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# ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF  
EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis explains a phenomenon of English language as a lingua franca and its use in everyday communication in multinational corporations. The thesis consists of theoretical and practical parts. The first part describes the status of English as a global language and its use worldwide. It also explains the current position of English in the world based on the Kachru model of spread of English. The second part is devoted to practical use of English as a lingua franca in multinational corporations and considers three of the most popular genres of business communication. All analyzed materials are taken from internal communication within one multinational corporation.

## **KEY WORDS**

English, language, business language, lingua franca, Kachru model, global language, international language, globalization, business email, chat communication.

## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce vysvětluje problematiku anglického jazyka jako lingua franca a jeho využití v každodenní komunikaci v nadnárodních společnostech. Práce sestává z teoretické a praktické části. První část popisuje status anglického jazyka jako celosvětového jazyka a jeho využití v globálním rozsahu. Pomocí Kachrova modelu také popisuje současnou pozici anglického jazyka ve světě. Druhá část se věnuje praktickému využití anglického jazyka jako lingua franca v mezinárodních společnostech a zvažuje tři z nejrozšířenějších žánrů obchodní komunikace. Veškerý analyzovaný materiál byl použit ze zdrojů interní komunikace v nejmenované mezinárodní společnosti.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Angličtina, lingua franca, jazyk, obchodní angličtina, globalizace, obchodní komunikace, model Kachru, obchodní email, chat.

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V Brně dne .....

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(podpis autora)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is one of the most popular languages. We can observe the use of English everywhere: we learn it in school as the primary foreign language, we listen to English songs and watch movies in English. When we travel abroad, we do not have a problem with communicating with locals using English. English has become a widely spoken language in the world. Moreover, today's English has achieved the status of powerful language and is spread to different spheres of our life. Why is English said to be such an important language?

There are a lot of facts and events which have influenced the popularity of the English language. However, a vast majority of English speakers worldwide are non-native speakers, and for them English is not their first language. As English is often used as a way of communication between people with different mother tongues, the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been developed. The power of the English language has spread to different spheres of our lives including the business environment. In the contemporary world a number of multinational corporations have increased rapidly; more and more organizations claim their status as 'international' or 'transnational' and distribute their services to many countries. A large multinational company can have hundreds of thousands of employees located in hundreds of countries. The main required condition for these large corporations is the use of English as the main company language.

The first part of my bachelor's thesis will be focused on the status of English as a global language and its current position in the world. In this part I will also provide a more detailed explanation of the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca and its role in multinational corporations and will provide a detailed explanation of the Kachru model of the spread of English.

In the second part of the thesis I will describe the practical use of ELF in multinational corporations and will analyze three genres of business communication. All genres will be described from two points of view: their structure and linguistic properties. The analysis will be provided based on materials taken from real-life situations in one multinational corporation.

## 2 ENGLISH: GLOBAL LANGUAGE

Nowadays, there are six languages in the world which have the status of international languages: English, French, Russian, Arabic, Spanish and Chinese. It has become very popular to describe and analyse these languages among linguists worldwide and studying them is very prestigious. Nevertheless, the English language has a prominent position and can be considered as the most popular language. Without a doubt English now has the status of the main international language; its use spreads all over the world. English is used in almost every part of the world, and by almost all nations. For some people English is their mother tongue, others have it as a foreign language. None of the world languages, except English, can be described as global, international, and polyethnic. We can find the confirmations of this in everyday occasions. When we switch on the television, we can, for example, hear English used by politicians. When we travel by public transport, we can see the names of bus or tram stops written in English. The same could be found when we travel abroad: English versions of signs, advertisements, names of streets are everywhere around. When we come to a restaurant in a foreign city, we can always ask for an English menu. Dröschel (2011: 34) notes that “the unprecedented spread of English has given rise to a number of terms such as ‘International English’, ‘English as an International Language’, ‘World English’, ‘English as a World Language’, ‘Global English’ etc”.

Nowadays, the English language covers all spheres of human life. Its power spreads to different fields from science and politics, to business and tourism. According to Seidlhofer (2011: 2) “English is not only an international language, but the international language”. Why is English said to be the global language, though? David Crystal, a British linguist and academic, describes the phenomenon of a global language as follows:

“A language does not become a global language because of its intrinsic structural properties, or because of the size of its vocabulary, or because it has been a vehicle of a great literature in the past, or because it was once associated with a great culture or religion [...] A language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people – especially their political and military power” (Crystal, 2003:9).

According to Crystal (2003) there are two main aspects of why English is the global language: geographical-historical, which roots lay in expansion of British Empire in 1600 and colonial education policy, and socio-cultural, which means a wide spread of use of English in all spheres of human's life: economy, politics, business, safety, entertainment, media, and education; in other words, today's English can be considered "as a cause and consequence of globalization" (Seidlhofer, 2011).

The global use of English is also described by Kachru in his model of the spread of English (Figure 1), in which all English speakers are divided into three groups or circles.

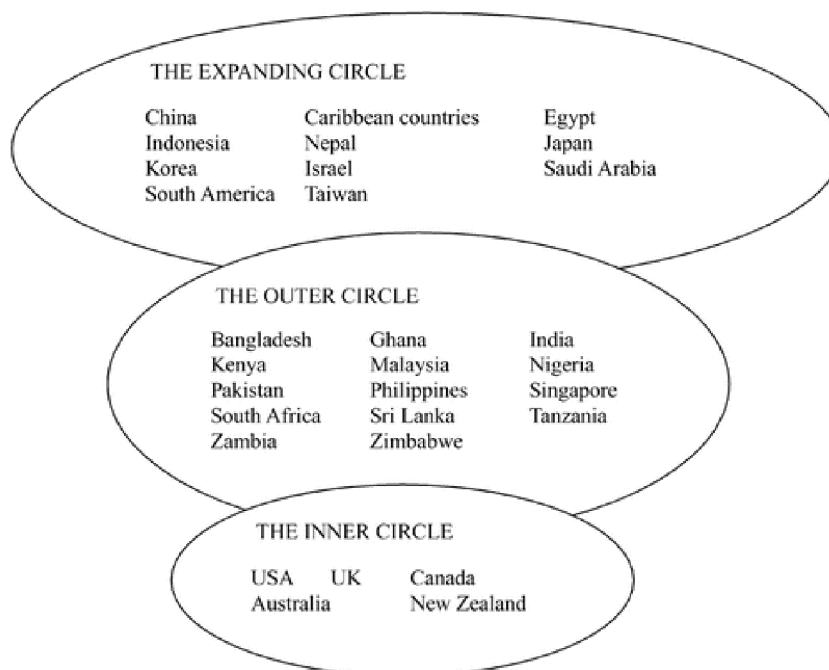


Figure 1.

