the companies that they would like to know more about, and fill out an enclosed form to request further information:

Chizeru: And I can apply to this company by using this ((shows an enclosed application form)). So I can just put my name and my address and send it, and they just this company send us the other information, more specialized.
After receiving additional information, the students can decide which companies they would like to apply to and send them a resume. The companies follow by scheduling information presentations for all interested students, where potential applicants receive another chance to submit their resumes:

Dasha: So they send you a brochure and then what- then you send them a resume?

Shoichi: Oh, I think so. I heard people- company present...explanation? Presentation. Explanatory presentation.

D: Oh, so you can go to a presentation=

Sh: =In the large hall=

D: =OK, and they sort of give a general [presentation

Sh: general pre[sentation. And to participate in a general presentation we have to hand in our resume.

While submitting a resume in response to a company’s invitation to do so is more than appropriate, cold phone calls are not appreciated and can have a counterproductive effect:

Shoichi: Making telephone call considered not good manner. Because according- there is manual for getting job, and the manual says, people who involved in personnel section are quite busy because many students- they have to process many documents=

Dasha: So you write? Send a letter=

Sh: =Send a letter. We are expected to send a letter. Making phone call is only allowed in case of emergency ((Oh I see)). And the people who make phone call for such case people who want pamphlet through phone call, they never ((beginning to laugh))=

D: =They never get it?= 

Sh: =They never get the position. They have- he have a list- he is not [considered/considerate?]. He or she is not [considered/considerate?].
Personal connections, on the other hand, pay an especially important role and in many cases seem to be a necessity (Johnson & Dillon, 1996). Recruitment books allow for this in that they include a list of “old boys” and “old girls” for the companies they list. “Old boys/girls” is an expression for somebody who graduated from the same university as the student and now works at the company the student wants to apply to. The students are encouraged to contact the “old boys/girls” for an information interview:

Chizeru: If I find a company in these books, this is from my university, and they give me, ((looking through the pages)) not here, sometimes they give me the person’s name which, does it make sense, old boy old girl, this is probably Japanese English but it means that the employee from some different university, so my university is *** university, so this is *** university, and I can ask this person, so sometimes there is a telephone number, so I can ask that person to make appointment. So the student can, they contact one of these persons, and make appointment to meet, and we can ask how this company and what contents of work.

Finally, the candidates are invited to an interview, which in itself often consists of several stages:

Chizeru: Almost all company have next step. This is first step—to apply for information. Most of the company they have other their [own?] resume like this one, and I can just- we can just copy from this one and send this company, this is the second step, and they will give us the schedule of interview, this is third step, and there’s many kind of interview, and finally you can get job from this company, maybe May or June, June-July.

Similarly to the North American culture, resumes play an important role at the initial stages of the outlined process. They serve as a “kind of business card, shows who applied.” Cover letters, on the other hand, are still a relatively uncommon practice which some of the job seekers are only recently beginning to use:

Shoichi: I think I said before, first side of resume, it’s quite ordinary, so students who want to promote them write on the back side and how they want to get- how honest they are to describe themselves on the back side.

Dasha: How honest? In what way?

Sh: How serious they want to enter your company.
D: OK. So is it a common thing to do?

Sh: I think it’s not common at all. A friend of mine do that, and I’m really amazed. ((Oh I see)). And yeah, so the front side is quite regular format, and they cannot make distinction on the front, so he- he [X] how he would be more competitive than others.

This interview extract brings us to perhaps the most striking difference of Japanese resumes: They have a very specific pre-printed format which consists of several sections that a job-seeker needs to fill out (see Appendix A). These pre-printed forms are available from stationary stores and bookstores:

Yoko: You can actually buy a resume form, so everyone has the same. It’s, um, says, education—academic history, job history, hobbies, skills. Um, you should put your parents there, family structure, how to get to that company from home.

As Appendix A shows, the sections on the form include such areas as the applicant’s name; contact address; photo; date of birth; gender; education; work experience; licenses and certificates; subjects which the applicant is good at (such as English or Statistics); hobbies; sports; health; reasons for applying; additional comments (working hours, salary, location of employment, etc.); family information; commuting time; marital status; and number of dependants. Most JPs felt that it would be undesirable to leave any areas blank on this form:

Yasuko: I think now I don’t have to tell them my personal thing (((laughs))), but it’s a form, I have to write.

The sections that the JPs considered most important also somewhat differed from the North American resume. While most NAPs considered the applicants’ skills to be the most important area, the JPs mostly stressed the importance of education:

Yoko: One of the most important is your academic history. In here [North America], skills are important. In Japan, academic history is more important.
Most JPs also felt that the name of the university and its ranking among other Japanese universities was especially important:

Yasuko: Sometimes people or the company care about the name of the university where they graduated from.

Sumiko: In resume, most important part is name of university. And if name of university is good, we can expect to have an interview.

Several JPs indicated that the Japanese resume genre is undergoing changes, especially with regard to some of its sections, a process which is consistent with the idea of genres as social processes that can change over time (Kress, 1993; Widdowson, 1998). Some of the participants expressed an unwillingness to disclose their personal information, such as their marital status or information about their parents. These participants maintained that such information was important “ten or fifteen years ago,” but now is mostly required by tradition and, although obligatory in a resume, may not play the same role as it used to:

Yoko: My impression is that twenty years ago or ten years ago it would matter but nowadays no. If you have good academic history. Before it mattered. Nowadays no.

Yasuko: They think they can ask personal things, but I think now things have changed. I guess Japanese resume format will be changed. I guess.

As we can see from the interview data, there is an established resume genre in Japan. This genre has a defined role in the employment search, although this role differs somewhat from that of North American resumes, which in turn reflects a different context in which the employment search takes place. Although an established and well-recognized genre, the Japanese resume seems to be undergoing changes to accommodate changing cultural values and employment requirements.
Resumes in Russia

While both North America and Japan have a distinct and well-established resume genre, resumes are still a novelty in the Russian job search culture and are something that has only recently begun to be used when looking for employment. Finding a job in the former Soviet Union required an entirely different procedure, as shown by Parker’s (1991) study of employment counseling for Soviet Jewish immigrants. The findings of her study can be extended to include non-Jewish Russians in their late twenties and older who were exposed to the Soviet system under which employment was virtually guaranteed by the state with very little job competition involved. University and college graduates were in most cases automatically offered jobs upon graduation. The RPs invariably described this system when asked about their job-search experiences in Russia:

Anna: Actually, it was our due, we had to go to the [word], plant or factory or company, and spend there at least three years working as a regular employee. Because this way you have to pay the state, pay back the money it had already spent on your education.

Dasha: So education was free, right? ((Right)) And after you graduated you were given a job at a- a place that you had to go to?

A: For sure. There were actually a lot of place to choose but it depended on your grades. If you were a brilliant student, you got a brilliant job. If you were a regular one, you got a regular job. If you were a poor student, I mean, poor in mind, poor in grades, then it was your way.

D: Mm. So people who had better grades would get a better job?

A: For sure. They had the choice.

The choices were very often obligatory, and the graduates as young specialists were sent to their places of future employment for as long as three years. The students with better grades had more flexibility in this process since they were offered the top choices from the list of available positions. For many of the graduates, their first job
would turn into lifelong employment. Those who wanted to change their place of employment, however, looked for a job through personal connections. Newspaper advertisements were rarely used by job seekers as well as by employers:

Maxim: Almost 90 percent is personal connections. You can be hired as janitor, or something of this kind through advertisement in a newspaper, but you could never find a good job. You had to know somebody in this place who would recommend you to the head of the department or the president of the company.

This system did not require aggressive job search skills, such as contacting employers, sending out resumes, and using cold calls to the companies. Parker found that the job-search approach used by Russian immigrants could be seen as very passive by North American standards. She felt that the immigrants in her study seemed almost to be waiting for employers to notice them without any apparent effort on their side. One of our NAPs, Janet, drew on her several years of experience as a career consultant to offer similar observations about the job search expectations of her Ukrainian clients:

Particularly the Ukrainian clients I worked with have been, at least at the outside have said: "These are my skills. If the employer doesn't want my skills, then I will find another employer." Frequently, I was seeing clients who were very early on in their settlement process so I'd say, you know, "that's a very interesting way to approach things," and we talked a lot about what their job search culture is like in the Ukraine and compare it with Canada.

Sergey, one of the Russian participants, provided further evidence of how the job search is seen by a recent immigrant from Russia:

I don't know exactly what I'm looking for, which is also a big problem. Because of that, I just decide to put it in chronological order, and then let the employer choose if he wants me or not. Well it certainly diminishes the chances, but=

Although actively contacting employers may have been an unnecessary skill in Russia for many years and as such has never been developed by the Russian participants, knowing how to use personal connections was and still is extremely important. Parker
noted that her clients viewed her as a possible employment resource, which in her opinion was an attempt on their part to find somebody who would solve their problems for them and which further exemplified their passive approach to looking for a job. It is possible, however, that her clients were in fact actively trying to use her as a personal connection. Although the situation in Russia has been changing rapidly since Parker’s research was published and the state system of providing graduates with a job fell apart in 1993, job seekers in Russia still rely heavily on personal connections as a job-searching tool:

Anna: Previously, it was the state system, it was the usual system that you are for sure get the job after you graduated. But everything is going to [word] and I really have no idea how do those young people manage to get their lives together. Because it’s very difficult. In my opinion, there are two ways only: to find a connection or to organize your own business.

Victor: It was a Russian company, and- nobody even knew what a resume looked like. It wasn’t used. Just personal connections. Is somebody is looking for a person to do a particular job, they just- if somebody told them that they know the person who can do this job, it’s fine. So you don’t need to have any transcripts, no letter of references, as long as you can do this job.

Since resumes were virtually non-existent in Russia until the mid-nineties, the Russian participants did not have prior resume-writing experience to rely on. When trying to transfer the job search skills that they used in Russia, the participants at times relied on two documents that had similar features but did not serve the same function as a resume: the “autobiography” and the “record of employment.” Both documents described the employee’s work history and education, but they were used as employment records rather than to present one’s relevant skills and qualifications when looking for employment.
Summary

Part I of our Discussion chapter has been based on the interviews to describe through the participants’ voices the resume in the context of North American, Japanese, and Russian job-search cultures. As we have seen from the participants’ accounts, there exist well-established resume genres in North America and Japan, although the Japanese resume seems to be undergoing changes. Russia, on the other hand, is now going through a transition period where such a genre may be forming or will form in the near future. Furthermore, the Japanese, Russian, and North American general job-search procedures differ in several important respects: The job search in North America seems to require more aggressive strategies on the job seeker’s part, which in turn determines a need for an aggressive resume and cover letter. We will explore these and other differences in more detail as we analyze the discourse of the resume-editing sessions in Part II of our Discussion chapter.

Part 2: Discussions about Resume Components

In this part we will use the insider accounts collected during the editing sessions to look at the main themes which emerged as the participants collaborated on editing the resumes. These accounts differ from the interviews in one important respect: Other than being staged by the nature of the activity that the participants engaged in—the editing of the resumes—they were unsolicited, as the researcher did not take an active part in these sessions. Each joint resume-writing session followed a similar pattern: The NAPs looked at the resumes and offered their suggestions which led to a discussion about how the resume needed to be edited. In this process, the participants engaged in a decision-making activity of selecting one option over the other available choices. We will use the informal discourse analysis to group the participants’ suggestions and ensuing discussion into three major categories that closely paralleled each other in each session: resume
layout, content, and language. The layout category includes such items as the spatial layout of the text on the page, use of font sizes and styles, indentations, and other formatting details. The content category shows information that the participants felt needs to be included in a resume: one’s employment history, education, personal information, and so on. The final category, language, does not focus on grammar, spelling, lexical, and sentence structure corrections; it is centered instead around the stylistic understanding of language that the resume requires as a genre.

We will then analyze the proposed options and choices within each category by using the formal discourse analysis. This will involve looking into the participants’ suggestions about what needs to be included in a resume, how this information should be phrased, and how it should be presented on a page. In addition to illuminating the options, we will also analyze the reasons that the participants provide to justify their choices and show the response that the options and the related reasons receive. In doing so, we will relate the participants’ choices to the broader picture of the resume’s role in the employment search in North America, Japan, and Russia.

