ON NON-NATIVE SPEAKER EMAIL COMMUNICATION
FROM A REGISTER PERSPECTIVE (REDUCED VS FULL FORMS)

REGISTROVÁ ANALÝZA EMAILOVÉ KOMUNICE NERODILÝCH MLUVČÍCH ANGLIČTINY (ZKRÁCENÉ A PLNÉ TVARY)

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1. Introduction

The task of learning appropriate style, register and genre is widely believed to be particularly challenging for non-native speakers. This could be attributed to a lack of language intuition. In fact, the reasons for this may be threefold: in the first place, following Crystal & Davy (1969), second-language writers generally fail to possess an inherent language intuition and sometimes resort to inappropriate language. Second, the challenges of applying the appropriate style, register and genre may be accounted for insufficient consideration taken in current teaching and learning materials. For example, as pointed out by Thornbury (2005, p. 94), email conventions presented in current textbooks had to be created hastily to meet the demand. Third, as writing is increasingly moving towards representing informal speech, especially in the case of email communication, the two distinct forms of productive communication (writing and speech) are blurring and somewhat difficult to distinguish (see e.g. Baron, 2000). As a result, the second-language learner/writer is faced with a formidable challenge.

Given the assumption that the issues of style, register and genre tend to be a constant stumbling block for non-native speakers of English, the author has investigated a corpus of informal email messages produced by Czech learners of English. The paper is concerned with such vexing terms as style, register and genre, and presents the results of an analysis of genre features. More specifically, the author has investigated a corpus of fifty-seven informal written scripts (emails), with a total of 10,383 words, written by Czech learners of English in answer to one of the Cambridge: First exam rubrics, with the aim of finding whether second-language writers of English have considerable difficulty in applying appropriate register features.

2. The Theoretical Framework, Materials and Methods
2.1. Note on Style, Register and Genre

Existing approaches towards stylistic analysis are numerous and diverse, as Urbanová (2005) notes, and drawing distinct lines of demarcation between them is not an easy task for a researcher (Urbanová, 2005, p. 73). Since the paper relies explicitly on such complex notions as style, register and genre, I feel it is, firstly, essential to clarify these rather daunting terms. This is primarily due to the fact that there seems to be, as yet, no general consensus concerning the use of the nomenclature. For instance, Lee (2001, p. 11) points out that Crystal and Davy (1969) tend to use the term style in the same way most use *register* – i.e. to refer to particular ways of using language for specific contexts. Others take the view that the three terms are not necessarily interchangeable.

Following Lewandowski (2010, p. 69), perhaps the most convincing explanation of the three terms (register, style and genre) was offered by Biber and Conrad (2009). The authors make the point that style, genre and register refer to three different angles or perspectives on text varieties. For Biber and Conrad (2009) the **register perspective** is made up of a combination of an analysis of linguistic characteristics, i.e. typical lexical and grammatical characteristics that are always functional, and which are common in a text variety with analysis of the situation of the use of the variety. Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 2) go on to explain that "the underlying assumption of the register perspective is that core linguistic features like pronouns and verbs are functional, and, as a result, particular features are commonly used in association with the communicative purposes and situational context of texts." **Genre perspective** encompasses the description of the purposes as well as the situational context of a text variety. However, its linguistic analysis concentrates on the conventional structures used to construct a complete text within a text variety, such as the ways informal emails tend to start or end. Genre features are not usually pervasive but conventional and once occurring in a text. In terms of **style perspective**, the linguistic focus is not functionally motivated by the situational context. Rather, style features reflect aesthetic preferences that are associated with particular authors (Biber and Conrad 2009, p. 2).