- The Inner Circle (*English as a native language, ENL*) includes native English speakers who use Standard English (SE) with its national norms; it is represented by following countries: the UK, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand.
- The Outer Circle (*English as a second language, ESL*) contains countries where English is considered a "second language" because of their colonial history. English is used as a *book language* and plays an important role in education, law, governance, and popular culture. This

circle includes post-colonial countries such as South Africa, Singapore, Philippines, India and Pakistan.

- 3. In the Expanding Circle (*English as a foreign language, EFL*) Kachru describes countries where English is taught and learned as a foreign language, EFL, or where English as the lingua franca, ELF, is used as a way of communication. The examples of these countries are Russia, the Czech Republic, China, Japan, and Brazil, etc.

The use of English spreads worldwide - scientific journals are published in English, the first computer programs were written in English, medical and technical terminology is based on English vocabulary. These facts place English in a high position in the technologies and scientific sphere.

According to statistics, about one and a half million people around the world can now communicate in English well. Nevertheless, non-native speakers of English today significantly outnumber native speakers; only for 20% of speakers English is their mother tongue. This means that “only one out of every four users of English in the world is a ‘native speaker’ of the language” (Seidlhofer, 2011: 2).

In fact, the overall majority of English speakers worldwide are non-native speakers who use the language in influential networks, and the proportion of those speakers is growing rapidly (Majanen, 2008: 1). As a result, the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca (ELF) has been developed.

According to Droschel (2011: 28) such aspects as the colonial power of the British empire, the leading position of the United States in economics, the political sphere and globalization identify the status and the spread of English “as the world’s most important lingua franca”.

### 3 LINGUA FRANCA AS A NEW PHENOMENON IN ENGLISH

“Language is the most frequently used and most highly developed form of human communication we possess” (Crystal, 1985: 247). This statement exactly determines the main function of language and its definition. However, it is not enough for communication between people from different parts of the world.

“A lingua franca arises out of situations where speakers of different first languages need to talk: they have to choose a medium for communication, and with any luck they have at least one language in common in their repertoires” (Mauranen, 2012: 15).

Of course, English is not the only language ever used as a lingua franca. Sanskrit in the ancient era, Latin and Greek in the Roman Empire, Russian in the Soviet Union – these languages were considered as very important lingua franca and had a great influence in the past, but they lost their power with time. In the modern world English “is the first truly global lingua franca” (Mauranen, 2012: 17) and no other existing language includes such a large number of users worldwide. The great influence of English language is obviously related to the rise of new technologies, the Internet and electronic communications. Furthermore, English now is also widely used in other spheres of our life: the global economy, politics, media and business. In my bachelor’s thesis I consider the use of English in business environment, where this language is used mostly as a lingua franca.

Seidlhofer (2011: 7) describes the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca (ELF) as “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option”.

This means that most of the speakers who use English as a lingua franca are non-native speakers and belong to Expanding circle of the Kachru model. However, it does not mean that interlocutors from Inner and Outer circles cannot use ELF as a tool of communication; in case of business environment, ELF is usually used by people from all three circles. This may occur, for example, during international meetings or conference calls. The practical use of ELF in business communication and its typical features will be further analyzed in the second part of the thesis and will be based on practical examples.

The term ‘lingua franca’ was first developed between the 15th and 19th centuries, when the population of the Mediterranean coast, mostly traders, spoke a mix of Spanish, Italian, French, and Arabic as the main language of commerce or trade. Some sources state that it was a pidgin

language, a mix of vocabulary of two or more different languages, which originally came from an Italic dialect. This neutral language in consequence was called ‘lingua franca’.

However, it is difficult to determine the exact etymology of the term. Most specialists claim that it came from the Arabian *lisan al-ifrang*. Arabic was an early lingua franca and its use was spread from Arabian Peninsula to India, China, Central Asia, and the Middle East with expanding of Islamic Empire in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century.

The modern world has now “a truly global lingua franca” – English – with its unprecedented power spread across the globe (Mauranen, 2012). For the first time in the world’s history, English can be considered an international language, a global language or a world language.

Lingua franca is a function of the English language; it is a way of interaction in the multinational areas, and people for whom English is not their mother tongue use it. Due to the fact that the English language is a way of communication for people from different cultures and nationalities, users often neglect the strict following of linguistic and grammatical norms of the standard English language. Non-native speakers often involve a variety of forms of the English language according to their region. According to Widdowson (2003: 29) “they speak a new variety of English which depends neither on childhood acquisition nor on cultural identity”. Thus, ELF can be determined as “a dynamic, locally realized enactment of a global resource, best conceptualized not as a uniform set of norms or practices, but as a highly variable, creative expression of linguistic resources which warrants a distinct analytical framework” (Dewey, 2009: 6).

## **4 ROLE OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES**

As was mentioned above, English as a lingua franca plays a significant role in different fields of today's society – in cultural, political, economic, and social spheres. English is used as a communication tool between people from different sides of the globe. Thus, the English language can be called the language of international communication. Globalization of English also takes place in business strategy; more and more large corporations are adopting English and establishing it as the main company language. According to statistics of Harvard Business Review, the company can become number one in its field only if it has an English language strategy. For the most powerful organizations worldwide English has become the official language and thus the main communication tool for business.

The greatest purpose of the English language in multinational companies worldwide is to make company service as modern, clear and comfortable as possible and further give the company the status of a “global corporation”. Also, the use of English becomes a necessity during business meetings and international negotiations. However, the main purpose of English in multinational company is to provide a good customer care. If the company's goal is to be considered a multinational corporation, it must be able to guarantee a high level of customer support.