**Resume Layout**

In all the resume-editing sessions, the NAPs started their suggestions by commenting on the resume layout. They suggested changes concerning their partners’ use of font size, font style (bold, italics, or regular), spacing, indentation, and other formatting details. The purpose of changing or rearranging the layout was to adjust it so that, in one North American participant’s words, “it doesn’t look overwhelming to the reader, so that it looks attractive, it looks like something you can easily read.” These suggestions evoked very little discussion; the RPs and JPs either changed the suggested layout features immediately or agreed to change them later. In most cases, as we can see
from Example 1, the NAPs did not give a clear reason for the suggested changes, and the JPs and RPs did not ask for one.

*Example 1:*

James: Um, one tiny little thing, I guess people can be really nitpicky about resumes if they want to, you know, look for things, but I would like, for example here when you’ve got the dashes and then the first letter, dash, first letter, and then because this line goes on it’s sort of over here, if it would be possible to indent it a bit. I don’t know maybe it’s not possible. And like, here there is no space to put in a dash=

Yasuko: =Right=

J: = it’s a really small thing ((laughing)).

Y: Yeah, but some people might, some people might... I should change.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J: Um, one tiny little thing, I guess people can be really nitpicky about resumes if they want to, you know, look for- for things, but I would like, for example here when you’ve got the dashes and then the first letter, dash, first letter, and then because this line goes on it’s sort of over here, if it would be possible to indent it a bit. I don’t know maybe it’s not possible. And like, here there is no space to put in a dash=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Y: =Right=)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J: = it’s a really small thing ((laughing)).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y: Yeah, but some people might, some people might... I should change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: The discourse analysis of James and Yasuko’s discussion

Where there was an attempt to explain why certain changes should be made, it often was very brief:
Example 2:

Daniel: First of all, in my opinion, because it's a resume, I don't think you need to write “a resume” on top.

Maxim: OK. ((Crosses out “a resume” on top of the page))

Table 4.2: The discourse analysis of Daniel and Maxim’s discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D: First of all, in my opinion,</td>
<td>(because it’s a resume)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because it’s a resume, I don’t think</td>
<td></td>
<td>M: OK. ((Crosses out “a resume” on top of the page))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you need to write “a resume” on top.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the clearest explanations was offered by Tina, a NAP who linked the layout of a North American resume with its function as a sales tool: to present one’s relevant qualifications in an attractive and easy to read manner:

Example 3:

Sumiko: So do I put the highlights of the qualifications on the left side or in the middle or=

Tina: Um, I have mine centered, but again, it depends on what you-how your=

S: =layout of page?=

T: =Right, and layout...the key things in the layout is to make it so it doesn’t look overwhelming to the reader so that it looks attractive, it looks like something you can easily read. Um, sometimes putting it in the middle makes it look unbalanced; it depends on the length of all your highlights. Sometimes it’s nice just to have everything completely flush left except for the-your own heading so that’s- that’s a personal choice as long as it’s got no mistakes in it and it’s parallel-structured.
Table 4.3: The discourse analysis of Tina and Sumiko's discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sumiko: So do I put the highlights of the on the left side or in the middle or=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina: =Um, I have mine centered, but again, it depends on what you- how your=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: =layout of page?=</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: =Right, and layout…</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the key things in the layout is to make it so it doesn’t look overwhelming to the reader so that it looks attractive, it looks like something you can easily read.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes it’s nice just to have everything completely flush left except for the- your own heading so that’s- that’s a personal choice as long as it’s got no mistakes in it and it’s parallel-structured.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this example, several options were outlined as equally acceptable, and it was left up to the JP to make a choice, as long as this choice made the resume attractive to the employer. Although no immediate decision was made and no evaluation of the proposed options provided, the JP did not offer any alternative options.

Several JPs commented that the layout of North American resumes included too many choices and it was difficult for them to know which ones to use because they were used to the standard layout of Japanese resumes:

Yoko: Well, in Japan that’s easy, I just write and then I’m going to give it to them. So I don’t have to worry about the format or layout or anything. Just write.
Resume Layout: Summary

Although the resume layout elicited many comments from the NAPs (see Table 4.4), these comments did not usually lead to the explanation of reasons behind them. Only one of the twelve NAPs explicitly linked the layout features to the purpose of the resume: to promote the applicant. The NAPs’ layout suggestions were for the most part accepted immediately; while talking about the layout features, the participants moved from proposing a different layout option from the one that was originally chosen to the decision that such option should be used instead of the original one. These interactions are summarized in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4: The summary of the layout discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Decision</th>
<th># of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase font size</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>7 NAPs; 4 JPs; 3 RPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change font style to bold for headings and position titles</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>4 NAPs; 2 RPs; 2 JPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change dashes to indents</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>1 NAP; 1 JP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add more white space</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>7 NAPs; 3 JPs; 4 RPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use bigger font for the applicant’s name</td>
<td>(none given)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>3 NAPs; 2 JPs; 1 RP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove the “Resume” heading</td>
<td>(because it’s a resume)</td>
<td>Accept suggestion</td>
<td>1 NAP; 1 RP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resume Content

While the NAP’s recommendations on the layout features of a resume prompted very few questions or comments and were mostly accepted right away, the content of the resume—what to include and what not to include—provided grounds for much discussion. Questions regarding several content categories and their place in a resume arose as the participants worked together. These categories included such information as one's health, family, physical appearance, gender, volunteer experience, and so on.

The following examples illustrate the dynamics of the discussions: raising a question of whether a particular category should be included in one’s resume, exchanging opinions, and explaining to each other the reasons for their particular viewpoints. A typical example of such a discussion is Chizeru’s and Karen’s exchange of opinions on whether one’s gender should be included in a resume:

Example 1.

Chizeru: Why does it nothing to do with the sex for the employer?

Karen: Um, just because it doesn’t really matter. Like, men and women get an equal- equal opportunities.

Ch: Is there a suitable, suitable sector for woman?

K: Um, in Japan, do women have certain jobs, and then men have certain jobs, or?

Ch: Not, but there is segregation. So maybe accounting and office work is suitable for women and outside work to negotiate contract it’s suitable for men. That’s why I’m asking.

K: Oh I see. No here it doesn’t matter, because here- because in Japan, like in the business world, are men given more respect ((yeah)) OK because here women are respected just as much as men, like it doesn’t really matter if
in the business world, say outside the office if women are interacting with men. There is no difference=

Ch: =Because equal ((Yeah)) OK.

K: So in that case you don’t necessarily need to put whether you are male or female, because whatever job you’re applying for, as long as you have the skills and will be able to do a good job, then it doesn’t matter.

Ch: In Japan, most of the woman quit the job after the marriage to raise their children, how about here?

K: Here, people just have, people have jobs like maybe if you’re married and get a job because you know it’s expensive having kids or say you’re living on your own you have job so that you can support yourself. Like, once you move away from living with your parents.

Ch: That’s why Japanese companies care about which sex because they are afraid that woman quit job so, so soon, so that’s why they want to keep the employee as long as possible, that’s why the have a tendency which they don’t hire women.

K: OK. Is- in Japan once you are married and have children, then you quit?

Ch: Almost all. So maybe it’s important for Japanese company to write such=

K: =Yeah and in that case it’s probably important for them to write whether you are married or not. If you are married maybe it means that you won’t be around for long then. If you kids soon after. But here, a lot of women, like someone in my office where I work she had a baby 7 or 8 months ago, and she came back to work.

The following table illustrates (1) the options that the participants discussed with regard to the information about one’s gender and its place in a resume; (2) the reasons that the participants used to explain their opinions; and (3) their response each other’s options:

Table 4.5: The discourse analysis of Karen and Chizeru’s discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ch:</td>
<td>Why does it nothing to do with the sex for the employer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 K:</td>
<td>Um, just because it doesn’t really matter. Like men and women get an equal- equal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ch: Is there a suitable, suitable sector for woman?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>K: Um, in Japan, do women have certain jobs, and then men have certain jobs, or?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ch: Not, but there is segregation. So maybe accounting and office work is suitable for women and outside work to negotiate contract it's suitable for men. That's why I'm asking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>K: Oh I see.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No here it doesn't matter, because here-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>because in Japan, like in the business world, are men given more respect ((yeah)) OK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>because here women are respected just as much as men, like it doesn't really matter if in the business world, say outside the office if women are interacting with men. There is no difference=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ch: =Because equal ((Yeah)) OK.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>K: So in that case you don't necessarily need to put whether you are male or female, because whatever job you're applying for, as long as you have the skills and will be able to do a good job, then it doesn't matter.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ch: In Japan, most of the woman quit the job after the marriage to raise their children, how about here?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>K: Here, people just have, people have jobs like maybe if you're married and get a job because you know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In turn 1, Chizeru raises a question of why gender is not important in a North American resume, thus opening a discussion on whether or not this information should be included in a resume. Karen provides a brief explanation in turn 2, which, however, Chizeru does not seem to find satisfactory enough to accept this option immediately. This leads to Chizeru’s attempt to further clarify the role of men and women in the North American workplace. In turns 4-5, Karen asks for more information about the workplace in Japan.
and learns in turn 6 that the distribution of workplace roles depends on one’s gender in Japan, and consequently is different from North America. This elicits a more detailed explanation of North American workplace norms in turns 7-13, where Karen compares the two cultures while both Chizeru and Karen clarify their understanding of the differences between the North American and Japanese workplace. In turns 12-13 Karen restates and expands her explanation of why one’s gender should not be included in a resume. Turn 14 begins further comparison of the two cultures and shows why the information about one’s gender is important for Japanese employers: in turns 16-18, we learn that in Japan women often resign after they get married and have a child. The discussion ends with Karen’s comparison of the situation in Japan and North America with regard to balancing one’s professional and family life.

As we can see from the interaction analysis, Karen and Chizeru negotiate two options: whether one’s gender should or should not be stated in a resume. While Karen’s suggestion is rooted in a North American assumption that it is not one’s gender but one’s qualifications that are relevant, Chizeru’s point of view is based on a different employment culture in which the gender of an applicant can indicate one’s suitability for long-term employment. In the discussion, Karen and Chizeru clarify each other’s points of view until they uncover and understand the underlying reasons for each option, which they rephrase in their own words in turns 11 and 17.

A similar interaction happens in the next example, where the participants discuss the relevance of one’s family information:

Example 2.

Leslie: Another thing that would be missing from the Canadian one is the, the family. It’s also- why do you think that? Why do you think we wouldn’t have family on it?

Koichi: Because many Canadian divorce.
L: No, because for us it's not-first of all, it's not bad ((OK)) but it doesn't matter, your family has no reflection on how well I do this job.

K: We're, the Japanese think, the unit of the society is a family, so, um, I don't know now but before the period of the high, high economy growth, family, whole family contributed to the company, so workers just hired, but the mother doing the um, the h-h=

L: =Housework=

K: =Housework, housework for father, so other member of family cooperate with the father's work. So, that's why.

L: What if you can do the job really well but you don't have parents? Because they are dead. It shouldn't influence whether or not you get the job in Canada because you should be able to take care of yourself in Canada. Even if you live alone, you should be able to do your own cooking.

Table 4.6: The discourse analysis of Leslie and Koichi's discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>L: Another thing that would be missing from the Canadian one is the, the family. It's also- why do you think is that? Why do you think we wouldn't have family on it?</td>
<td>K: Because many Canadian divorce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>L: No, because for us it's not-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>first of all, it's not bad ((OK)),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>- but it doesn't matter, your family has no reflection on how well I do this job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>K: We're, the Japanese think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>the unit of the society is a family, so, um, I don't know now, but before the period of high- high economy growth, family, while family contributed to the company, so, workers just hired, but the mother doing the h-h=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While examining Koichi’s draft of a resume, Leslie compares it to North American conventions and suggests that a few sections be omitted. At the same time, in turn 1 she asks Koichi to think of the reasons for these conventions. The answer he comes up with in turn 2, however, is based on his own cultural understanding of the role that one’s family may play in an employment search, which he explains in turns 6-7. Koichi’s explanation is based on the assumption that the applicant’s family has a direct relevance for assessing his or her desirability for employment since one’s everyday environment can add or take away from one’s ability to work well in a Japanese company. Moreover, Koichi transfers his reasoning to the new situation, and assesses Leslie’s suggestion according to his own framework. We can see from turn 2 that he concludes that family information is not included in Canadian resumes because a high divorce rate makes such information unfavorable for the job applicant. This explanation sharply contrasts with the reason that Leslie provides in turns 3-5, which reflects North American norms and
emphasizes the importance of one’s personal ability to do the job. Again, the participants take turns explaining their respective points of view to each other (Leslie in turns 3-5 and 8-9, and Koichi in turns 6-7), although this time the interaction is shorter and there is less negotiation involved than in Example 1. Koichi and Leslie state their respective points of view, but do not attempt to come to a better understanding of each other’s reasons.