2.2. Methods of Analysis

Register is frequently understood as a cover term of language variety defined by its situational characteristics, the speaker's/writer's purpose, the relationship between the addressor and addressee, the production circumstances, etc. As a result, the email analysis attempts to follow to a great extent the comprehensive framework for register analysis proposed by Biber and Conrad (2009) and outlined below. However, the method of analysis deviates from the suggested framework to a certain degree because it was felt that modifying the framework would more relevant with regard to the main aims of the research. Specifically, Biber and Conrad (2009) postulate a register analysis which is first and foremost dependent upon three steps:

1) a description of the situational characteristics of the register that includes e.g. the description of participants, relations among participants, channel, production circumstances, setting, communicative purposes, topic;
2) an analysis of the typical linguistic characteristics of the register;
3) identification of the functional forces that help to explain the reason why those linguistic features tend to be associated with those particular situational characteristics (Biber and Conrad, 2009, p. 47).

The analysis of situational characteristics is an important starting point for the linguistic (register) and genre analysis, because a register is a variety commonly associated with a specific situation having a specific communicative purpose, and it is also for this reason that I attempt to follow Biber and Conrad (2009) and describe situational characteristics of the email under investigation.

The first category of participants (addressor and addressee) is self-explanatory. That is, virtually every text is produced by someone (addressor) and attributed to someone (addressee). For example, personal email messages as well as personal letters tend to be addressed to an individual but can of course be addressed to multiple individuals. Social characteristics of the person (e.g. age, sex, level of education, social class) producing a text can have a profound effect on language choices, too. Similarly, the role of on-lookers cannot be ignored. As a matter of fact, the on-lookers are the participants who observe but are not the direct addressees of the register, yet the role of on-lookers is equally essential in making language choices.

As regards the relations among the participants – or rather, the degree of interactiveness, it may vary considerably from register to register. According to Conrad and Biber (2009) most registers are intermediate in their degree of interactiveness. For instance, participants in an email interchange directly respond to one another, but that interaction can spread over days or weeks. Apart from the

degree of interaction, the consideration of the social role and personal relationships among participants is important as well. In many cases the participants can be socially equal, e.g. friends or classmates exchanging email messages. Participants can also have different degrees of shared knowledge. For example, the description of your leisure time activities may vary depending on whether you are talking to your best friend or a complete stranger.

As far as channel is concerned, it roughly corresponds to Halliday's mode and primarily refers to the distinction between spoken and written language – speech vs writing. Furthermore, it is possible to distinguish amongst specific mediums of communication within speech and writing, e.g. radio for speech, and electronic (e.g. emails) for writing.

The production circumstances are closely connected with the channel of communication. For instance, casual conversations usually allow very little time for planning, while written texts have greater editing possibilities. In other words, the written texts can be revised, added, deleted and edited.

The time and place of interaction (setting) play an important part in making language choices as well. Also, the general characteristics of the setting can be crucial setting with regard to the place of communication. That is, whether or not communication takes place in private or public place.

In addition to the afore-mentioned tangible aspects (e.g. participants, physical mode of communication), it is equally important to consider the communicative purpose. Communicative purposes can be very general, e.g. narrating or reporting past events, and relatively easy to identify. Having said that, as noted by Conrad and Biber (2009) many registers combine several communicative purposes, e.g. textbooks include descriptive and explanatory purposes. Another parameter in relation to purpose is factuality. Does the addressor intend to convey e.g. factual information, personal opinion, speculation or a mix of them? The final parameter concerns the expression of stance that includes both personal attitudes and epistemic stances.

Topic can be a very open or very specific category and it is of great importance in making lexical choices yet it has no impact on the grammar of a register. Topic is roughly the equivalent of Haliday´s field, yet it is not identical. As to the grammatical differences, they tend to be more apparent as a result of various communicative purposes according to Biber and Conrad (2009). Having outlined the main situational characteristics for describing a genre and register, I now turn to the analysis of the typical linguistic characteristics of a register.

An Analysis of the Typical Linguistic Characteristics

Linguistic description is central to the analysis of text varieties. However, the key question arises as to which lexico-grammatical features are pervasive characteristics of a particular register. Biber and Conrad (2009) suggest three major methodological considerations in a register analysis. The methodological considerations are briefly summarised below.