Another necessary requirement of successful multinational company is English-speaking employees. People applying for a job in a multilingual corporation must be able to communicate in English well. It is necessary for further interaction with customers and cooperation with co-workers as most of employees in such organizations come from different countries. “People decided to use English as a communication tool in multinational corporations where people from different countries and different nationalities are working together and must cooperate with each other. They need not feel bound and tightened by their national language local boundaries and their limited reach” (Krhutová, 2009: 15).

We can observe that there a lot of people from different parts of the world, with different culture and first languages who cooperate with each other every day within one company. The role of culture is very important in a company strategy as each culture may influence collective habits and thoughts and then forms a model of behavior of entire company. Thus, it is very important to build a good multinational and multicultural system which can further shift a company to higher position on its field.

Of course, multinational corporations include a large number of departments which are responsible for different parts of company's business. However, a vast majority of these departments are dealing with internal issues and they are responsible for operating of the entire company. Usually, there is only a small part of the whole company's mechanism which is responsible for customer support. Nevertheless, customer care plays a very important role, especially in big companies, without it the whole business of such companies would obviously not be possible. Based on my work experience, I can describe the customer support in large companies as a department which is responsible for solving customer's queries via phone or email. The department is usually divided into different teams according to specific regions and languages. It may be a French team, which is focused on French customers queue and communicate with them primarily in French, or a German team. However, the main language of business relationships between sellers and customers or between partners in multinational corporations is the English language. The reason for that is described by Krhutová below:

“It is a flexible, open to change and easy enough to learn. Moreover, its capturing the positions as a professional language brings no prejudices, as a professional variety is free of cultural and political implications” (Krhutová, 2009: 16).

Business communication as a unit of the language system has its own features. The entire business communication can be divided according to different genres of written and spoken language. If we consider written genres of business communication, we can highlight some of them such as emails, agreements, statements, contracts, and reports. Almost all these types of company documentation are formal and very often they are only available in English. As was mentioned before, it is the standard condition for a company, which claims its status as 'multinational'.

A multinational company can also be called multilingual because it is supposed to operate in many countries and should provide customer care in these countries. In this business environment the term English as a lingua franca is used. Using English as a common language in business means that partners from Saudi Arabia and the Czech Republic can collaborate without any language bounds; further, it may shift the company to the international level. The same may occur within the company: colleagues with different mother tongues can cooperate using English as a link language. “Adopting a common language is not just a good idea, it is now becoming a must – even for a company that is based in a country where English is not the main language” (Pearson English blog).



## **5 METHODOLOGY AND ANALYZED MATERIALS**

I have already mentioned that we can consider variety of communicative genres of written and spoken language when describing English as a lingua franca in multinational corporations. According to Swales (1990: 39) the genre can be determined as a “type of communicative event and offers the following as examples: jokes, stories, lectures, greetings and conversations”. The given definition is mostly related to the genres of spoken language, however, the term ‘communicative event’ can also be used for written language. For business English described in this work, typical genres of written communication are work emails, agreements, contracts, reports, declarations, whereas spoken genres include, for instance, telephone calls and face-to-face communication between colleagues.

This part of my thesis is focused on three genres of written language: business emails, internal chat communication via Skype, and internal emails. All three genres are described here according to two main aspects: a structure and typical linguistic properties. The genre of internal emails can be considered as a communication between colleagues from different departments within one organization and may include elements of formal and informal language; it contains some features of genres of business emails and internal chat, and I use it in my thesis for comparison two previous genres according to above criteria.

The practical part of the thesis describes features of business writing based on some examples taken from real-life situations within one multinational organization. In order to follow the company’s privacy policy, some internal information including personal details is removed from the contexts of the emails. Some of the examples (Figure 2-4) are demonstrated in the text, and the rest is then represented in Appendix in form of samples (Sample 1-22).

### **5.1 Genre of Business Emails**

Emails have become very popular within business environments and take a vast part of the entire business communication. It is a method of conversation via the Internet that does not require participants to be available at the same time. Email communication is popular in business environments as a fast and effective way to stay in contact with partners and co-workers. It gives a possibility to share information and send necessary documentation without face-to-face contact. Conversation via email can be considered as a dialogic interaction; however, it does not require immediate feedback of interlocutors.

Email communication usually takes place in a formal situation. A typical example of a business email in a multicultural organization is communication between a customer support representative and a customer, when the interlocutors do not know each other well. The main features of such type of conversation are following a correct word order, clear organizing of the letter, precise information, use of short sentences, but not short forms. Such emails can also include abbreviations and specific terminology, which is used internally within one company. Business emails are usually asking for information or requesting something. They can contain thanking, confirming, apologizing, or can refer to attachments. In order to obtain required information and establish good business relationships a sender and a reader follow the standards of formal business writing which will be further described in the thesis.

### **5.1.1 Structure of business emails**

The structure of almost all business emails is the same. It usually includes a subject, greeting, the body of the message and a closing.

#### **Subject**

The subject line is very important in a business email - it is the first thing that the reader sees in the mailbox. Subject lines should contain a brief but meaningful explanation of the following email – it should be easy enough to recognize it from the other emails. The subject usually consists of only a few words and helps the receiver to understand the main purpose of the following email. According to the norms of business email, the subject line can contain from six to ten words. However, based on my practical experience, one to five words for a subject line is usually enough to describe clearly what the following letter is about. Sometimes people prefer to give a complete message into the subject line in order to save time of a reader: *Spare Pool ID needed* (Sample 17), *Stolen devices* (Sample 21).

The title of the letter should be as specific as possible. It is important to avoid unclear descriptions of a subject line thereby to save a recipient from being confused. In the following example, a subject line is very meaningful from the point of view of a customer (sender) and contains enough information to help an agent (receiver) to understand the aim of the email:

*Device maintenance* (Sample 3). However, for agents who are dealing with all kinds of repairs and receive about a hundred requests per day regarding different products, such subjects will not help to recognize the issue. An example of a more detailed subject line is demonstrated as follows: *ID Card printing issue* (Sample 2).