Example 3 comes from Kelvin and Victor’s collaboration on Victor’s resume.

Prior to the session, Victor had spent six years in Canada and wrote, in his own words, “about ten or fifteen versions of my resume.” Kelvin, however, finds that an important section is missing from Victor’s resume:

*Example 3:*

K: I’ve read this all and I know you are very very specialized technical, very qualified for probably jobs that I would- wouldn’t even understand what’s going on in them, but um I didn’t get an idea of building community, and hobbies is another place. Do you- Have you ever volunteered for anything? You’ve got to one time or another=

V: =No. ((laughs))

K: Help someone, someone in some way?

V: Well actually I was always helping teaching Russian to Canadians in [name of a Canadian city].

K: Were you getting paid for it?

V: No, no just volunteering.

K: Excellent, excellent qualification. You’ve GOTTA tell them that somehow you did volunteer, did volunteer work, for example, I would put volunteer language teaching. You don’t have to say what type. And that would be volunteer. To me all of a sudden you’re way, WAY up there because someone who gives of themselves without expecting anything back is a kind of person I want to work with. And not because you work all night, because you’re a giving person.

V: Yeah I didn’t know that people are really crazy about volunteer. Isn’t it a little bit, like not doing it from the heart but you know I have to do it because I have to get a job?
K: Yes, that's true, everyone knows, when you are there you want to get a job and get paid, but they wanna get somebody who is, who they can get along with. And someone who volunteers is generally easy to get along with because they give without expecting anything in return ((yeah)) if you come and go OK I want to work here but I'm gonna take, take from this company, money money money and it doesn't show in any way that you give back, I- to me if I read your resume and I didn't see in any way that you give back to the community or back to- and this is just my bend, maybe there are some people who aren't even looking for this.

V: Well I was doing research for free just because it's interesting for me.

K: Wow, there you go, volunteer research. Language teaching and research. What type of research? ((writing)) OK.

(Kelvin and Victor turn to discussing other issues, and later come to the topic of volunteering again)

K: Volunteer it's highly important. Highly, just positive, positive=

V: Volunteer job, what happened was that in Russia it wasn't we didn't have- ((addresses Dasha)) did we?

D: No, we didn't have volunteer jobs.

V: I don't think we did. So its' not like, it's not developed at all. Maybe there is some, but we didn't- it's not part of life, so you come here and it's just, that's what happens you know it's just you just you don't even think about it. But probably I have to explore.

K: And that's again so brave. I don't know if I can imagine myself being in a different country learning the socials- because essentially I've told you that, and add volunteer is just one example, um, to make this better to um, to make you more um, to get the social aspects right. In other words, when you sit down with that interviewer that you don't look too foreign that you don't fit in. Um, in Canada where it's a consumer-based country, we are so wealthy it's outrageous. We don't even realize it because we've lived here our whole lives. We consume we consume we consume. I want I need I get, I want I need I get. It's really odd for us to see somebody who doesn't do that and says I volunteer to help to give. And in our society that's highly regarded because everyone is so busy consuming so it's like vow that's really a positive thing! Volunteering, so it's regarded very highly. Even unconsciously, and it has to be in there.

V: No, I see, I see your point=

K: In Russia maybe [that's not
V: No what happened is now when I think about it what happened is we didn’t have any like disadvantaged people, officially, so there was no cause for volunteering. Just there is no need for volunteering. Supposedly everything should be fine, is fine.

K: What do you mean, disadvantaged people?

V: I don’t know. If you volunteer to help in food kitchen for example. Or to mentally ill patient for example I don’t know.

K: Or to help even your own grandmother.

V: =No we did have it, but we never called it volunteering.

K: But you gotta here in a resume. And I can understand with Julie comes from a Polish background, and they do a lot of things without money exchange, do it without even thinking that that’s volunteering=

V: =Yeah that’s right, that’s right=

K: It’s part of their lives.

V: Maybe if I dig for something that I did not for money ((laughs)) I will dig out something.

K: So give that= these little changes a try and see what people think.

Table 4.7: The discourse analysis of Kelvin and Victor’s discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>K: I’ve read this all and I know you are very very specialized technical, very qualified for probably jobs that I would- wouldn’t even understand what’s going on in them, but um I didn’t get an idea of building community, and hobbies is another place. Do you- Have you ever volunteered for anything? You’ve got to one time or another=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
helping teaching Russian to Canadians in [name of a Canadian city].

K: Were you getting paid for it?

V: No, no just volunteering.

2

K: Excellent, excellent qualification.

3

You’ve GOTTA tell them that somehow you did volunteer did volunteer work, for example, I would put volunteer language teaching. You don’t have to say what type. And that would be volunteer.

4

To me all of a sudden you’re way, WAY up there because someone who gives of themselves without expecting anything back is a kind of person I want to work with. And not because you work all night, because you’re a giving person.

5

V: Yeah, I didn’t know that people are really crazy about volunteer. Isn’t it a little bit, like not doing it from the heart but, you know, I have to do it because I have to get a job?

6

K: Yes, that’s true, everyone knows, when you are there you want to get a job and get paid, but they want to get somebody who is, who they can get along with. And someone who volunteers is generally easy to get along with because they give without expecting anything in return ((yeah)). If you come and go OK I want to work here but I’m gonna take, take from this company, money money money, and it doesn’t show in any way that you give back, I- to me if I read your resume and I didn’t see in any way that you give back
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>to the community or back to-</td>
<td>and this is just my bend, maybe there are some people who aren’t even looking for this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>V: Well I was doing research for free just because it’s interesting for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>K: Wow, there you go, volunteer research. Language teaching and research. What type of research? ((writing)) OK.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION CONTINUES LATER**

| 10 | K: Volunteer it’s highly important. |   |
| 11 |   | Highly, just positive, positive= |
| 12 | V: =Volunteer job, what happened was that in Russia |   |
| 13 | it wasn’t we didn’t have- ((addresses Dasha)) did we? | D: No, we didn’t have volunteer jobs. |
|     | V: I don’t think we did. So its’ not like, it’s not developed at all. Maybe there is some, but we didn’t- it’s not part of life, | so you come here and it’s just, that’s what happens you know it’s just you just you don’t even think about it. But probably I have to explore. |
| 14 |   |   |
| 15 | K: Um, in Canada |   |
| 16 | where it’s a consumer-based country, we are so wealthy it’s outrageous. We don’t even realize it because we’ve lived here our whole lives. We consume we consume we consume. I want I need I get, I want I need I get. It’s really odd for us to see somebody who |   |
doesn't do that and says I volunteer to help to give. And in our society that’s highly regarded because everyone is so busy consuming so it’s like vow that’s really a positive thing! Volunteering, so it’s regarded very highly. Even unconsciously, and it has to be in there.

| 17 | V: No, I see, I see your point= |
| 18 | K: In Russia maybe [that’s not |
| 19 | V: No what happened is now when I think about it what happened is we didn’t have any like disadvantaged people, officially, so there was no cause for volunteering. Just there is no need for volunteering. Supposedly everything should be fine, is fine. |
| 20 | K: What do you mean, disadvantaged people? |
| 21 | V: I don’t know, if you volunteer to help in food kitchen for example. Or to mentally ill patient for example I don’t know. |
| 22 | K: Or to help even your own grandmother. |
| 23 | V: No we did have it, but we never called it volunteering. |
| 24 | K: But you gotta here in a resume. |
| 25 | And I can understand with Julie comes from a Polish background, and they do a lot of things without money exchange, do it without even thinking that that’s volunteering= |
| 26 | V: =Yeah that’s right, that’s right= |
| 27 | K: =It’s part of their |
To Kelvin, Victor’s resume does a good job in showing Victor’s professional qualifications, but does not indicate the personal qualities that are relevant for finding employment in North America. In turn 1, Kelvin suggests that such qualities can be represented in a resume through volunteer experience or hobbies and explains the importance of volunteering in turns 3 and 4. According to Kelvin, somebody who volunteers their time without expecting anything in return has a better chance of finding a job since volunteering shows their giving nature. Victor, however, is not convinced, and in turn 5 questions the motives one may have while using volunteer experience as an additional tool for getting employed. This leads to another explanation of Kelvin’s reasons in turn 6, followed by the disclaimer that the high value he attaches to volunteering may be his personal preference. Victor, who starts by saying in turn 1 that he does not have any volunteer experience, comes up with an example from his experience that fits into the category of volunteering. This ambivalence is explained later when, after discussing a few other issues, Victor and Kelvin return to the topic of volunteering. In turn 12 and 13, Victor explains that volunteer experience is not considered as work experience in Russia and therefore is not relevant in the Russian job-seeking culture. We further learn from turn 14 that Victor transfers this to the North American workplace, having not previously given any conscious thought to including non-paid work as part of his work experience. However, when this option is brought to
his attention in the session, and its positive value is explained to him, he finds volunteer experience worth exploring. Again, we notice that Victor’s explanation of why he did not originally include volunteer experience in his resume leads to Kelvin’s further elaboration on why volunteering is important in North America, and why it is so highly regarded (turn 16). Victor indicates in turn 17 that he agrees with Kelvin’s explanation and responds to Kelvin’s reference to the Russian job-seeking culture with a more detailed clarification of why a non-paid experience was not important in Russia (turns 18-21). Kelvin proceeds by accepting Victor’s point of view and at the same time emphasizing the importance of his suggested option for North American resumes in turns 22-23, where he refers to the experiences of his wife, Julie, who comes from a Polish background. Finally, the negotiation ends with Victor agreeing that he should reevaluate his experience and include volunteering in his resume (turn 24).

**Resume Content: Summary**

The analyzed examples provide us with a sample of content-related issues that the participants discussed during their joint resume-writing sessions. The variety of issues is summarized in Table 4.8 together with the options that the participants proposed for each issue, the reasons for each option, and the number of participants advocating each option. Unlike the layout suggestions, available content choices produced considerably more discussions which in most cases did not end in an immediate decision; therefore the following table does not include the “Decision” part.

**Table 4.8: The summary of content discussions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th># of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>• Include</td>
<td>• Shows one’s suitability for long-term employment.</td>
<td>2 JPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do not include</td>
<td>Not relevant since men and women are equal.</td>
<td>2 NAPs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>Family</strong> | <strong>Include</strong> | Shows one's upbringing, environment, and ability to work with others. | 3 JPs |
| | | Required by tradition. | 3 JPs |
| | Do not include | Not relevant since it is one's personal skills that are important. | 6 NAPs |
| <strong>Photo</strong> | <strong>Include</strong> | Shows that one conforms to the norms of the group. | 2 JPs |
| | | Required by tradition. | 3 JPs |
| | | Used for convenience of the employers (to remember the applicant through different stages of an interview). | 1 JP |
| | | Shows one’s individuality and ability to take risks by not following conventions. | 1 NAP |
| | Do not include | Not relevant since it is one's personal skills that are important. | 5 NAPs |
| <strong>Date of Birth</strong> | <strong>Include</strong> | Shows that there are no breaks between one's graduation and employment, which is culturally expected. | 3 JPs |
| | | Required by tradition. | 3 JPs |
| | | Used in a legal document which documents one's employment history in Russia (but the function of which is different from a resume). | 2 RPs |
| | Do not include | May be used to discriminate against the applicant. | 8 NAPs |
| <strong>Health</strong> | <strong>Include</strong> | Required by tradition. | 3 JPs |
| | Do not include | May be used to discriminate against the applicant. | 3 NAPs |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Include</th>
<th>Relevant not only as work experience but also because it portrays the applicant as a giving member of the community, which carries positive value.</th>
<th>4 NAPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer experience</td>
<td>Include under such categories as hobbies or work experience</td>
<td>Relevant as work experience but carries neutral value as volunteering.</td>
<td>3 JPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not include</td>
<td>Not relevant since it is not considered as working experience and carries neutral value.</td>
<td>1 RP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commuting time to work</td>
<td>Include</td>
<td>Relevant since the employer pays transportation-related expenses.</td>
<td>1 JP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not include</td>
<td>Not relevant since the employer does not pay transportation-related expenses.</td>
<td>1 NAP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see, the list of the discussed issues somewhat resembles the categories included in a traditional Japanese resume. This is explained by the fact that the JPs-NAPs sessions raised much more discussion related to which content categories to include and which to omit than did the RPs-NAPs interaction. This was especially noticeable in the sessions with the JPs who had only been in Canada for a few months. For such participants, the resume-editing session was their first or second experience with North American resumes. On the other hand, the JPs who had spent several years in North America were more accustomed to the North American resume rules and conventions. Nevertheless, their resumes still included many of the areas required in a Japanese resume, such as date of birth and gender. The RPs’ resumes mostly contained categories
expected in North America, and the interaction data showed only three instances of the participants discussing which categories to include, compared to 24 instances in the JPs-NAPs sessions.