First of all, the authors call for a comparative approach and note that by comparing samples of texts from different registers, it is possible to determine whether particular features (e.g, use of nouns, pronouns, verbs) are characteristic of the target register. While discussing the linguistic characteristics of registers, Biber and Conrad introduce three vital concepts: register features, register markers, and genre markers. The register features are defined as words or grammatical characteristics that are (1) pervasive – distributed throughout a text from the register, and whereas the register markers are (2) frequent – occurring more commonly in the target register than in most registers (Biber and Conrad, 2009, p. 53). Ferguson (1983) notes how certain expressions (register markers) can be restricted to a single register. For example, the count is two and one is particular used in baseball broadcast. In most cases, however, register differences are realised by the presence and absence of register features (both grammatical and lexical) rather than by the presence or absence of a few register markers. In addition to the two concepts, Biber and Conrad (2009) argue for an analysis of textual conventions, e.g. genre features (genre markers), to describe a text variety more fully. In fact, genre markers are the distinctive expressions and devices that are used to structure a text form of a particular genre. They are normally formulaic occurring in a particular location of a text, often at the beginning or end.

The second aspect concerns the need for quantitative analysis. That is, it is essential to determine the extent to which a given register feature occurs in the target register. As mentioned above, since it is, for example, possible to find various instances of the passive voice in various registers, quantitative analysis should be employed hand in hand with a comparative approach to make sure that the grammatical feature is indeed pervasive or frequent enough to be regarded as a register feature.

The third aspect concerns the need for a representative sample. A question can be posed: what is actually a representative sample? Obviously, there is no simple answer. Biber and Conrad (2009) speak of the size of the text corpus. They also provide a list of linguistic features to be investigated in register studies. The categories include, for example: vocabulary features (e.g. specialised vocabulary, discourse markers), special features of vocabulary, e.g. backchannels.

Lastly, the authors offer the description of a quantitative register analysis and show the way the rates of occurrences should be worked out. Because texts vary in size, it is necessary to arrive at "normed" rates of occurrence (Biber and Conrad, 2009, p. 62) – that is, the frequency of occurrence of a particular feature in a text sample, which usually includes 100 words. To perform such conversions, the following formula is suggested:

Normed rate = (raw count / total word count) x the fixed amount of text. For example, if an email message contains 16 nouns/148 words in total x 100 words = 10.8 nouns per 100 words.

Identification of the Functional Forces

The final step of a register analysis postulated by Conrad and Biber (2009) involves functional interpretation. At this stage, it is important to account for why the selected linguistic features are related to the situational characteristics and provide relevant instances. In other words, the task is to match the two up, explaining why specific linguistic characteristics are associated with situational characteristics. In this connection, the authors note that for the register analyst the situational description does not need to be considered final before undertaking the linguistic description (Conrad and Biber, 2009, p. 66). According to the authors, in interpreting genre features, e.g. genre markers, it is of importance to consider whether genre markers are purely conventional or functional, or perhaps a mixture of the two.

To reiterate, I follow the framework suggested by Conrad and Biber (2009). First, description of the situational characteristics is carried out. Second, I conduct the linguistic analysis focusing on the selected register features. Finally, I am concerned with the functional interpretation of the results. But I deviate from the suggested method to a certain extent by examining not only typical and pervasive lexico-grammatical features of the informal emails under investigation, but also their deviations from standard English – that is, expressions that are less likely to appear in email messages written by native speakers of English. Also, a strict comparative (quantitative) approach has not been taken. A comparative approach across cultures was not found convenient for the objectives set out, as the exam is exclusively intended for non-native speakers of English. Another option would be to compare analysing the informal emails. Rather every attempt has been made to identify the occurrence and frequency of the investigated features and compare them with the current studies into native and non-native discourse. The analytical approach adopted in this study combines quantitative and qualitative analyses. It is felt that the use of quantification serves as a starting point of investigation enables us to highlight general tendencies in the occurrence of the phenomena under investigation and motivate the selection of representative discourse samples which can subsequently be explored qualitatively. That is, both qualitative and quantitative perspectives are regarded as complementary. In the final stage, in line with Conrad and Biber (2009) the functional forces are described.