## **Salutation**

Opening salutations in a business email must be written in an appropriate format. Wallwork (2011:9) claims that a receiver usually forms a first impression of the email from its opening, even though a subject is what a reader sees first. Opening salutations contain the name of the recipient; it means that when a sender makes a mistake spelling a reader's name, there is a big risk to annoy him/her.

The following criteria described by Wallwork (2011) should be used in the beginning of the email and can help to make a good impression of the sender:

- Correct spelling of the recipient's name;
- Correct titles and gender;
- Being as specific as possible when the name is unclear.

It is important to write correctly a person's name. Making mistakes can be considered by a reader as impolite and disrespectful. A greeting should contain an appropriate initial salutation and use titles when needed. Salutations often start with the word *Dear* to express respect to the reader, after that person's name usually follows: *Dear Mr. Gehlert*. Wallwork (2011:12) also mentioned that in some countries people may use functional or academic titles instead of names. However, based on my experience, this method is not popular in business writing.

Nowadays many companies adopt a very friendly style of writing and open an email with informal salutation (Sample 2, Sample 13). Using *Hello* or *Hi* rather than extremely polite forms help to adopt a friendly and positive approach and gain the customer's support and trust. Companies expect the same feedback from customers and obtain it in most cases: *Hi Vera* (Sample 22).

## **Body text**

The body of the email usually consists of three parts: the introduction, main text and closing. Introduction should describe the purpose of the email. This part usually begins with specific phrases, some of them are mentioned as follows: *I am writing you regarding, Please be informed that, Please proceed, Please provide.* The more detailed explanation will further appear in the main body.

The main part is focused on the details of the letter and can often be divided into several short paragraphs according to different requests. The structure of the email should be precise and contain short and simple sentences rather than one long paragraph to avoid grammatical mistakes and save a reader from being lost and bored. However, in some cases where it is not possible to avoid long sentences in the email, it is a good idea to provide a summary of what has been written to let a reader quickly look through it and catch the main points. Wallwork (2011) provides a list of the main criteria of successful emails, some of which were already mentioned above. He also suggests the following steps to write an email in standard English:

- Using of a correct word order

A basic structure when writing an email is: subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object. If the letter contains an adjective, there is a risk of misplacement - a common mistake in business emails. An adjective should be put before the noun which an adjective describes. However, there is a possibility that a letter can contain more than one adjective in a sentence, then they should be placed in the following order: quantity, size, color, origin, material, and use (Wallwork, 2011:29).

The other 'rule' related to a correct word order is avoiding of parenthetical phrases – phrases which are divided by commas and separate the subject from it's verb. Avoiding such phrases let the recipient read through the email and understand the information quickly and easily.

- Check spelling and grammar.

The important criterion of writing a professional business email is spelling, especially spelling of personal names. The incorrect spelling can make a bad impression on a sender – he/she can lose a respect of a recipient immediately if the name of a reader is misspelled.

- Do not mix levels of formality.

As was mentioned above, some companies adopt more friendly and open relationships with customers and prefer using informal salutations rather than polite English. However, it does not mean that the following letter can be written in an inappropriate way and contain elements of chat conversation, for example, a method of simplification.

## **Ending**

In a final salutation a sender usually wants to thank the recipient for his interest and time. The common phrase for closing the email is *Best regards*. If the ending of the email contains several salutations, it should be written in short parts divided by full stops. However, some people prefer using long series of salutations instead of simple phrases. The examples of such salutations are demonstrated in Sample 2: “*Your quick feedback will be highly appreciated. Regards*”, and in Sample 4: “*Waiting for your earliest solution will be highly appreciated. Thank you in advance*”. The given examples contain long and very formal salutations used by a sender in order to express a high respect to a recipient even if interlocutors have had no communication before. Such long and formal salutations are typical for people from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

## **Signature**

The signature should include brief information and contact details about the sender. The typical signature contains a name, a company name and a phone number. In some cases, it also includes a work position. Some companies prefer including their address, website, or logo and call to action such as *Visit us* or *Follow us*.

## **Attachments**

Business emails can also refer to attachments. A sender usually informs about some additional documentation such as reports, contracts or price confirmation in the main body, or at the end of the letter.

Hello [REDACTED],

Could you please be so kind and provide us with a product number for given units?

Thank you very much in advance.

In case of any questions, please, do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

*Figure 2.*

Figure 2 demonstrates the email which is written according to the above mentioned norms of official business writing. The structure of the email is clear, and the email contains all necessary parts. The sender uses a friendly greeting (*Hello*), the body contains the request and includes only one part - there is no a detailed explanation. However, the phrase *given units* shows us that the reader is aware of the issue and the explanation no need in this case. The closing part consists of three phrases. The first sentence thanks the reader in advance for the request above. The second phrase gives a feedback to the sender. This method is widely used when writing business emails – it helps a sender to express a respect to a reader, thus to gain the same approach from him/her. The third part includes the phrase *Best regards* which is typical for closing of official letter.

Referring to the main purpose of the given thesis, I would like to note that in the environment where most people are from the outer and the expanding circles of the Kachru model, possible violations in the email structure may occur and some of the norms of business language can be omitted or changed.

### **5.1.2 Linguistic properties of business emails**

Emails usually contain a less formal style of business communication. Despite the fact that business emails are used to share official information, it accepts possible grammatical mistakes, often has informal style and even contains elements of chat communication. It comes especially in cases when English is used as a lingua franca. The genre of business emails is more informal than the other written genres of business communication such as declarations and reports, thus, we can observe avoiding some linguistic norms of formal language.

## Use of abbreviations

Even though business email is a genre of formal writing, it can accept the use of abbreviations perfectly well. Moreover, as business emails contain internal information, there are also a lot of internal abbreviations which are used to save the time and avoid long sentences in email.

There are different types of abbreviations in business writing, typically acronyms and initialisms. The main difference between them is that an acronym forms a new word from the beginning letter and is not rarely a new word better known than the original term: *NATO*. The examples of common acronyms and initialisms in internal business writing are mentioned below:

FAO - For the Attention of;

FYI – For Your Importance;

FOC – Free of Charge;

FYI – For Your Importance;

ASAP – As Soon As Possible.