This can possibly be explained by the fact that the JPs’ prior job-search experiences involved a standard resume form containing these categories. The RPs, on the other hand, did not have any prior experience with resumes in Russia, and thus did not have any norms or conventions to fall back on. However, they did use their knowledge of the Russian workplace culture and did not include certain categories such as volunteering, which is important in a North American resume but not relevant for a job search in Russia.

The Reasons section of the table explains how the participants’ job-search cultures influenced their selection of the options and why questions about certain categories kept surfacing during the sessions. While the options for each category were simple—to include or to omit something from a resume—each option was based on an underlying reason which provided an important insight into the workplace considerations that are relevant in North America, Russia, and Japan. These reasons were not unanimously defined within each culture: The NAPs represented the most homogenous group where the participants showed a striking similarity in the explanations provided during independent sessions while the JPs raised identical questions but offered a variety of reasons as to why certain information should be included in a resume. Their explanations, however, were consistent with their description of a changing employment culture in Japan, where certain cultural expectations are becoming less important and, while they still matter to some people, others follow them because of the tradition.

While the reasons for some of the proposed options varied within each cultural group, the original decision of whether or not a certain category should be included was
the same. For example, five out of six JPs included their date of birth in a resume, while six out of six brought up the issue of the family information during the session.

Furthermore, their original decision was markedly different from the North American employment culture, as evidenced by the unanimous response from the NAPs who repeatedly stressed that such information is not relevant since one’s skills and qualifications are more important than one’s age or one’s family. Moreover, the NAPs emphasized that such information could be used to discriminate against the applicant. This can possibly be explained by the fact that the reasons behind the options were also very different and at times opposite in the two cultures. For example, some JPs explained the need for one’s photograph by the importance of being “standard” and “blending in” with the rest of the society. The NAPs, in turn, advocated one’s personal skills and abilities as a crucial success factor. Furthermore, the only NAP who liked the idea of having one’s picture on a resume explained that including a picture shows one’s individuality and the ability to stand out. The reasons, therefore, were based on the cultural norms and expectations which were reflected in a resume through the participants’ choice of content categories.

Moreover, the interaction between the participants did not end at suggesting an option, explaining the reason behind it, and then accepting or declining it. As we have seen from the analysis of the three discussions, the explanations followed a circular pattern where the participants took turns gathering more information about each other’s options of what should be included or omitted from a resume, explaining the reasons behind their suggested option in more detail, and finally comparing each other’s reasons and their place in the two job search cultures.
Resume Language

After the participants reviewed the content of the resumes, the sessions turned to the question of how the information about one's skills, education, experience, and other content categories should be worded. Although a big part of the NAPs' suggestions revolved around the correct use of grammar, punctuation, easily confused vocabulary items, and other language units, these suggestions involved very little discussion and, similar to the layout features, were for the most part immediately accepted. What did involve a significant amount of debate, however, was the use of language to project a culturally appropriate image of a job seeker. Such debates surfaced in all 12 sessions since, according to the JPs and RPs, using resume-specific language features to provide employers with a description of one's experience and skills was not expected in either Japan or Russia and was therefore difficult for the participants.

The explanations of the problems made by the participants during the interviews following the interactions may help the reader to interpret their interactions. We will therefore provide two quotes from the interviews to illustrate the participants' perceptions of the problem. One of the participants, Yasuko, saw the use of language as a major difficulty in writing a North American resume:

Dasha: So when you were doing this, North American style resume, did you find it difficult?

Yasuko: ((in emphatic whisper)) Yes. Very.

D: What was diffi[cult]?

Y: Uhm[... Let's see. Well first of all, in a Japanese resume you do not have to describe what I did in my previous work experience, just write the name of the company ((Oh)), and maybe title, that's it. Like, Personnel Officer, or [??], that's it. I didn't have to describe what I did. But in North American resume, I have to describe what I did, and maybe ((addressing the NAP)) as you said like I should describe precisely, and that's um very difficult.
As we can see from this quotation, a traditional Japanese resume does not require a description of one’s duties or other content categories. What is required instead is one’s position title and the place of employment, which made it difficult for the JPs to know how to use the language to represent themselves in a resume.

The RPs also had difficulties learning how to describe their experience in a North American resume. Larissa, who brought four samples of her resume to the session, starting with one of her earliest versions, explained that the understanding of “resume language” did not come to her naturally:

L: And, of course you have to, you have to *vladet' yazikom* ((have a mastery of the language)), specific English to write a resume. It’s a specific language like for a resume. In Russia, you didn't have to write resumes, so of course how you can have this specific language, right? I guess you have to practice, it all comes with practice in writing resumes, but that’s why it was very interesting, I mean to put all your skills, all your qualifications in a proper format.

D: When you say it's a specific language, what do you mean?

L: I think all resumes, when you read all resumes you can say that they all have certain specific language. I mean, certain- same phrases, very short, precise. You have to know that language to be, to be successful and to get, to get an interview. In Russia, we didn't have to write resumes, so we didn’t develop this specific language of course, how could we?

Larissa’s description is mirrored in the impression that Janet, an employment consultant, has formed about the resumes of the former Soviet Union immigrants:

I find that, um, clients that I’ve worked with in the past who are from the former Soviet Union, um, they don’t do any description. They just list where they worked, and maybe a job title, and sometimes years. Um, and sometimes- ((laughing)) I worked with this guy for a while as a client who was- had worked in, um, it was like a mechanical engineering, but very specific mechanical engineering. And he had worked a lot- a lot of his work had been done not in the military but with the military. So his whole resume didn’t make any sense, it was in English but um, it was all like- just listing, like, the places that he had worked, like the bases that he had worked with, the government military departments that he’d worked with, but no descriptions of anything. So we worked a lot on trying to help him figure out who does that work in Canada and how they describe it, and, you know, what they- how they frame what they do.
As these accounts show, in both Japanese and Russian employment cultures job applicants are not required to provide detailed descriptions of their experience, skills, and other relevant characteristics. This is something that they have to learn is part of a North American resume. The interaction data of the resume-editing sessions allows us to take a look at this process and see how the JPs and RPs use language to portray themselves in a resume.

In Example 1, Sumiko, a Japanese participant, is applying for an advertised language teaching position. To help her acknowledge the advertiser’s requirements, her partner Tina has suggested she add a Highlights of Qualifications section to Sumiko’s resume and now they are working together on this section:

*Example 1:*

Tina: OK, excellent writing and communication skills?

Sumiko: Only in Japanese ((laughing)).

T: Well you can say that by leaving off languages completely, by saying “excellent writing and oral communication skills”, period. Or...one thing that I always do too is use it as a semi-column, and say something like...um,... like, like you know the idea of paying attention to details, that kind of thing. It is something that should be addressed ((Yeah)). You could put it down just as excellent written and oral communication skills.

S: ((writing, softly repeating to herself))

T: I would say written and oral=

S: =written and oral=

T: =communication skills.

S: Oh I feel very uncomfortable to write down this kind of stuff ((laughing)) about myself.

T: Well would you say that you’ve got excellent communication skills in Japanese?
S: Maybe... if I write this kind of stuff then, because it is not I but the director or the people of the company who judged my skills could say that. So...

T: But, they are judging it, but this is your sales tool.

S: Yeah, yeah, I understand it. But still I feel very uncomfortable to write such kind of positive adjective about myself.

T: Why?

S: Mmmm...

T: Do you think that’s something that just comes because of, uh, say Japanese tradition or [culture?]

S: No no.] Because if I translate this kind of stuff in Japanese, maybe I mustn't use this kind of stuff to the interview, because this is the program- I apply for a position in North America, but all the staff are the Japanese people. So if I write something like that, like I’m the strongest candidate or something like that, then I....

T: So it makes you feel like=

S: =So maybe I just list all of my experience, all this kind of stuff in more neutral way, and then they judge: you must be- you may have- you must have the excellent oral skills and writing skills.

T: But if everybody’s got good experience, then...

S: Maybe we show that kind of stuff- so that’s why we have the certificate or something like that, because I can distinguish myself with the other people. If I have this kind of certificate or English proficiency test or something like that, it supports that- my excellent oral skills or English skills ((laughing)).

T: So on this you are not selling yourself then, just, just giving the factual information.

S: No, just ..factual information. The company judges then that... I am this excellent person.

We will now turn again to analyzing this extract for the presented options, reasons behind them, and the participants’ evaluation of the options:
Table 4.9: The discourse analysis of Tina and Sumiko's discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T: OK, excellent writing and communication skills?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>S: Only in Japanese ((laughing)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>T: Well you can say that by leaving off languages completely, by saying &quot;excellent writing and oral communication skills,&quot; period. Or...one thing that I always do too is use it as a semi-column, and say something like...um,... like, like you know the idea of paying attention to details, that kind of thing. It is something that should be addressed ((Yeah)). You could put it down just as excellent written and oral communication skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>S: Oh I feel very uncomfortable to write down this kind of stuff ((laughing)) about myself. T: Well would you say that you've got excellent communication skills in Japanese?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S: Maybe... if I write this kind of stuff then, because it is not I but the director or the people of the company who judged my skills could say that. So...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>T: But they are judging it, but this is your sales tool.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>S: Yeah, yeah, I understand it. But still I feel very uncomfortable to write such kind of positive adjective about myself. T: Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>T:  Do you think that’s something that just comes because of, uh, say Japanese tradition or [culture?</td>
<td>S:  Mmmm…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>S:  No no.] Because if I translate this kind of stuff in Japanese, maybe I mustn’t use this kind of stuff to the interview, because this is the program–I apply for a position in North America, but all the staff are the Japanese people. So if I write something like that, like I’m the strongest candidate or something like that, then I….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>T:  So it makes you feel like=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>S:  =So maybe I just list all of my experience, all this kind of stuff in more neutral way, and then they judge: you must be–you may have- you must have the excellent oral skills and writing skills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>T:  But if everybody’s got good experience, then…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>S:  Maybe we show that kind of stuff- so that’s why we have the certificate or something like that, because I can distinguish myself with the other people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>If I have this kind of certificate or English proficiency test or something like that, it supports that- my excellent oral skills or English skills ((laughing)).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>T:  So on this you are not selling yourself then, just, just giving the factual information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>S:  No, just ..factual information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The company judges then that… I am this excellent person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In turn 1, Tina recommends listing excellent writing and communication skills as a relevant qualification which matches one of the ad’s requirements. Sumiko, who is an advanced speaker of English, does not accept this suggestion in turn 2 by saying that she could only refer to her Japanese writing and communication skills as excellent. Tina tries to offer alternatives, such as leaving off languages completely while still satisfying the potential employer. Sumiko, however, responds by saying in turn 4 that she does not feel comfortable assessing her own skills as excellent. She gives the reason for her decision in turn 5 when she explains to Tina that it is not her place to be evaluating her own skills and that such judgement should be left to the people who are responsible for hiring. Tina, in turn, brings in a reason for why such self-evaluation should be included and refers to a resume as a sales tool with which one is expected to market one’s own skills. Sumiko is still not convinced in turn 7 in which she agrees with Tina’s assessment of a North American resume as a sales tool, but still decides to stay with her own way of describing her qualifications. She hesitates when asked to elaborate on the reasons for not wanting to use positive adjectives when referring to herself, and she seemingly rejects Tina’s suggestion that her decision may reveal the influence of the Japanese culture (turns 8-9). However, Sumiko’s explanation is based on the fact that the position she is applying for, although based in North America, is through a Japanese company, and the hiring personnel are Japanese. This shows a close link between her use of the language and her knowledge and experience with the Japanese employment culture. In turn 11, she rephrases her explanation from turn 5, and says that she needs to describe her experience in a more neutral way and leave it to the employer to decide whether her communication skills are in fact excellent. Tina makes another attempt to convince her that evaluating one’s own skills in a positive way is important in a resume (turn 12). In response, Sumiko provides further supporting details for her argument in turns 13-17 and suggests
that certificates, proficiency tests, and other factual information are the best way for the resume to show that one's skills are "excellent," but such a decision should be left to the employer. Tina compares these two points of view in turn 15 as using facts versus self-evaluation to present one's skills.