Below (in bullet points) is a summary of the type of sources and their primary objectives and chosen methods.

- The present study examines genuine pieces of writing (informal email messages) produced by a homogenous group of Czech learners of English who are at a past intermediate level of proficiency and looks into the use of short as well full forms.

- The study attempts to follow the framework for register analysis as postulated by Conrad and Biber (2009) by providing situational characteristics, identifying and interpreting selected lexico-grammatical features. The quantitative analysis is not, strictly speaking, comparative but makes an attempt to compare individual linguistic features within the examined register. As regards the method, the rate of occurrence of the target items was ascertained and examined manually, and the raw data was normalized to frequencies per 100 words to allow for comparison with previous and further research studies.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures
Emails

As far as the time period and choice of the materials (informal emails) are concerned, all materials (informal emails) were gathered in the period 2008 – 2010 at the end of the semester, after the course, and once the selected textbooks had been finished, as part of the mock examination. As a general rule, the students are supposed to take a mock examination at the end of course. As the students are preparing for one of the Cambridge exams, they invariably sit for the FCE and CAE mock exams of the official past exam papers from Cambridge ESOL.

The written instructions were based on one of the mock exam rubrics. The emails under investigation were originally hand-written. To investigate linguistic characteristics of informal emails without the aid of a computer corpus, I compiled a relatively small corpus of 57 email messages, with a total of 10,383 words. Despite the size of the corpus, I still feel that one of the main advantages of the analyzed emails is the same purpose of the email messages with relatively similar content inherent in the emails. This allows for a more comprehensive investigation and supports my argument, albeit rather tentatively and with preliminary results, that Czech students tend to grapple with applying the appropriate level of formality – or rather, informality due to the insufficient attention given in current textbooks.

All of the analyzed emails are complete texts (rather than excerpts) between 130 – 200 words in length. The exact word count is always given under individual emails. Most of the emails are within the required word limit. Although a couple of emails are slightly below or over the word limit, they still contain all the important information for analysis. Because the emails had been handwritten and sometimes somewhat difficult to follow, each email was reproduced for ease of reference.

Since linguistic features tend to vary across a register depending upon the situational characteristics as regards to different relationships between the participants and the primary purposes of email, I decided to examine one type of transactional email, a sub-register. All emails were written by Czech learners of English in answer to the same task as part of the First Certificate in English examination in which the writer is asked to provide a target reader, a friend, with the requisite provision of information and written in an appropriate style for the situation. The four pieces of information required and expected are as follows:
- to inform Tom about a more-than-three-hour delay on the way home;
- to tell Tom which photos the writer likes best;
- to tell Tom about the found watch and about the place where it was found;
- to tell Tom where the writer would prefer to stay and why.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

All materials (informal emails) were gathered in the period 2008 – 2010 at the end of the semester as part of a mock examination. The written instructions were based on one of the practice FCE exam rubrics. Subsequently a corpus of fifty-seven email messages, with a total of 10,383 words, was compiled. All of the analyzed emails were complete texts between 130 – 200 words in length. Since linguistic features tend to vary across a register depending upon the situational characteristics as regards to different relationships between the participants and the primary purposes of email, I decided to examine one type of transactional email, a sub-register. All emails were written by Czech learners of English at post-intermediate level of proficiency in answer to the same task as part of the

First Certificate in English examination in which the writer is asked to provide the target reader, a friend, with the requisite provision of information and written in an appropriate (informal) style for the situation.

3. Result and Discussion Section (Analysis)
3.1. Situational Characteristics

In keeping with Biber & Conrad (2009), I begin by describing the participants and relations among participants involved in the study.