These abbreviations are widely used in different contexts and can be considered as common abbreviations in business emails, however there are some of them which can be recognized only in some specific areas: *RMA* (Samples 3 and 4). Moreover, not rarely do users form different parts of speech. In the sample 14 we can see the interesting phenomenon when the initialism *FOC* acts as acronym and forms a verb: *I FOC'd*. The given abbreviation does not belong to internal terminology. The phenomenon of mixing acronyms and initialisms is not typical; the method is used by the non-native speaker of English rather as an exception in this email.

As was mentioned above, acronyms and initialisms can be related to both, common and specific types of documentation. Example of internal initialism of one specific organization is mentioned in Sample 8: *PC*.

Some abbreviations can have an ambiguous effect: *Rgrds* (Sample 12), *THX* (Sample 15). The given abbreviations are not acronyms nor initialisms. They can be considered as shortened form of words and can make an impression that a reader did not find enough time to write a full word.

## Specific terminology

In business communication, use of specific terminology is a necessity. Each company uses its own professional vocabulary depending on business field. Such internal terminology often can be understood only by individuals from one industry: *Part Hold* (Sample 6).

Some common words using in business communication may usually have several meanings. They can be related to standard vocabulary and can be widely used in different contexts. However, meaning of common words entirely change when it is used in the context of internal business communication and only people with specific knowledges can understand them. In the given examples of the emails, the professional vocabulary of one organization contains the following terminology: *Shipping Manifest* and *Gold Request* (Sample 16), *Spare Pool* (Sample 17).

### **Short sentences and paragraphs**

Wallwork (2011) claims that long and complex sentences are typical for formal business letters. However, in my work I observe that in business emails short sentences and paragraphs become a necessity. This method is used in order to save time and save a reader from being lost and confused, but it is important to keep a letter complete and comprehensible. In Sample 22 the sender provides the brief, but clear explanation of the email uses the short sentences and short paragraphs.

### **Violation of grammatical rules**

Compared to the other written genres of business communication (contract, reports, offers), where the following grammar is necessarily, the business email can accept possible violations. As we analyze English as a lingua franca, we can observe business email communication between non-native speakers of English, thus the interlocutors do not always keep the letter correct from the point of view of grammar. Sample 1 demonstrates an email which differs from the standard business email written, for example, by a native speaker. The sender of the given email is from Saudi Arabia - this country comes under the Expanding circle in the Kachru model. In the given email we can observe violation of such criteria as punctuation and spelling: *massage*, *attaché*, *reapair*, and *remainder*. Violation of norms of standard business writing is also demonstrated in Sample 20. The text of the given email contains different formats; the first



part of the text is much bigger, whereas the second part is less visible for a reader, thus there is a risk that it can be considered as a signature. However, in the given context, the second part is the more important as it contains all necessary information required from a sender. Sample 5 demonstrates a letter which contains an ambiguous sentence: “*arrange a device swap and accessories request*”. It is not clear whether the sender wants the reader to arrange “swap” or request. Also, in this email the sender avoids a punctuation mark in the middle and in the end of the email that can also be a reason why a letter is ambiguous and makes an impression that the reader did not have time to write the email properly.

### **Imperative and conditional in the letter**

Another property of business emails is the imperative mood. The imperative sentence expresses command or requests by the main verb called a finite verb, which states in the imperative mood: *send me, stop it, or run there*. When I receive emails in my work, I often find the use of imperative mood expressed by the following verbs: *see, proceed, send, provide*. Very often imperative mood in sentences is used in polite form by adding the word *please*: *please find* (Sample 3), *please arrange* (Sample 5), *please look* (Sample 12), *please proceed* (Sample 16).

Sometimes the writer tries to use the conditional rather than the imperative, asking if the reader can do the task. In order to write a polite and friendly email, the writer uses this method. Thus, he/she can expect the positive feedback from his/her interlocutor. In Sample 13 the conditional is used instead of imperative: “*Could you please be so kind and provide us...*”.

## **5.2 Internal Chat Communication**

Apart from the formal types of communication in multinational companies, I would like to mention the internal chat, a type of communication where co-workers can communicate with each other. The internal chat is a way of informal communication via Skype in a form of real-time dialogue which requests immediate feedback from the interlocutor.

### 5.2.1 Structure of internal chat

The structure of the internal chat differs significantly from the structure of business emails, where the letter is strictly divided into separate sections. The structure of chat conversation is very similar to oral communication and can contain some elements of spoken language. As is mentioned above, it is informal real-time dialogue with the immediate reaction of the interlocutors. Thus, this type of business writing does not have any precise structure.

Figure 3 demonstrates the internal chat view, which has form of the dialogue. Interlocutors usually avoid the long sentences to save the time and quick share with each other some knowledge and news, or ask about something in form of instant messages.



*Figure 3.*

According to Figure 3, we can conclude that chat conversation does not have a precise structure which is necessary for business email. Even though the given chat contains a greeting, after which main reason is followed, the conversation cannot be considered a well-structured. The

main reason of using internal chat is to share an internal information or to request something as fast as possible so it is not important for a sender to make well-structured sentences even if interlocutors do not know each other.

Sample 19 demonstrates the email where the first part is similar to the structure of a business email – it contains a greeting and polite request in imperative mood. However, when we have a look at the entire email, we see that it is a kind of informal conversation without any precise structure and with elements of spoken language. We also can observe that all given conversations demonstrate immediate feedback from interlocutors; that fact also shows that chat conversation is very similar to oral communication.

### **5.2.2 Linguistic properties of internal chat**

As was mentioned above, in chat communication language has a “speech-like” form. It contains elements of spoken language and despite the fact it is a genre of business writing, the omission of standard written English is typical for this type of communication.

#### **Short forms**

In order to save time, the writer prefers the method of shortened forms of words in chat. We can observe that all of the given examples (Samples 9,10, and 19) demonstrate the use of shortened words. As the chat is close to face-to-face interaction, spelling in chat conversation significantly differs from standard written English. In the given examples the method of substitution, when the full word is changed to short abbreviations is used: *pls* – please, *u* – you, *sec-* second. The method of shortened forms is used in order to save time and write a message as fast as possible. The method is very popular in internal chat conversation; however, we also saw it in business email where this method is considered more impolite than positive.