The interaction in Example 1 shows many similarities to the earlier analyzed discussions about the resume content: The participants exchange their viewpoints on how one should represent one's suitability for a position and state the reasons that they base their suggestions on. Again, the JP does not immediately accept the suggestion, which leads to a repeated exchange of viewpoints and reasons in a circular pattern. At the same time, in this interaction the participants also repeatedly evaluate each other's options and reasons: Sumiko is not comfortable with the North American norm of self-evaluation and at the end of the discussion stays with her opinion that it is the employer's role to assess one's skills, while Tina thinks that simply listing one's credentials does not help an applicant to stand out and be noticed among other equally qualified candidates.

Example 2 provides us with another look at the debate on whether one should only describe facts or also evaluate one's experience. In this example, Pamela provides Yoko with suggestions on how she can reword the descriptions of her work duties:

Example 2:

Pamela: Or you might want to say something like "experienced in working with children"=

Yoko: =Exper-i-enced ((writing))=

P: =instead of just working with children=

Y: =in work-ing=

P: =so it really serves to highlight your strengths, you want it to sound great. I mean, you've done a lot of wonderful things, so it's not hard, but you want to focus on it. I think I was, I was talking to- because I work with immigrants, and I know that for some cultures, for some people, it's really
difficult for them to get used to a North American resume because for them it sounds like we’re bragging, right ((laughing)). It was hard for them to describe themselves in that way, like experienced, fluent =

Y: =That’s true=

P: =exceptional skills in you know translating, or whatever, but it’s part of it, the job search in North America, you have to make yourself sound really good. It’s not being immodest, it’s just part of it. If you try to be modest, it’s like “oh, she’s just average” or whatever ((laughing)), and you really want to highlight your strengths to them, yeah.

(Yoko now comments on resumes in Japan)

Y: In Japan we have skill section in a standard resume, but you only put like TOEFL score, or English like a standard exam to measure your skills, so you just put grade or score. Just scores. You don’t really need to stress what you have done. Or you put university names and company names where you have worked. So there is no place to…brag ((laughs))

P: Right ((laughs))

Y: So it was very hard for me to come up with this um version. Because I just got my diploma supervisor’s resume and I just tried to work on mine. It’s just more like, her style. She’s American.

(discussion continues later)

P: If you were going back to Japan and decided to apply for a language teacher position, what would you put in your resume, would you write down your TOEFL score?

Y: Yeah, TOEFL score, and there is another very big examination, on scale from 1 to 4, if you have one it means your English is very good. So on the skills section, you would probably put scores.

P: Mm. But you wouldn’t put anything like “high proficiency in English”=

Y: =oh no, no. You should indicate by your score, or what certificate you have, or what diploma you have. Japanese form is chronological, so if they see that let’s say in between 1993 and 1997 this person was in Canada, then probably they will assume that your English is pretty good.

P: OK, but you don’t tell them yourself=

Y: =((emphatically)) no, no. It’s a very cultural difference, we shouldn’t … ((laughing))

P: Why not though?
Y: Probably just, it’s culture, it’s…modest. In Japan people prefer to hire those who can work in teams, modest, cooperative, I mean, you know, not always standing out, not always bragging. So, it’s important to show them that you’re normal in an interview, or in a resume. Even if you’re not ((laughs)).

Table 4.10: The discourse analysis of Pamela and Yoko’s discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 P: Or you might want to say something like “experienced in working with children”=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 P: =instead of just working with children=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 =so it really serves to highlight your strengths, you want it to sound great. I mean, you’ve done a lot of wonderful things, so it’s not hard, but you want to focus on it. I think I was, I was talking to- because I work with immigrants, and I know that for some cultures, for some people, it’s really difficult for them to get used to a North American resume because for them it sounds like we’re bragging, right ((laughing)). It was hard for them to describe themselves in that way, like experienced, fluent =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 =exceptional skills in you know translating, or whatever, but it’s part of it, the job search in North America, you have to make yourself sound really good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 =Exper-i-enced ((writing))=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 =That’s true=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 It’s not being immodest, it’s just part of it. If you try to be modest, it’s like “oh, she’s just average” or whatever ((laughing)), and you really want to highlight your strengths to them, yeah.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To Pamela, Yoko's resume does not do justice to her varied experience since it does not provide enough emphasis on Yoko's strong points, skills, and qualifications. In turn 1, Pamela recommends rewording some of Yoko's job descriptions to highlight her strengths and to "sound great" (the explanation that she gives Yoko in turn 4). Yoko starts by writing down Pamela's suggestion (turn 2), but a few turns later we learn that phrasing her experience in the way expected in North America does not happen without some inner struggle. Pamela, who has previously taught workplace English to new Canadians, explains her understanding of how different cultures may perceive North American resumes in turn 4 and notices that in her experience many immigrants see a sales-letter style of the resumes as immodest or bragging, to which Yoko readily agrees in turn 5. Pamela continues by explaining that this style is expected in North America and failure to follow it may have a negative impact of reducing one's qualifications to the average level, which is not what the employers want to see (turns 6-7).

The discussion now switches from editing Yoko's resume to resumes in Japan. Yoko shares her experiences of writing Japanese resumes, which have no need or place for detailed descriptions of one's skills and experience, and on which self-evaluation is not necessary. Moreover, she mentions that she found writing a North American resume difficult, and she does not consider the way her resume is written to be "her style." Instead, she informs us that it is modeled after her American supervisor's resume. The discussion then turns to talking about resume-writing books and workshops, and comes back to shed more light on how one's skills are presented in a Japanese resume. Following Yoko's mention of the skills section, Pamela asks her how she would show to the Japanese employers her level of proficiency in English. Yoko's reply mirrors the discussion between Sumiko and Tina in Example 1: She says that one's proficiency could be indicated by one's language test scores or even by one's length of residency in
an English-speaking country. At the same time, Pamela’s suggestion to use evaluative language to describe Yoko’s proficiency as high is twice met with an emphatic “no.” Yoko then proceeds to give her own explanation of why one would do better to use descriptive language (facts) rather than evaluative language (self-assessment), and we learn that in Japan job seekers are expected to be modest, and that being able to work in cooperation with other people is valued more highly than depending on and highlighting one’s personal skills.

Example 2 matches Example 1 in that it provides us with more evidence that the two cultures use two different approaches to represent the applicant’s skills and experience in a resume. These approaches are based on two opposite reasons: In North America one promotes oneself as better than average and thus distinct from a group, whereas in Japan one promotes oneself as a member of a group thus sharing the group’s characteristics. Again, we see that the participants not only exchange their reasons for using language in two different ways, but also evaluate each other’s solutions: Pamela sees describing one’s skills through factual information as not helpful since it levels the applicant with the average job seekers, while Yoko writes down Pamela’s suggestions but at the same time responds to the thought of using the self-evaluation language with an emphatic “no.”

Our next example comes from an interaction between Dennis and Sergey. Sergey, who had spent about six months in Canada prior to the session, went to several job-search and resume-writing workshops and was familiar with the format and style of North American resumes. The session primarily focussed on rephrasing Sergey’s descriptions of his experience and education, which was accompanied by an extended discussion about North American resume norms and expectations. In the example, Dennis examines Sergey’s resume and decides first to explain the promotional aspect of
resumes in North America, after which he and Sergey discuss the details of Sergey’s resume. We will first examine Dennis’ explanation, and then analyze the discussion which followed.

Example 3:

Dennis: In North America, you fight for the top. And to get that job, you will say anything to get that job. Even if it means exaggerating, even if it means you know, doing something that, you know, something that you actually did. But when you actually express it in words, it sounds a lot better than what you actually did. So, on a resume, you are supposed to look as perfect as possible. And that might mean, like, everything has to be true, like you must have that experience, but to say that you are, you know, a bricklayer, is not the right term. You’d probably be using another word for it. I’m a salesman, actually, for my company, and you know what they call me, on my business card? They call me an area manager.

Sergey: Area manager. Right.

D: It’s not exaggerating. I’m managing an area, in terms of the sales aspects. But yet, people think that I’m in a management position. And that’s, you know ((laughing)) it’s unfortunate, but they get that wrong interpretation. But, it puts me in a better light, and when I go and look for my next job I’ll tell them that I was an area manager with this company, and they’ll go wow ((laughing)). And I’m not lying, in fact, my company gave me that name for that position. So um, you know, I had no control over that, over that position title. So, what we want do on this resume is to make it look as professional as possible, OK? And so, that’s the difference, OK? So I understand you’re not exactly sure what you’re looking for, but, um, and you said you just mentioned that last sentence you said, you know, you let the employer decide whether or not they want to hire you or not, and that’s not the kind of attitude the employer wants from you. In fact, they want you to be BEGGING for the job, even though you might not even want to take it a month later. But they want you to look like you WANT that job so badly that no one else is suitable for that job except for you. And that’s the game, because everybody else that’s applying for that job is doing the same thing, thinking that that’s the only job in the market and that’s the only job in their life that they want to take. And that’s how they express themselves.

S: So, are those people who are sitting on the other side of it, like, Human Department, managers, do they also assume that all the resumes already have that grade of exaggeration?

D: Umm, you take it, they take it straightforward, because it’s not up to them to interpret it.
S: Yeah I'm just saying if I put it everything modest, they would probably think that, it's supposed to have everything exaggerated as everyone else does, so if it's just modest like that, so in reality it could be much worse then=

D: Yes, it would pale in comparison with other people that exaggerate it. So if the exaggeration is the norm, and you are modest and you are honest, then you are pale in comparison. So, that's the dark reality (laughing)) that's the dark reality of it. And yes, you are right, the Human Resources interviewer or whoever that person is, look at these resumes um do understand that there could be some [amount of?] exaggeration, but it's acceptable. But, the point is, ACCEPTABLE.

After examining Sergey's resume, Dennis finds it necessary to point out the North American expectations of the job search and one's resume. He describes the competitive nature of the North American workplace and then proceeds by explaining its impact on how the job seeker is supposed to use language to describe himself or herself in a resume. His explanation matches those of Tina and Pamela in that it emphasizes the need to make one's experience and skills sound as attractive as possible, "a lot better than what you actually did." Dennis illustrates this by his own example of working as an area sales representative. Although his work actually involves sales, it also can be seen as managing the area in terms of sales and therefore can be described not as a "sales representative" but as an "area manager."

Although Dennis openly admits that his position is not in management, he notices that it is not an exaggeration but rather a different take on his job duties which allows his job description to project the image of somebody in a position of responsibility. He explains to Sergey that this is what is expected in the North American employment culture, and that the applicant should express himself to fulfill these expectations.

Sergey's reaction shows us that he sees such practices as exaggeration of one's real skills, qualifications, and experience. Dennis at first rejects this assessment, saying that Human Resources personnel do not interpret or evaluate one's descriptions but take them
at face value. However, after exploring Sergey's assessment in more detail, Dennis concludes that, regardless of whether it may be seen as exaggeration or not, such self-representation is culturally expected and acceptable, while experience described in modest language does not project a favorable image of the applicant and diminishes one's chances of finding employment in North America.

The interaction which follows shows us how Dennis helps Sergey to interpret and re-evaluate his experience of building and later selling his own house, and to rephrase this experience to sound attractive to North American employers.