Participants and Relations Among Participants

The **addressors** are easily identifiable; they were young adults of Czech nationality between the ages of 18 – 25. Also, it must be noted that they were all students at the time of the beginning of the investigation. The students all took part in an intensive course and sat for the FCE mock-examination (pomaturitní studium) as part of their studies. As far as the gender of the participants is concerned, there were 41 females and 16 males in total. They all had been classified as being at the intermediate level of proficiency. The majority of whom had studied English as a foreign language previously at secondary school in the Czech Republic, most of them graduated with a pass in English, and Czech is their mother-tongue. In sum, the writers formed a homogenous group in terms of age, level and language learning background, nationality, and profession.

Regarding the intended reader i.e. **addressee**, their social roles and personal relationships among participants, as based on FCE instructions, the informal email message was essentially intended for their peer (a foreign friend), i.e. for an individual reader. The writers were thus expected to produce a personal email using an informal or neutral register as well as appropriate genre markers, for example. The participants (authors of the emails) were, however, aware of the fact that the personal email messages would ultimately be read by the examiner(s) so the role of the on-lookers ought to be taken into consideration, and admittedly, cannot be ignored. As a consequence, it may be argued that the role of on-lookers is even more significant than that of an unknown addressee. In short, the influence of both should be recognized. In considering an appropriate sampling, I decided to follow a homogenous sampling strategy. That is, all the participants were young Czechs adults who participated in the same type of language programme, were of a post-intermediate level of proficiency, and completed the mock test in identical exam conditions. It is felt that the focus on a homogenous group of Czech learners at a specific level of proficiency will be of benefit for previous and perspective research studies. As regards the relationship among the participants, in contrast with real-life email messages in which the interaction can be immediate (or spread days or weeks), the degree of interactiveness is in this situation low as the reader is not meant to reply at all. The two participants (addressor and addressee) are said to be friends and are thus socially equal.

Channel, Production Circumstances and Setting

First, it must be noted that the email messages were not typed but handwritten and were produced in a very specific public setting, i.e. in exam-like conditions at the Elvis language school. Next, the email messages were written within the required time limit and the exam was held in a public setting. Therefore the time and place were equally shared by all of the test-takers. The writers had some time to plan what they were going to write. That is, the emails allowed opportunity for quick planning, editing, deleting and revision. Admittedly, the setting (i.e. the time and place of interaction) including the type of channel might have had a considerable impact on language choices. For instance, it may be argued that the language produced is not natural and was not written in natural conditions. While acknowledging that these specific means of expressing language can have a certain degree of influence upon the linguistic forms that the writers employed, it could also be argued that every text arises in a specific context, often with various and even hidden purposes as well as interests.

Pikhart, Jan

Communicative Purposes and Topic

The emails combined several communicative purposes. The general communicative purposes of the emails were to convey four pieces of factual information (factuality) and to express personal opinion on the recent visit made by a friend and a future visit to the same friend. That is, the emails were not only task-focused but interpersonal as well. More specifically, the purposes of the emails under study were to briefly inform the friend (Tom) about a more-than-three-hour delay on the way home (1), to tell Tom and perhaps describe which photos the writer likes best (2), to tell Tom about a found watch and about the place where it was found (3), and to tell Tom where the writer prefers to stay and why (4). This thus involved brief description and explanation of the problems, description of the photos and the watch including giving holiday preferences. In terms of the topic, the instructions and email combine the topics of the recent visit to a friend and upcoming mutual holiday plans.

3.2. Linguistic Analysis and Functional Interpretation
Lexico-grammatical Analysis

Having outlined the situational characteristics of the email messages under investigation, the purpose of this part is to present the results of the lexico-grammatical analysis – or rather, the following part is concerned with the linguistic investigation of the register features of the informal transactional emails and the functional associations between linguistic patterns and situational factors. Following Biber and Conrad (2009) a quantitative study was conducted focusing on the selected lexico-grammatical features. The study examined (but was not restricted to) spoken-like, informal features such as discourse markers (e.g. sequencing), and vocabulary features, (e.g. phrasal verbs), other spoken-like features, and register deviations. However, this paper presents a part of the study that focused on the use of short forms (contractions) in comparison of the full forms.