#### **Emoticons**

The use of emoticons is typical for chat conversation. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018) emoticon is “a group of keyboard characters that typically represents a facial expression or suggests an attitude or emotion and that is used especially in computerized

communications”. Interlocutors can express their feelings or mood using emoticons in chat conversation. According to my experience, most of chat dialogues contain asking, requesting, thanking, or apologizing, etc, that means that the most popular emoticons of business chat express sadness and happiness. The use of emoticons can help to highlight the emotions and reaction regarding some situations.

The given examples (Sample 9,10, and 19) demonstrate the practical use of emoticons by use of positive symbol. In Sample 10 the writer is trying to explain the participant the mistake he/she made previously. Using positive symbol of emoticon twice, the sender shows that he/she does not want to offend the reader but just explaining the issue in the funny way. In Sample 19 the positive emoticon demonstrates a friendly and open mood of interlocutors, whereas Sample 9 contains thanking and respect that we can see in the context.

As the chat conversation is related to spoken language, the use of emoticons is typical for this type of business writing. In the spoken language emotions are expressed by tone of voice, whereas in writing it can be expressed by symbols. However, chat programs, for example Skype, contain lists of emoticons which include not only the symbols of emotions such as happiness or sadness, but also animals, weather or symbols of a meal.

### **Punctuation**

Chat dialogues are usually poor from the point of view of the punctuation. According to my investigation, people avoid the use of commas and the other punctuation marks in dialogues. Even the full stop is usually expressed not by symbol but using method of separate messages as it is demonstrated in Sample 9. However, some chat messages can include basic punctuation such as full stop, commas or question marks. In Samples 9,10, and 19 we can see only the use of a question mark.

### **Specific terminology**

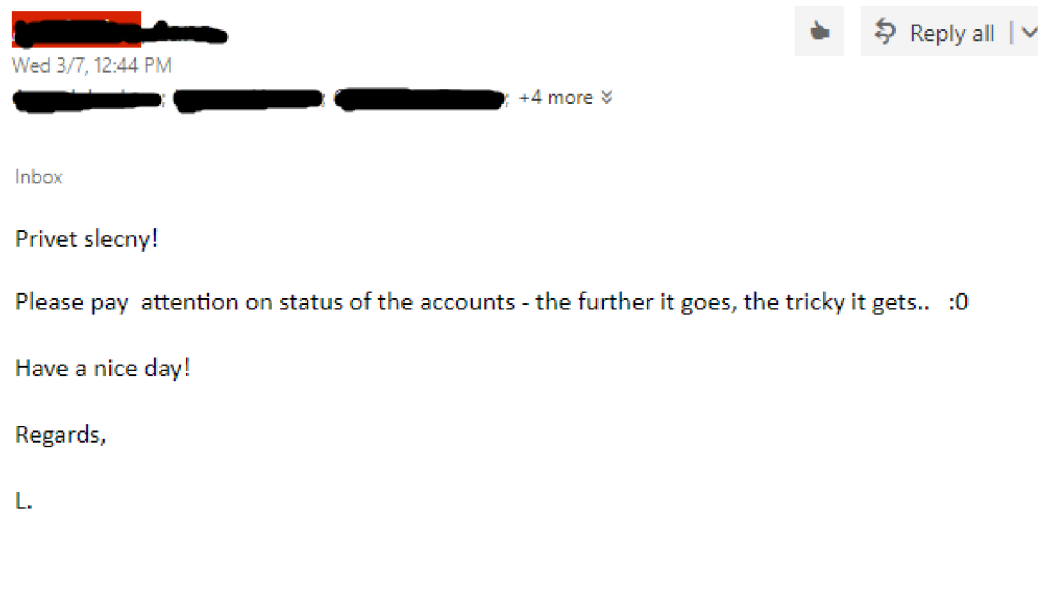
The use of specific terms was already mentioned above in the context of business emails. Nevertheless, both of these genres are related to business writing, thus, the use of specific terms is possible in conversation with partners and customers as well as with colleagues during chat conversation. Sample 10 contains the term *RMA* which has been already mentioned in Samples 3, 4, and 5 where this term used in official emails.

### 5.3 Internal Emails

Internal emails can be considered a genre of business writing which takes place mainly between colleagues within one organization from different departments. Unlike internal chat communication, the genre of internal emails contains all internal documentation such as requests, confirmations, reports, and news which must be written in form of official letter in order to be saved or further distributed to many readers. Thus, it must be written in appropriate format. However, this genre may contain elements of both previous genres.

#### 5.3.1 Structure of internal email

As internal email is considered an official document, even though it is a type of communication between colleagues, it must be written according to norms of business email. That means that a structure of internal email consists of subject, open salutation, main body, ending and signature. However, it does not mean that the language of internal email is always formal.



*Figure 4.*

The example above demonstrates an email which has a correct structure according to norms of business emails: it contains all parts which must be mentioned in the official email including

punctuation. However, the content of the given email is very informal and includes features of chat communication that does not mean that the letter is written in inappropriate format. Here we can observe such elements of informal language as a mix of languages (Russian and Czech in salutation and English in the main text), the initial letter of a name of a sender instead of the whole name, and even use of emoticons that expresses a friendly and positive approach of the sender. The given content cannot be considered incorrect and inappropriate as it is understandable for all recipients.

Sample 6 demonstrates the example of internal email. The given email is also structured according to norms of business emails mentioned in Chapter 5.1.1. The body text is divided into two parts. The first part contains a main request (the reason of the email); the second part then includes a more detailed explanation of the issue.

### **5.3.2 Linguistic properties of internal emails**

If we consider linguistic properties demonstrated in Sample 6, we can observe that the language in this letter is rather informal and contains elements of chat communication as in the previous example (Figure 4). In this email we can see use of short form (*pls*) which is rather informal. Also, the format of text cannot be acceptable for formal types of writing because of highlighted words. Moreover, we can observe the use of emoticons and even a difference in word size which means that a sender likely did not re-read the whole email before sending. These features however cannot always be considered as a mistake because it is a conversation between colleagues; sometimes it is enough to read comprehensibly.