Dennis: Um, back to this resume here, so let's see, work experience. So this is the latest one, right? You worked on your family house.

Sergey: Another option for that, which somebody advised me, um=

D: =self-employed=

S: =self-employed and also, working on personal residence. ... Not just a family house, but working on personal residence.

D: Yes, yeah, like, self-employed in a residential property development.

S: It appeared to be good business, really. I figure out that if I'd be hiring people to do the job, I did myself=

D: And you did it yourself, didn't you?=  

S: =I=

D: =You could have formed your own company. And you could have paid yourself to build your own house.  

S: Yeah, this house, I owned for those years that I was building my house I owned ten times more than I owned during my life. Like working for the companies, all my wages went for the maintenance, all my savings went to the house. Then I managed to sell it.

D: And you made money off that house. That's a company. That's you know if you're here in North America and you are doing the same thing, you could have applied for a business permit and that would have been a company. And you know you are just a start-up company, and so you had one project to do to take most of your time for the
year. There is a, yeah. That’s a company. And you were working on one project, your own house. In fact, if you can say that it’s not your house it’s even better. You were working for, you were building somebody else’s house. That way, they kind of see wow, you are very entrepreneurial, you like to, you know, make money AND you have the skills to construct a house. So if we can... Here, this is basically what I’ve written: Self-employed, residential housing development.

S: Right.

D: Is that what you did?

S: Yes.

D: There. Doesn’t it sound better than “work on the family house”?

S: Much better.

D: ((laughing)) Did I exaggerate? Did I exaggerate? No, I didn’t actually. That line about your family house, it’s like your father telling you to you know put those nails in that wood kind of thing, that’s how people would perceive that line, if you are just helping your family on a part-time basis and receiving meals as an allowance or you know payment for all the work you’ve done. They don’t want to hear that. They want to hear it as professional as possible. Something like that would be, um, not exaggerating and it sounds a lot better.

Table 4.11: The discourse analysis of Dennis and Sergey’s discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 D: Um, back to this resume here, so let’s see, work experience. So this is the latest one, right? You worked on your family house.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 S: Another option for that, which somebody advised me, um=</td>
<td>D: =self-employed=</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 S: Self-employed and also, working on personal residence. Not just a family house, but working on personal residence.</td>
<td>D: Yes, yeah, like, self-employed in a residential property development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4    | S: It appeared to be good business, really. I figure out that if I'd be hiring people to do the job, I did myself=  
D: And you did it yourself, didn’t you?=  
S: =I=  
D: =You could have formed your own company. And you could have paid yourself to build your own house. |
| 5    | S: Yeah, this house, I owned for those years that I was building my house I owned ten times more than I owned during my life. Like working for the companies, all my wages went for the maintenance, all my savings went to the house. Then I managed to sell it.  
D: And you made money off that house. That’s a company. That’s you know if you’re here in North America and you are doing the same thing, you could have applied for a business permit and that would have been a company. And you know you are just a start-up company, and so you had one project to do to take most of your time for the year. There is a, yeah. That’s a company. And you were working on one project, your own house. In fact, if you can say that it’s not your house it’s even better. You were working for, you were building somebody else’s house. |
| 6    | D: That way, they kind of see wow, you are very entrepreneurial, you like to, you know, make money AND you have the skills to construct a house.  
So if we can... Here, this is basically what I've written: Self-employed, residential housing development. |
| 8 | S: Right.  
D: Is that what you did?  
S: Yes.  
D: There. Doesn’t it sound better than “work on the family house”?  
S: Much better.  
D: ((laughing)) Did I exaggerate? Did I exaggerate? No, I didn’t actually. |
| 9 | That line about your family house, it’s like your father telling you to you know put those nails in that wood kind of thing, that’s how people would perceive that line, if you are just helping your family on a part-time basis and receiving meals as an allowance or you know payment for all the work you’ve done. |
| 10 | They don’t want to hear that. They want to hear it as professional as possible. Something like that would be, um, not exaggerating and it sounds a lot better. |

Dennis starts with the first entry in Sergey’s resume, “work on the family house.” Sergey, who had already received feedback on his resume from other sources, tells Dennis about the other people’s suggestions about how this entry should be rephrased, and together they discuss and compare the options in turns 1-3. Dennis then proceeds by helping Sergey to apply North American conventions to his job description and suggests that they take a different look at Sergey’s experience and think of it as Sergey’s own business (turns 4-5). He points out that building one’s house is similar to starting a
company and explains this by indicating the difference that such a rewording will make on the employer: It will show that Sergey has an entrepreneurial spirit in addition to the necessary skills (turn 6). As we can see from turn 7, “work on the family house” is now stated as “self-employed: residential housing development,” which Sergey accepts in turn 8. Dennis in turn 9 provides his assessment of Sergey’s job description: To him, “work on the family house” does not sound modest; it sounds unprofessional and does not project the energetic image of a self-starter, somebody whom a North American employer would want to hire.

As we see from Example 3, Dennis and Sergey start out with different assessments of each other’s options. For Dennis, modest descriptions do not show applicants in their best light since they do not signal that they are actively trying to get a job through advertising themselves in the most attractive way. However, his view of the most attractive self-advertisement is based on the North American norm of self-promotion, which is initially seen by Sergey as an exaggeration of one’s actual skills and abilities. Again, two culturally different viewpoints surface through the choices that the participants consider with regard to how one’s experience should be worded.

We will conclude this section on the “language” issue by illustrating a Russian perspective, using a quotation taken from the interview data. It provides a contrast to the North American perspective offered by Dennis and can be compared to the Japanese perspective offered by Yoko. In this example, a Russian participant, Larissa, shares her thoughts on the self-evaluation required in a North American resume. Larissa brought several resumes to the session, and the latest versions looked undistinguishable from a resume one may expect to see from a North American job seeker. After three years in Canada and several jobs, Larissa found employment that she enjoyed and considered her own job search a success. Example 4 shows us Larissa’s
comparison of the Russian and North American ways of representing oneself through language:

Example 4:

Larissa: I found it very difficult to say that, that you are this excellent person, not excellent but you have these wonderful skills, that you have excellent proven organizational skills. If you say, if you put just simply “organizational skills,” it’s not going to work, so you have to say excellent proven organizational skills, but for me it sounds, you know, you just like ... kichishya ((bragging)), neskromni ((immodest)). I mean, why don’t you put just simply organizational skills, but here I know that with the employer, it wouldn’t work if you just say organizational skills, you have to put excellent. I don’t know... everybody has organizational skills, right? Well, presumably. But you have to say excellent proven. So, this phrasing will make somebody to look at it: “Oh, excellent proven, oh it’s not just organizational skills, it’s excellent proven.” Actually, when I read all the resumes I laugh, well not laugh but I’m kind of smiling all the time, it’s such a...how do I say it? It’s a show, you know, it’s a show. It’s just a show. And interview I guess is a show too. You just say things that your employer wants to hear. It’s just a show. Oh well, now we live here so I guess we’ll have to...adjust.

Dasha: Would you do it in Russia? Say that you have excellent communication skills?

L: I just- as I said, I had one interview in Russia and I didn’t say anything positive about myself when I’m thinking about it now. I think what did you tell them? And it was, you know, I wasn’t selling myself, I wasn’t saying “Yes, I organized, I prepared, I coordinated.” It was “I helped to organize, I helped to prepare, I helped to assist.” Here you have to say I ((stresses I)) blah-blah-blah. There you could say “I helped” and nobody paid attention, it was just “well good for you.” And I remember, I just wasn’t selling myself at all. I didn’t care what I was saying to people who were interviewing me in Russia, I was just telling the truth. I was involved with children, yes, I participated, yes, but... I guess I could say “I prepared, I coordinated,” but I didn’t say that, I just thought, it’s immodest, see. I said, well we organized all the kinds of things, we kind of like prepared activities ((speaking in a soft “downplaying” voice)), and here you say “I” ((speaks with more projection)), power you know “Spice girls.”

Larissa states right away that, in spite of her successful job-search experience, she found the North American way of self-promotion difficult to get used to. Her assessment of this convention is similar to those of Sumiko and Yoko in that she finds it “immodest
bragging.” She also agrees with Sergey’s assessment of self-evaluative language as bordering on exaggeration since to Larissa, it should be enough to say that one has organizational skills without having to evaluate them as “excellent.” We can see that, in spite of accepting the North American resume-writing conventions and successfully using them in her own resume, Larissa still thinks that it is a necessary show that one has to put on for the employer in order to fit in. We learn from her comparison of self-presentation styles in Russia and North America that in Russia one does not advertise their skills through evaluative language but merely states the facts of one’s experience and at times downplays one’s contribution by disguising it as a collective effort (“we organized, we prepared”). To her, stating the facts is “telling the truth” while self-evaluating these facts is immodest bragging bordering on exaggeration.

**Resume Language: Summary**

The analyzed examples provide us with a sample of discussions about the use of language for self-presentation in a resume. The proposed options are summarized in Table 4.12, together with the reasons that the participants provided for each option, the ways they felt about each other’s suggestions and reasoning, and the number of participants advocating each option.

**Table 4.12: The summary of language discussions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Evaluation of option</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To assess one’s own skills and experience through evaluative language (“high proficiency in English”).</td>
<td>The applicant should promote him/herself and represent one’s experience in a positive light.</td>
<td>Acceptable and expected practice, Immodest, bragging, Exaggeration</td>
<td>12 NAPs, 1 RP, 5 JPs, 3 RPs, 3 RPs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown by the analysis, the RPs and JPs showed similarities in their views on the use of language; at the same time, they differed considerably from the NAPs. All 12 NAPs followed the self-promotional conventions of a North American resume. The rewording of the JPs and RPs’ job duties suggested by the NAPs invariably included evaluative language that not only described one’s skills and experience but also carried a positive value, such as “excellent communication skills,” “experienced in working with children,” or “managed the structural engineering aspects of the construction.” The positive value that such phrases carried was specific to the North American expectations of a desirable job candidate: somebody who is not afraid to take responsibility (“managed”), somebody who has done the job many times and knows all its aspects (“experienced”), and somebody who knows and values one’s own skills (“excellent”). Such phrasing projected an image of an energetic, confident person who possesses the necessary skills and is not afraid to market them. It should be noted that the NAPs also repeatedly stressed that such self-evaluation should be supported by the facts about one’s employment, education, and other experience. As one of the participants put it, “but
don't just say I'm good. Explain to them why you're good.” The underlying reasoning behind the NAPs' suggestions reflected the cultural conventions surrounding the need to market oneself in a resume, which include presenting one's skills and experience through facts but also evaluating them through language.

The Evaluation of Option column shows, however, that such self-marketing was seen negatively by both JPs and RPs. Five out of six JPs noted that evaluating one's own skills was making them uncomfortable since it was “immodest.” (The sixth JP wrote down his North American partner's suggestions without openly agreeing or disagreeing with them.) The JPs felt that such evaluation should be left to the employer since it is not the applicants' place to say how good their skills and experience are. To the JPs, high qualifications are to be indicated through facts. For example, one's TOEFL score or length of residency in an English-speaking country can tell the employer how good one's English is, but direct self-evaluation such as “high proficiency” would be considered culturally inappropriate. This preference can be partially explained by the confining structure of a traditional Japanese resume which does not provide adequate space for descriptions and does not require them. As one JP put it, in a Japanese resume “there is no place to brag.” At the same time, the participants' feeling of discomfort and resurfacing resistance to incorporating evaluative language in their resumes can be explained by the cultural expectation of fitting into the group rather than standing out and a high value that the Japanese society places on being cooperative and group-oriented, or, in the JPs' words “modest” and “not bragging” about one's achievements.

The RPs' reaction to using the language of self-promotion in resumes was similar to that of the JPs. Three RPs expressed feelings of being “immodest” when positively evaluating one's skills, and noted that such evaluation should be left to the employer. Other RPs saw the North American way of looking at every experience from a marketing
angle and highlighting the positive qualities as being not entirely truthful and exaggerating one’s abilities. (One RP evaluated his partner’s option as both immodest and an exaggeration.) The RPs opted for simple descriptions of their prior jobs in language that did not carry evaluation. To the RPs, statements such as “building family house starting from layout” meant telling the truth while their North American rewording—“managed all the aspects of residential housing construction and development”—were seen as an exaggeration and unnecessary escalation of the real situation. Their use of language to represent themselves in a resume was, therefore, similar to that of the Japanese participants in that one’s experience was based on describing facts rather than on the combination of facts and the evaluation of them. The only exception was one Russian participant who assigned modesty in describing one’s own skills to “other Russian people” and stated that he fully embraced the North American norm of self-promotion as a guarantee of his future success.