- Short forms (contractions)
- Full forms

Contractions vs. Full Forms

As stated above, part of the study was concerned with the use and occurrence of the structural reduction, e.g. contracted forms/short forms as opposed to full forms, ellipsis. That is, in the first parameter, the total numbers of contracted forms and full forms were manually counted to identify the functions of the target items in context. As previous research has shown, the occurrence of contracted forms is considered a clear indicator of informality (see e.g. Crystal, 2001) and it is frequently found in informal registers (see e.g. Biber et al., 1999) – that is, it is also characteristic of email communication (see e.g. Crystal, 2001). However, the presence or absence of contracted forms may be dependent upon various kinds of factors which need to be taken in consideration, e.g. mode or medium, text-type, subject matter including the age or gender of the speaker/writer.

But when it comes to second language writers, it is generally suggested that learners of English have a tendency to overuse full forms, avoid contracted forms and simply play it safe. As mentioned already, this "deviation" does not lead to any misunderstanding but can give an impression of an excessive formality, and may just sound odd and somewhat stilted (see e.g. Parrot 2000). As will be seen, the emails under investigation seem to represent a blend of written and spoken language in this respect as the vast majority of the emails under investigation used a combination of the contracted and full forms. However, as shown in the table below, the use of short forms was more frequent with 275 occurrences compared with the 168 instances of full forms.

Moreover, the table also shows the number of tentative suggestions/preferences using short as well as full forms. The findings in the table indicate that the writers (especially when making tentative suggestions or giving preferences) opted for the use of full forms (33 occurrences) rather than short forms (4 occurrences). In this connection, the most common phrases were polite expressions: *I would like* and *I would prefer* (20 occurrences). The use of these full forms was also noticeable in the emails that preferred the use of short forms. To illustrate, several instances are

given below the table. For the sake of clarity and ease of reference, the number in the round brackets refers to the number of the email.

Table 1: Frequency of full and short forms and tentative suggestions or giving preferences

Full forms and short forms	Full forms	Short forms	Tentative suggestions or giving preferences – Full forms (I would like, I would prefer)	Tentative suggestions or giving preferences – Short Forms (I'd like, I'd prefer)
Raw No.	168	275	33	4
Norm. Rate	1,62	2,65	0,32	0,03

If I can choose, I would like to stay on your uncle's farm. (3)
I would prefere to stay in your's familly flat if it is OK for your parents. (23)
I prefer to go to your uncle´s fam. Because I would like to do some walks and see the landscape there. (12)

The preference for the use of short forms is not indicated in the relative clauses under investigation. The full forms were, in fact, used in 16 cases whereas the short forms were employed only in 7 cases. Similarly, short forms tend to be avoided when expressing epistemic modality (with zero occurrences), e.g. x *you must have been falling*. This finding can be accounted for the fact that such structures tend to be acquired at this level of proficiency and are primarily focused on producing the correct grammatical form, i.e. paying less attention to contracted forms. At the same time, however, it must be noted that most of the instances were used incorrectly.
You must have left it there, when you decided to help me with cleaning. (50)
Having left your watch behind, you must have been feeling like a looser I guess. (53)

Table 2: Frequency of full forms and short forms in relative sentences

Full forms and short forms	Full forms	Short forms
Raw No.	16	7
Norm. Rate	0,15	0,06

I reckon that the best one is the photo which was taken in the outside where we are together with glass of wine. (10)
I mostly like the photo where we are on the disco with our friends. (11)

Furthermore, it appears that the second-language writers under investigation tend to give preference to short forms when it comes to prefabricated expressions (52 tokens) that are commonly presented in many teaching and learning materials, such *as I'm dying to see you again*, *I'm glad...*, *but doesn't matter*, *I can't wait... you're welcome* etc. as illustrated below. This can be explained by the fact that these expressions tend to presented in learning and teaching materials.
I'm dying to see you again. (46)
I'm glad you enjoyed your stay here in Prague. (2)

In agreement with Kavka (2009, p. 144) that both forms short and full forms are characteristic of Standard English, the following conclusion can be drawn, albeit tentatively, from the results of this part of the investigation. The writer favoured short forms particularly in first person singular, e.g. *I'll* (21 occurrences) versus *I will* (13 occurrences), and third person singular, e.g. *it´s* (32 occurrences) vs. *it is* (8 instances), whereas the use of full forms was apparent in relative clauses and tentative suggestions. The former could perhaps be explained by the frequent exposure to these items, while the latter might have to do with politeness.