All samples related to the genre of internal emails demonstrate conversations between non-native speakers of English, and we can observe that some linguistic features appear repeatedly. Emails contain a mix of languages and violations of grammatical rules. Also, we can see the presence of shortened forms (*pls*, Sample 6). When a reader is asked to do something, and some action is already done, it is enough to notify it in one word as it is shown in Sample 17: *done*. The considered email communications take place in one organization located in the Czech Republic, thus we can observe the very often use of Czech grammar in salutations *Hi Věrko* (Sample 11), *Hello Ondro* (Sample 7). Furthermore, sometimes colleagues abroad prefer the use of the Czech language, for example, in email salutations, if the reader is Czech. Sample 14 demonstrates the email where the sender from South Africa writes *Ahoj Vera* to express a positive and friendly approach.

Elements of informal language and violation of grammatical norms are acceptable for this genre due to the main reason: internal emails are not used in order to establish further business relationships and collaborations. Internal emails are used only between colleagues within one organization in order to achieve “a communicative goal” (Seidlhofer 2011:18), even though it is communication between several departments in different parts of the world.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

English is considered a global language nowadays; the use of the English language strategy is a necessary condition for all organizations which claim the status of “international”. However, the majority of English speakers worldwide are non-native speakers with different mother tongues who often use English as the only option to communicate with each other. For these people English is considered a lingua franca or link language. The main task of my bachelor’s thesis was to describe the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca and its use as a main communicative tool in multinational corporations.

The first part, the theoretical part, describes the position of English in the world, the definition of the term English as a lingua franca, ELF, and an explanation of why today’s English is the most important lingua franca.

In the practical part of the thesis the use of ELF in the business environment is described based on examples from real life situations taken from one multinational company.

In the second part I attempted to describe three of the main genres of business communication. The genre of business emails represents the formal style of business writing and its main properties, whereas the genre of internal chat describes an informal type of business communication and is completely opposite to the genre of business emails. The genre of internal emails may contain linguistic properties of both previous genres. All three described genres are related to the business environment and widely used among people in multinational corporations as a way of communication.

Business emails are one of the most popular types of business correspondence; it is an easy and fast method of interaction and sharing working documentation with partners and customers. Emails require the following grammatical norms of formal language, however, it is still less formal than the other genres of business correspondence (reports, contracts, confirmations) and can contain possible violations of strict norms of standard English, especially, if the communication takes place between non-native speakers of English.

Despite the fact that the genre of business emails is less formal than the other genres of official documentation, internal chat communication differs significantly from the genre of business emails. It is informal, similar to the face-to-face interaction form of instant messages which allows people to communicate in real time. This method is used as a communication tool between colleagues within the company.



The genre of internal emails is also related to communication between colleagues in one organization. However, unlike the genre of internal chat, the genre of internal emails is more formal and can be considered an official documentation which can usually contain confirmations, acknowledgments or statements and can be saved or further distributed. Unlike chat communication, internal emails should always be written in the official company language.

In my bachelor's thesis all three genres are described according to two aspects: the structure and their typical linguistic properties.

The genre of email communication is a formal style of business writing; according to norms of standard English, business emails always have a precise with several separate sections. According to Wallwork (2011) the success of the message depends on a strict following of the structure pattern. However, business emails can accept possible violations in grammar and punctuation, especially when ELF is used. Based on examples from real-life situations where English is used as a lingua franca, I described possible deviations from norms of standard English.

Unlike business emails, internal chat conversation does not have any clearly defined structure as it is a genre more similar to spoken language. The main purpose of using internal chat is to obtain required information as fast as possible.

All given genres, however, take place in business environments, thus they may have some common linguistic features; we can observe a presence of specific terminology from business vocabulary or special usage of some general words. The same is related to acronyms and initialisms: in the genre of business emails abbreviations are used between partners, whereas in chat communication and internal emails the same abbreviations can be used among colleagues.

Another linguistic property typical for all mentioned genres is the use of short sentences. One of the main purposes of business writing is to save time and solve an issue as soon as possible, so the interlocutors use the method of shortened sentences which contain a brief but meaningful explanation of the letter. However, shortened sentences in these three genres are completely different because formal business email requires the following grammatical rules, whereas informal chat usually omits the use of the official pattern of what a message should look like.

In my bachelor's thesis I compared three genres of business writing with regard to formal and informal language, their specific structures and linguistic features. All analyzed materials are

taken from internal communication in one multinational company. The majority of participants use the given written genres of business communication in the form of ELF.

All three genres have great importance for business nowadays. Every day millions of people communicate within multinational organizations with co-workers, partners, sellers and customers using emails and chat. The common feature of these types of written genres is that they are now the very important communication tool for all multinational corporations.

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## 8 APPENDIX

### List of samples

Subject RE: repair form [REDACTED]  
remainder

---

[cid:image001.jpg@01D3CA9A.0B0EF3E0]  
Best Regards

[REDACTED]  
Supervisor [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Tel: - [REDACTED]  
Fax: - [REDACTED]  
Mobile: - [REDACTED]  
E-mail - : [REDACTED] <mailto:[REDACTED]>

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, March 06, 2018 10:57 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: repair form [REDACTED]

Description

Dear sir,

update message attaché final repair forms [REDACTED] no [REDACTED] [REDACTED]\_18\_cig\_3 handheld for maintenance

[cid:image001.jpg@01D3CA9A.0B0EF3E0]  
Best Regards

*Sample 1.*

Subject ID Card printing issue

---

HTML Body [Click here to view HTML version](#)

Text Body Hi,

As per our telephonic conversation, please find the attachment of the white lines on the cards after printing from our ([REDACTED])

Waiting for your earliest solution will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Kind Regards

*Sample 2.*

Subject    Device maintenance

---

Hi sir ,

Please find attached RMA Form with Devices need maintenance

Regards.

Name: [REDACTED]  
Job Title: System Administrator  
Division: [REDACTED]  
Mob: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

Description  
--

*Sample 3.*

[REDACTED] to [REDACTED] Only sent an email. - 

to [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] 

Dear Mr. [REDACTED],

Hope my email finds you well,

Kindly for your quick support in the attach you will find out RMA of damaged devices.