These different approaches to representing oneself in a resume were in turn evaluated by the NAPs from their own cultural point of view. To all 12 NAPs, a description of one’s experience through facts without the element of self-evaluation was seen as a self-defeating practice that does not show how one’s skills and qualifications are better than those of other applicants.

Part 3: Summary and Conclusions

In this part, we will take a final look at the three main themes of the data analysis—resume layout, content, and language—and use the interviews to summarize our examination of the similarities and differences among the North American, Japanese, and Russian position.

As we have seen, the themes offer a progression of contrasting views starting with uncomplicated suggestions of layout options, going to the comparison and
explanation of content options and the underlying reasons, and finishing with the strongest contrast of opinions uncovered through the analysis of the resume language. The data analysis of all three themes indicates the existence of a major difference between the North American position on one hand and the Japanese and Russian position on the other. The North American participants advocate the self-promotional nature of resumes, which determines their choice of resume layout, content, and language. They see resumes as a sales tool and repeatedly stress the importance of marketing strategies in one’s job search:

You persuade, you present things in a way that markets to them [employers], you tailor your resume to that employer. You market to them, you persuade them, you use sales techniques.

According to the NAPs, resumes are similar to other types of promotional literature, such as car pamphlets, and should show how the applicant differs favorably from other job seekers:

It’s predominantly a sales document, but with specific details to back it up. In that way it is similar to the kind of pamphlet car dealers hand you to describe a new car: It points out the features of the car that the customer might find most appealing but also includes the technical details for each feature. For example, it doesn’t just say the engine is powerful; it also gives the stats on ccs and horsepower. The purpose is to stand out, apart from the other applicants.

While the self-promotional purpose of a resume is seen as not only appropriate but also culturally expected by the NAPs, it contrasts sharply with how the Japanese and Russian participants perceive the self-presentation conventions of a North American resume. To both groups, the advertisement of one’s own skills and abilities is seen as “immodest” since, as both JPs and RPs indicated, it is the employer’s role to decide how good the applicant’s skills are. As one of the participants said, “It is for the other person to say these things,” meaning the positive evaluation of one’s skills and abilities. Several participants described the North American self-presentation style as “bragging” and
expressed feelings of discomfort when trying to adopt this style and use it in their own resumes. One of the Japanese participants illustrated this by the following example:

I think that’s is a very hard part for Japanese to sell ourselves, like even though I think I have confidence I always think Oh, should I say this? Or I shouldn’t say that? I always think about it. When I wrote a cover letter, my roommate told me, you have to say that I am this kind of person, like I am a highly motivated person, I’m very creative, and I was like Oh I shouldn’t say this, it isn’t…you shouldn’t say these things about yourself.

One Russian participant further illustrated such discomfort by admitting that the only way she was able to use a North American self-presentation style was to convince herself that it was a role she temporarily had to play and that upon her return to Russia she would never again meet the people who witnessed her “bragging” about herself in such an immodest fashion.

While the NAPs emphasized the value of standing out, the majority of JPs and RPs implied that they felt more comfortable blending in:

In Japan people prefer to hire those who can work in teams, modest, cooperative, I mean, you know, not always standing out, not always bragging. So, it’s important to show them that you’re normal in an interview, or in a resume. Even if you’re not.

All people from the Soviet Union are team players, because it was a part of the upbringing, to be the part of, you know, collective.

As we can see, on one level both the Russian and Japanese groups were similar in their reaction to the NAPs’ position. At the same time, there were important differences between these two groups at another, more detailed level. The Japanese participants kept coming back to a traditional Japanese resume in their choice of content and language. As well, they often reported that compared to a North American resume, the Japanese resume is “easy. I don’t have to worry about the format or layout or anything. Just write.” They had prior knowledge of what a resume is in Japan as well as pre-formed expectations of what should be included and for what reasons, which gave
rise to similar debates between all six of the Japanese/ North American pairs of participants.

The Russian participants, on the other hand, did not have their own established resume genre to rely on. As one of the participants said, “Five years ago, nobody even knew what a resume looked like. Now some do, if they work with Western companies, but a lot still don’t. It just isn’t used in a lot of places.” With the emerging genre of a resume still in its early stages, several Russian participants imitated instead the surface features of an employment history, a document that listed one’s positions and places of employment as well as education, but which was used for different purposes than finding employment. Not having a pre-established structure to rely on, the Russian participants had fewer questions and debates about the resume content than did the Japanese participants and showed a greater variance in their understanding of what should be included in a resume. Yet one area—that of the resume language—brought out just as many debates as the sessions with the JPs. This may indicate that, in addition to more specific job-related values, some choices that the participants were deliberating about were based on more general cultural values, such as blending in as opposed to standing out.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

As the literature review has shown, there is limited research available on the resume genre. There is also a growing concern in the field that genre studies mainly focus on the use of particular genres in North America while virtually nothing is known about how some genres, especially business genres, function in other cultures (Bhatia, 1993; Popken, 1993; Swales, 1990). This study was designed to examine the resume genre with respect to its use across cultures. Our first research question was: What are the communicative purposes of the resume genre? Are they culturally universal?

In order to answer this question, we needed to examine the communicative purposes of the resume within the cultural context of the genre. Our second research question was therefore connected to the issue of genre analysis: How can choice as revealed in insider accounts link genre, communicative purposes, and social and cultural context of a genre?

To answer our research questions, we drew on “insider accounts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), considering that they may provide a valuable addition to looking at genres as finished texts, or products. In other words, we did not only engage people in writing a genre; we engaged people in talking about writing a genre. Ethnographic interviews provide one example of such accounts; of even greater value are unsolicited accounts of people engaging in a particular activity. Our study design provided an opportunity for both unsolicited accounts of the participants as they engaged in a resume-editing activity and solicited accounts in the interviews which followed the editing sessions. It was our assumption that pairing North American participants with Russian or Japanese participants would juxtapose the choices that they make in writing resumes and, as a collaborative activity, bring to focus the reasons behind their choices for further comparison. The examination of the participants' reasons, whether similar or different,
would then allow us to look into some of the cultural values and beliefs behind their choices. The interviews that followed the editing sessions were designed as a tool which could provide us with a deeper understanding of the general job search situation as it relates to resumes in the three cultures, and supply further insights as to why certain choices have been made.

In our account of this, we followed Halliday and Hasan's (1985) understanding of text as both product and process. Especially as process, text is strongly related to choice: While creating texts, writers select appropriate language resources to create meaning. We then further drew on Mohan's (2000) analysis of choice as more than simply options to choose from. According to Mohan, choice also includes reasons on which is based the process of selection. Mohan notes that in social theory choices and their underlying reasons are seen as a mediating instrument between (1) people as social agents who engage in a certain activity, and (2) the social context which is reflected in people's choices through the values and beliefs that inform their decisions. By analyzing people's reasons for choices, we can explore the link connecting genres as human activity, their communicative purposes, and their sociocultural context.

We then drew on Swales' (1990) understanding of genres as communicative events driven by certain communicative purposes. The purposes are shared by the discourse community and constitute rationale for the genre, shaping its schematic structure and influencing and constraining choice of content and style. In our analysis of the data, we have selected the themes that represent the schematic structure of the resume: its layout, content, and language. Our assumption was that, since the schematic structure of the genre is shaped by its communicative purposes, the analysis of these themes with regard to the discussed options based on choices would lead us to examining the communicative purpose of the genre and its nature across cultures.
We will now turn to the detailed discussion of findings as they pertain to our two research questions:

(1) What are the communicative purposes of the resume genre? Are they culturally universal?

(2) How can choice as revealed in insider accounts link genre, communicative purposes, and social and cultural context of a genre?

**Research Question One:**

**The Communicative Purpose of the Resume across Cultures**

Available research on resumes considers them part of a job application letter genre which includes cover letters and resumes (Bhatia, 1993; Connor, Davis & De Rycker, 1995). The job application letter genre in turn is seen as belonging to a broader genre of promotional literature (Bhatia, 1993). Thus, the communicative purpose of a resume—to serve as an employment search tool—is assumed to be achieved by means of persuasion. According to Swales' (1990) definition of genre, such a communicative purpose affects and determines the schematic structure of resumes which, following the promotional nature of resumes, should serve the purpose of advertising one's experience, skills, and abilities to a perspective employer.

This assumption is substantiated by the analysis of the NAPs' suggestions as to what North American resumes should look like, what should be included in them, and how the content should be delivered through language. According to the participants, the North American resume should be attractive and easy to read in the spatial layout of its features and use of fonts and other formatting details. It should include sections that show the best sides of the applicant—skills that are best suited for the job, relevant education, and relevant personal traits which are presented through such sections as hobbies and volunteer work. The promotional nature of the North American resume is
further exemplified by its language: One’s own skills and abilities are evaluated and promoted through such “power words” as “initiated,” “organized,” “developed,” and so on. These words, mostly verbs, show action and create images of people who are confident in their ability to do the job and are not afraid to assess their own strengths through evaluative language. The NAPs explained their choices in resume-writing by relating them to (1) the nature of the North American employment culture; and (2) general North American values and beliefs. According to the participants, looking for a job in North America involves a considerable amount of competition, and job applicants are supposed to approach this process assertively and show initiative in telling employers about their value to the organization to which they are applying. This image of a positive and confident individual is not specific to the job-search only, although this may be one of the areas which brings it into a sharp focus. Some values are applied to other areas of life; for example, the participants noted that volunteer experience is included in a resume because it shows the caring and giving nature of the individual in the otherwise consumerist society. Prompted by cultural context and especially the employment culture of North America, a North American resume is a promotional tool, the purpose of which—to assist in finding employment—is carried out by means of persuasion.

The analysis of the editing sessions and interviews, however, showed that the Japanese and Russian participants did not share the same understanding of the resume as a sales tool. They instead proposed different options for representing themselves through the resume layout, content, and language. In the process, they engaged their North American partners in discussions concerning why certain options should be chosen, thus allowing us to see the reasons behind their decisions. While discussions about the resume layout were relatively simple and for the most part did not involve the exchange of reasons, the content and language of the resume brought out considerable negotiation of
choices and explanations of why certain choices should be made. Again, such explanations revealed the relationship between resumes and employment culture of Japan and Russia as well as general cultural values and beliefs.

The Russian group and the Japanese group showed one important difference: Unlike the Russian participants, the Japanese group had an established genre of the Japanese resume to draw on and was in that way similar to the North American group. The JPs borrowed from their knowledge of the Japanese resume genre and debated over such content information as one’s gender, family information, date of birth, marital status, and other areas. From their discussions, it became apparent that each of these areas has a specific relevance for the Japanese resume as it fits into the Japanese employment culture. For example, one’s gender is important since most women resign from their jobs once they are married and ready to start a family. This makes gender an important consideration for the employers. One’s family information may be used to determine one’s environment during the formative years to see how well one can work with others. Although many participants did not agree with the rationale for certain categories, such as family information, and indicated that the Japanese resume may be undergoing changes, the editing sessions and following interviews showed that the Japanese resume exhibits content options that are very different from the North American resume, and that this difference is at times based on opposite employment and general cultural values.

While the discussions about resume content mostly stemmed from differing employment culture, the resume language stood out in that all the Russian and Japanese participants showed a striking similarity in opting for the “modest” language of describing their skills and abilities through facts alone rather than through facts in addition to self-evaluative language. Yet the Russian participants all stated that they did
not have prior experience with resumes in Russia since this genre was not used in that country until a few years ago. At the same time, the Japanese participants reported that the Japanese resume does not require an elaborate use of language since the content is delivered as one- or two-line entries of job titles, licenses, and so on. Neither group, therefore, was influenced by the prior experience of using language extensively to represent themselves in the resume of their respective employment cultures. Furthermore, the discussions about language followed a different scenario than those about the resume layout where, despite a similar situation, the participants did not show any difficulty in immediately agreeing to the North American layout options. The discussions about language, however, were often emotionally charged, and participants argued that they could not possibly “brag” about their own skills and abilities in the way their North American partners wanted them to. Such dynamics suggest that the discussions about language may have been mostly informed by the participants’ general cultural values.