As far as the parameter of colloquial contractions is concerned, such as *wanna, gonna, gotta*, these semi-modals are, generally speaking, especially applied in very colloquial speech and informal

registers, e.g. conversation (see e.g. Conrad and Biber, 2009). With regard to this study, colloquial contractions were not at all widely used, despite the fact that they are also characteristic of email communication in general (see e.g. Danet, 2002).

In fact, out of 57 emails only two emails used colloquial contractions. One email ended with a colloquial closing *See ya*, and the same email used *gotta*. The other one opted for *gonna*. Notice also that the first writer used the abbreviation *asap* unlike the second writer. The entire email was chatty and thus was found to be characteristic of the writer´s individual style. Overall, the absence of colloquial forms was not found to be surprising as these semi-formal modals are generally neglected in teaching and learning material including the materials under investigation.
I gotta go buddy, let me know asap. (28)
See ya (28)
I'm gonna send them to you as soon as possible. (54)

4. Conclusion

With regard to the results of the linguistic investigation discussed and exemplified above, i.e. on the basis of the email analysis the following findings emerged: The corpus confirms that the written language used and produced in the specific conditions is not fundamentally different from speech and the pieces of writing under investigation do not fall into such categories and dichotomies as speech vs. writing, formal vs. informal. That is, the study confirms that there are no absolute differences between writing and speech. More specifically, the results of the quantitative analysis of contracted/short forms (as opposed to full forms) support the claim of application of neutral language. As a matter of fact, the use of colloquial contractions was very rare. Rather, the emails under investigation used a combination of the contracted and full forms. The results have shown the preference for short forms particularly in prefabricated expressions which might be partly due to the frequent presentation of the target items in teaching and learning materials. By contrast, the preference for full forms was more frequent while e.g. making tentative suggestions or giving preferences. Overall, the writers who largely employed full forms throughout their writing sounded somewhat more polite and written-like, not necessarily formal. The use of full forms had to be considered on an individual basis since full forms may have been used intentionally, e.g. for emphasis. Moreover, it must be stressed that the presence or absence of contracted forms might be dependent upon other variables, e.g. mode or medium, text-type, subject matter including the age or gender of the speaker/writer.

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Pikhart, Jan

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Resumé

Článok predkladá registrovú analýzu 57 neformálnych emailov napísaných českými študentmi stredne pokročilej úrovne. Registrová (lexikogramatická) analýza sa opiera o teoretický rámec Bibera a Conradovej (2009), najskôr je predkladaná tzv. situačná charakteristika daného registra a potom sú skúmané vybrané lexikogramatické rysy z funkčného hľadiska. Kvantitatívny prístup je primárny a je prebieha prostredníctvom tzv. lexikogramatickej analýzy vybraných štylistických javov. Sledované a porovnávané sú skrátené a plné tvary ako prostriedky charakteristické pre písomný či ústny prejav. Výsledky ukazujú použitie oboch tvarov a potvrdzujú predpoklad, že emailová komunikácia obsahuje prvky písomného aj ústneho jazyka.

Summary

The present article offers a register analysis of 57 informal emails produced by Czech learners of English of the intermediate level of proficiency. The register (lexical-grammatical) analysis builds upon Biber and Conrad (2009). First, the situational characteristics of the register are described. A number of lexical-grammatical features are subsequently examined. More specifically, the paper focuses on the use of full as well as short forms as features typical of written and spoken language. The results show and corroborate the assumption that both forms can be found in the pieces of writing under investigation.