Your quick feedback will be highly appreciated.

Regards...

*Sample 4.*

[redacted] to [redacted] sent an email. - 📧

to [redacted] ▾

Good day

Please arrange a device swap and accessories request see attached RMA form.

SN	Fault descriptions
14043521400098 (ref 04427)	No camera app

Kind regards

[redacted]

*Sample 5.*

Hi [redacted]

can you pls **urgently** raise [redacted] to **uncomplete** RMA [redacted] / [redacted]  
[redacted]? (revert status to WIP)

Job was completed mistakenly and needs to go on Part Hold, which will take time... :-(

Thanks & Regards

[redacted]  
[redacted]

*Sample 6.*

[redacted] to [redacted] sent an email. - 📧

to [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], [redacted], ek... ▾


Hello Ondro,


could you please advise about the capacity?

Thank you,  
D.

*Sample 7.*

[redacted] to [redacted] sent an email. - 

Two days ago at 4:24 PM 

to [redacted] [redacted] 

Ahoj [redacted]

I am very sorry, we are not able to set up manual discount in this case. As we discussed previously, we are not allowed to do so - only after PC is confirmed.

My apologies I can't assist you any further.

Regards,

L.

*Sample 8.*



Ryzhkova, Vera <[redacted]>

Fri 8/4, 3:24 PM

[redacted] Ryzhkova, Vera 

Ryzhkova, Vera 2:36 PM:

Hi! any cases ?

[redacted] 2:37 PM:

not really

[redacted] 2:37 PM:

I'll ask to my mates

Ryzhkova, Vera 2:37 PM:


:)

*Sample 9.*



[REDACTED] 11:15 AM:  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] 11:15 AM:  
Hi Vera  
Ryzhkova, Vera 11:15 AM:  
hi  
[REDACTED] 11:16 AM:  
could u pls check the rma  
[REDACTED] 11:16 AM:  
and tell me what is wrong  
[REDACTED] 11:16 AM:  
:)  
[REDACTED] 11:17 AM:  
i see u send the [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] 11:17 AM:  
and what about the Price Quotation? :)  
Ryzhkova, Vera 11:18 AM:  
och  
Ryzhkova, Vera 11:18 AM:  
god  
Ryzhkova, Vera 11:18 AM:  
sorry

*Sample 10.*

 [REDACTED]  
@Vera Ryzhkova Hi Věrko, could you please check the job and advise?  
Thank you.  
Thursday, March 15, 2018 9:52 AM

*Sample 11.*

hello team,  
Please look into this case and advice the best way to proceed urgently.  
Rgds, Treesa

*Sample 12.*

Hello [REDACTED],

Could you please be so kind and provide us with a product number for given units?


Thank you very much in advance.

In case of any questions, please, do not hesitate to contact us.

Best Regards,

*Sample 13.*

---

 [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]  Today at 11:53 AM 

to [REDACTED] 

Ahoj Vera,

The Customer claims they are renewing the contract.  
Currently I am only FOC the repairs if they escalate to me, reason being is I want to create pressure on them to provide a PO.

I was aware the list [REDACTED] sent me a couple of days ago were for a number of units that were on the expired contracts, but [REDACTED] only made mention of the one specific serial number. Therefore I FOC'd just the one RMA.

If [REDACTED] and or [REDACTED] complain I will highlight that the contract expired in Feb and we are waiting PO.

Regards

*Sample 14.*

To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: [REDACTED] FORMS

Hi

Pls use the attached form for [REDACTED] when you send a rma request.

THX

Best Regards,

*Sample 15.*

Subject Gold [REDACTED]  
Text Body Hello Team,  
Please proceed with Gold request RMA [REDACTED] logged for tomorrow. Please proceed with [REDACTED]  
Shipping manifest is attached.  
Thank you.  
Best regards,  
[REDACTED]

*Sample 16.*

Subject RE: Spare Pool ID needed  
Text Body Hello Team,  
Done.  
Best regards,  
Vera Ryzhkova  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
----- Original Message -----  
From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 9/25/2017 9:18 AM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Spare Pool ID needed  
Hello,  
please add Spare Pool ID to jobs in the attached reports.  
Thank you in advance.  
Best regards

*Sample 17.*

Privet devochki,

Below you can find information and instructions on PNP contracts.

Contract [REDACTED] expired 30-09-2017 - [REDACTED] - please proceed as [REDACTED]  
Contract [REDACTED] active - [REDACTED] should be possible - [REDACTED] - please proceed [REDACTED]  
Contract [REDACTED] active - [REDACTED] should be possible - [REDACTED] - please proceed [REDACTED]

Please let me know in case of any questions.

Have a good weekend to all 🌸

With kind regards,

*Sample 18.*

Conversation with [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Thu 8/31, 4:40 PM

[REDACTED] 4:24 PM:

Hello

[REDACTED] 4:24 PM:

are totaly busy ?

[REDACTED] 4:26 PM:

hi yees what do you need? :)

[REDACTED] 4:27 PM:

if you have many stuff to do, nothing

[REDACTED] 4:27 PM:

:)

*Sample 19.*

[Redacted] to [Redacted]

Yesterday at 7:18 AM

good morning. I attach the requested data, thanks

Stor :RUF7560  
Contact person: [Redacted]  
Store phone number: [Redacted]  
Address: [Redacted]

*Sample 20.*

Subject RE: [Redacted] - Stolen Devices  
HTML Body [Click here to view HTML version](#)  
Text Body Ahoj [Redacted]  
Could you please flag the below serial numbers [Redacted] as stolen?  
Thank you

*Sample 21.*

From: [Redacted].co.za  
Sent: 3/19/2018 8:17 AM  
To: [Redacted]  
Cc: [Redacted]  
Subject: Re: Case - [Redacted]: Faulty Unit [ ] [ ]  
Hi Vera

I trust you are well.  
Please use [Redacted] sno: [Redacted] and advise on price.  
Note previous price quoted to [Redacted] was [Redacted] for the same device.  
Thank you  
Kind Regards,

*Sample 22.*