To summarize, our findings indicate that while the broad communicative goal of the resume—to serve as a tool in finding employment—may be the same across cultures, it may be realized differently through the schematic structure of the resume. There exist different options for how a resume may look like (layout), what may be included in it (content), and which linguistic features may be chosen to express the content (language). These differences are determined by the norms and expectations of particular job search cultures as well as by general cultural beliefs. Resume-writers as discourse community members carry these values with them and interpret the communicative purpose of the resume—to help in finding employment—according to what is valued and considered important in their culture. They then use this knowledge to select appropriate layout,
content, and language features. The persuasive nature of the resume is not necessarily retained across cultures, at least not in its North American sense.

**Research Question Two: Genres, Communicative Purposes, and Choice**

As we have seen from the findings of the study with respect to Research Question 1, “insider accounts” provide a valuable addition to looking at genres as product in that they allow us to see the reasons offered for the participants’ choices as they create texts. When at the beginning of each section the NAPs looked at the resumes that their partners brought with them, they were able to see the choices that the JPs or RPs had made about the available layout, content, and language options. The NAPs’ reaction to their partners’ choices was often that of a polite puzzlement as to why someone would choose options that did not serve their best interests of self-promotion. It was only after the reasons behind these options were explained that the participants began understanding each other’s points of view and saw why, for instance, including one’s family information in the resume made sense in Japan while it did not in North America. They were able to see that their partners had their reasons which may have been very different from what would be considered the norm in the North American resume-writing culture, and yet were perfectly acceptable within their partners’ discourse communities since they reflected the norms and expectations of the participants’ respective cultures. While the North American resume appeared to reflect an individualistic, competitive society, both Russian and Japanese participants seemed to place greater importance on being a part of a group, and showed group deference through their choice of self-presentation strategies.

We took a decision-making point of view on how the participants in our study approached the resume genre. Seen from this viewpoint as decision-making members of their respective resume-writing discourse communities, they made decisions about the schematic features that constitute a resume according to the communicative purposes of
the resume as interpreted on the basis of their own cultural assumptions and values. This
dynamic link between the genre's communicative purpose, schematic structure, and
sociocultural context surfaced through the examination of the chosen options and the
underlying reasons rather than through looking at the options alone. Such an analysis
allowed us to see beyond the mere surface discrepancies of the resume genre as it is
characterized in North America and the resume samples written by people who were
expert members of the discourse communities in their own cultures but apprentices into
the North American resume-writing discourse community; it allowed us to understand
these discrepancies through the participants' discourse as they were engaged in making
decisions about resumes.

To summarize, the examination of the discourse of people who are engaged in the
decision-making activity of writing a resume (or any other genre) and selecting certain
options over others may be a valuable addition to genre analysis as it allows us to
understand not only what language, content, layout and other features a certain genre
has, but also to begin to see how these features are shaped by the communicative
purposes and the social context of the genre. Choice links genres to their communicative
purposes through reasons, since as social agents we select between options by evaluating
them through what we know is valued in our social context. Such knowledge may not be
explicit; it may be ingrained through growing up in a certain culture and absorbing its
norms and rules as we are socialized into the beliefs that guide our communities,
including beliefs about how to write resumes. Yet such knowledge can also be learned by
looking into the beliefs of the communities that differ from our own, and we can do so
by examining the reasons which the members of these communities express in their
decisions.
Implications of the Study

The findings of the study presented here raise several considerations for both researching and teaching genres. These considerations closely follow the two research questions of the study and center around genre variances across cultures and the reasons that shape these variances. We will discuss research implications first and then turn to teaching implications.

The first research consideration stemming from the study is related to the findings concerning the universality of the communicative purposes of the resume. As Research Question 1 indicates, the communicative purpose of a genre such as a resume may be the same at a very broad level across cultures, and yet it may be realized in different ways. This may result in differing elements of the schematic structure of the genre. Such differences depend on the norms and expectations of both the specific discourse community and the more general cultural context, since members of a discourse community apply their pre-existing values and beliefs to constructing a genre. This suggests a need for further research on the dependence of genres on culture to see whether the communicative purposes of a genre are the same in various cultural contexts. In addition, the realization of the communicative purposes of the genre through its schematic structure deserves further investigation, since the apparent parallelism of the communicative purpose at a broad level does not necessarily lead to the parallelism of the corresponding schematic structures in different cultures. As far as the resume genre is concerned, further exploration of cultures other than the ones examined in this study is required. It may be that other important differences will be uncovered as more resume-writing discourse communities are studied; on the other hand, it may be that there is a greater uniformity of the resume genre than indicated by the examination of the three resume-writing cultures undertaken here.
Another research consideration is that of research methodology, which stems from Research Question 2. It appears that looking at the discourse of people engaged in writing a genre sample in addition to studying finished samples of the genre provides valuable insights with respect to why people construct a genre the way they do. It supplies "insider accounts" that may allow us to investigate the values and beliefs that participants bring with them. Examining the discourse of people as they construct genre may provide researchers with an additional tool for examining the link connecting the communicative purposes of a genre, its schematic structure, and its sociocultural context, and thus provide us with a more detailed understanding of how genres function.

Our research endeavor also brings to light several considerations that involve the teaching of genres. Firstly, the suggested dependence of the resume genre on cultural norms requires building an awareness of these norms on both the students’ and teachers’ parts. Studies have shown that one of the factors determining the degree of second language proficiency is the degree to which a student learns and adopts the beliefs and values of the second language group (Schultz, 1991; Schumann, 1978). With genres, one may need to learn the norms of the parent discourse community before an expertise of the genre is achieved. Yet several complications arise here. One of them, as our study indicates, is that such norms may vary from culture to culture even within the same genre. How can teachers know why their students may attempt to use certain features, such as their family information, on their resumes? On the surface, including such information may seem as a one-time occurrence, nothing more than a strange and counter-productive mistake on the student’s part that needs to be corrected. Yet this may make their students feel threatened and invalidated (Ishiyama, 1995) by a new culture which suddenly seems to deny the validity of their prior beliefs and require that they cast aside everything they always knew was “good” and “right” to make room for new,
different values. This may hinder the learning process since students may not be willing
to part with what is familiar and valued from previous experiences to embrace something
that they do not understand and have not yet learned to value. Ishiyama’s research into
immigrants’ cultural adaptation suggests that before new norms and conventions can be
successfully learned, the pre-existing values need to be acknowledged as equally valid
and important. At the same time, our beliefs and values may be held unconsciously, as a
part of one’s socialization into the familiar cultural community. How then can students
know why they make certain choices in their resume (and other genre) writing? How can
teachers bring these values to the surface?

Looking into each other’s reasons for selecting certain options may provide one
answer to this problem. For teachers, to understand where their students are coming from
and what cultural values they reference in their resumes may mean developing a
multicultural understanding of genres and fostering learning by looking into why certain
language and other features are important in a genre in addition to teaching an inventory
of these features. For students, understanding the reasons behind their choices may mean
bringing to the surface the values that they hold but may not be consciously aware of.
Knowing why and how they make certain choices may help them understand why and
how the choices made by others may be different.

At the same time, Bloor (1998) notes that fostering such an understanding,
however valuable, may at times prove difficult for teachers who are often pressed for
time and may find teaching genres as inventories of certain features a more practical
solution. Using discussion while writing a genre by members of different cultural groups,
similar to the one undertaken in this study, may provide a useful solution to this problem.
As the study has shown, engaging in discussions while writing or peer-editing may lead
to the exchange of opinions on how a particular piece of writing should be composed,
which in turn may lead to the students explaining to each other why they make certain choices in their writing. As we have seen, these explanations are likely to lead to specifying the norms and values that such choices are based on and may thus link the surface features of the genre to their underlying sociocultural context. These reasons and genre conventions that relate to them could be made even more explicit through structured discussions that could follow the writing or editing sessions. Such discussions would debrief students with regard to their joint writing session and allow them to make sense of their experience (Kolb, 1984) as they are reflecting on the reasons behind their own choices as well as those of their peers. It would also allow them to see different sets of conventions that the same genre may be based on as parallel and valid in their own context rather than “right” or “wrong.”

**Limitations of the Study**

The focus of the study and the ensuing research design account for several limitations of our research and findings. Some of the limitations have already been mentioned in the *Methodology* and *Conclusions* chapters; others will be brought to the reader’s attention in this section. We will first look at the limitations which relate to the genre that we chose for this study: the resume. Other considerations which refer to the cultural dependence of this genre and the connection of choice and sociocultural dimensions will also be discussed.

The study discusses the resume as a homogenous genre, yet certain variations exist within resumes written for specific professional fields. In the study, three of the Japanese participants were graduate students who were planning to pursue a career in academia. Unlike the other nine participants, their resumes were more of a CV (curriculum vitae) style than a business style, which brought out a slightly different perspective on the content and language of their resumes. Although no research has been
done on this topic, it is possible that CVs are in fact a sub-genre of resumes. It would be revealing to conduct more research with a distinct focus on either business resumes or academic resumes (CVs). Still, there were enough similarities between a North American CV and a business resume to approach them as one distinct genre.

Other limitations of the study stem from our effort to investigate the communicative purposes of the resume across cultures. The study talks about North American, Japanese, and Russian groups of participants, yet the North American group includes two distinct cultures: American and Canadian. There exist enough cultural differences within the US and Canada to merit a separate study on the differences between Canadian and American resumes. Projected against other cultural groups, however, the Canadian and American resumes show much more similarities than differences and are considered as one cultural group in this study.

Another limitation is the restricted number of cultures that this study employed in its attempt to look at the communicative purposes of the resume and their universality across cultures. To limit the study to a manageable focus, only three cultures and their resume-writing practices were explored. Although this provided us with enough data to conclude that there exist different options in the resume schematic structure and language across cultures, it would be interesting to replicate the study with different groups of participants to see what differences or similarities the resume genre exhibits across other cultures.

Although this is not a quantitative study depending on sample size, the limited number of participants within each group may have played a factor in the findings of the study. One of the purposes of the study was to explore the relation of choices that the participants make to the sociocultural aspects of the resume. Our assumption was that the insider accounts of the participants would allow us to see the reasons behind their
choices. For the most part, the participants’ accounts within each group matched with regard to the cultural conventions that they referenced. Yet one Russian participant stood out in that he seemed to identify with the North American conventions of self-promotion rather than with the beliefs of the other Russian participants in the study. This indicates that some of the choices that people make while writing a resume may be based on personal rather than cultural beliefs. It is unlikely that a larger number of sessions would change the findings as they pertain to the communicative purposes of the resume and the existence of choices in their realization through the resume layout, content, and language. However, it is possible that a larger number of participants would provide us with a better understanding of the reasons behind the participants’ choices.

Finally, the diversity among the participants, while having its advantages, also imposed several limitations. The Japanese and Russian participants were at different stages in their familiarity with the North American culture in general and resume-writing conventions in particular, a situation which may have affected the consistency of interaction during the editing sessions. The participants who had spent several years in North America were already familiar with many North American values that were at the core of certain layout, content, and language choices in the resume. Furthermore, some of them already had some resume writing experience and made the choices that matched North American expectations without any coaching on their partners’ part. At the same time, the different stages that the participants were at allowed us to see which choices they found especially difficult to accept and adopt, even after spending several years in North America. Such choices mostly referred to the use of language and, as discussed in earlier in this chapter, seemed to be based on general cultural values rather than on the specific resume-writing conventions. At the same time, the North American participants also varied in their degree of familiarity with other resume-writing cultures: some were
monocultural while others had experience working, studying, or travelling abroad. Some of the participants had had an extended exposure to the Japanese culture, including a familiarity with Japanese resumes. These participants’ knowledge of their partners’ culture allowed them to make assumptions about certain choices rather than inquiring about their partners’ reasons for making their decisions. Had the participants been matched more closely according to their familiarity with the resume-writing practices and general cultures of their partners, the study may have revealed different aspects of the participants’ interactions concerning their choices in resume writing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix A: The Japanese Resume Form

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