

## A Chronotopic Analysis of Cover Letters in Persian and English

### UNE ANALYSE CHRONOTOPIQUE DES LETTRES DE MOTIVATION EN PERSAN ET EN ANGLAIS

Reza Pishghadam<sup>1,\*</sup>; Fahime Sabouri<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran  
Ph.D., Associate Professor of TEFL.

<sup>2</sup> M.A. Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran  
Email: fahime.saboori@gmail.com

\*Corresponding author.

Address: English Language Department, Ferdowsi University, Mashhad, Iran.

Email: rpishghadam@yahoo.com

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#### Abstract

The concept of chronotope was originally used by Bakhtin (1981) in literature and literary criticism. But this concept seems to have great potential to be employed in other contexts as well. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), for example, it can function as a useful tool to better inform L2 writers of the spatial and temporal conventions expected by the L1 genre community. Taking advantage of this capability, the present study used the chronotope in a move-based genre analysis of cover letters in Persian and English. To this end, a corpus of English and Persian cover letters was examined. In this study, the chronotope of each move of a cover letter was determined in the letters of both languages, and then through a contrastive analysis their similarities and differences were discussed. Finally, the important implications of the findings in language instruction were presented.

**Key words:** Chronotope; Bakhtin; Letter writing; Cover letter; Persian; English

#### Résumé

Le concept de chronotope a été initialement utilisé par Bakhtine (1981) dans la littérature et la critique littéraire. Mais ce concept semble avoir un grand potentiel d'être employé dans d'autres contextes. En anglais à des fins spécifiques (ESP), par exemple, il peut fonctionner comme un outil utile pour mieux informer les écrivains

L2 des conventions spatiales et temporelles attendues par la communauté Genre L1. Profitant de cette capacité, la présente étude a utilisé le chronotope dans un mouvement basé sur l'analyse genre de lettres de motivation en persan et en anglais. À cette fin, un corpus de lettres de motivation en anglais et en persan a été examiné. Dans cette étude, le chronotope de chaque déménagement d'une lettre de motivation a été déterminée dans les lettres des deux langues, puis à travers une analyse contrastive de leurs similitudes et les différences ont été discutées. Enfin, l'importance des implications des résultats dans l'enseignement des langues ont été présentés.

**Mots-clés:** Chronotope; Bakhtine; Ecriture de lettre; Lettre de motivation; Persan; Anglais

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#### INTRODUCTION

There has recently been an increasing interest in and a growing recognition of the value of the concept of chronotope in genre analysis (Schryer, 2002; Bemong & Nele, 2006; Pedersen, 2009), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) composition (Schryer, 1999; Crossley, 2007), and even in the analysis of classroom events and conversations (e.g. Brown & Renshaw, 2006). Considering the fact that this concept has been introduced to literature by Bakhtin about 30 years ago, this trend seems to have been somehow slow. The reason might partly lie in the fact that the idea of chronotope did not manage, in the first place, to capture as much attention as some of Bakhtin's other ideas, such as dialogue, and was not as much frequently adopted in other fields.

The term *chronotope*, literally meaning *space-time*, refers to “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin, 1981: 15). In a literary work, the chronotope represents the fusion of the indicators of time and space into one complete whole. Also, the significance of the chronotope in literature is that it can precisely determine different genres and define the distinctions between them.

While Bakhtin used the chronotope to categorize literary genres, the present study employs it to define the rhetorical unity within a genre. In other words, it examines the individual moves of a genre in terms of their use of time and space. Such chronotopic analysis can have obvious advantages. They include illustrating how the chronotope can be effectively used to analyze a move and how it can lead to obtaining more precise results compared to those of the past. Such new observations in genre analysis would consequently provide valuable and helpful guidelines in ESP instruction.

## 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Chronotope

The term *chronotope* is not one of Bakhtin’s coinages. In fact, he first got the idea of the chronotope from a lecture on biology he attended in 1925 (Dentith, 1995). A chronotope refers to the interconnection between temporal and spatial aspects which is, in an artistic way, represented in literature (Holquist, 2002). In other words, it alludes to the specific combinations of space and time that has led to the existence of different historical forms of narrative. Also, it functions as “the primary means for materializing time in space” (Bakhtin, 1981: 22).

The chronotope has both a general and a restricted level of use in literature (Holquist, 2002). In a general sense, it can function as a precious tool for exploring the complicated and controversial relation between art and life through social and historical analysis of text. Apart from this general level of use, the chronotope can also act as a recurring formal characteristic that serves to distinguish a particular type of text or genre. It is in this restricted sense that “not only ...it determines genres, but ...the reverse is also true: genres determine it” (p. 145). This feature of chronotope clearly denotes its “intrinsic generic significance” in literature, as Bakhtin (1981) put it (p.15).

In his essay on the chronotope, Bakhtin (1981) discussed different novels in terms of their most significant chronotopes but, being a scholar of Greek and Latin literature, his example of the chronotope associated with Greek romance is probably the clearest one. According to him, Greek romances are organized around certain interrelated spatial and temporal conceptions. Simply put, such romances are typically founded on a

series of adventures which occur in a hiatus. That is to say, the time of this chronotope is empty in the sense that it is beyond any biographical or social significance and there is no causal relation between the events. This is evident in the fact that, after going through lots of adventures and ordeals, the hero’s character does not develop and become wiser; nor does he even get older. In the same vein, the space of this chronotope is abstract in the sense that there is never the name of a particular place mentioned as the setting of the adventures and they could technically take place anywhere. In other words, “when there are eruptions, it could be *any* volcano; when pirates appear, it could be on *any* sea” (Holquist, 2002: 110).

Based on what was so far said, the chronotope is specifically used to categorize literary genres and define the artistic unity of a literary work. Yet, one might wonder if it would be appropriate to use this concept in a context other than what Bakhtin originally used it in.

Bakhtin has brought up this point in his essay on the chronotope. He started the essay with the fact that the chronotope was primarily used in mathematics and as a part of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity but he went on to argue that “the special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor...What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time” (Bakhtin, 1981: 15).

In the same vein, we would like to state that the special function it has in literary criticism is not our concern but we are borrowing it to examine the rhetorical unity within a specific genre. To do so, we examine the individual moves within that genre in terms of their use of time and space. This way, the chronotopic analysis helps us to identify the main moves and their order and to draw demarcation lines between them.

### 1.2 Genre Analysis

A genre, according to Swales (1990), is “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p. 58). Hence, he argues, genre analysis has a predominant role in the examination of the writer’s purpose. It investigates how rhetorical considerations govern grammatical choice, that is to say, how the expectations and conventions of different discourse communities shape and modify the text they use.

A move, on the other hand, is a text segment whose purpose is to contribute to meeting the overall function of a genre (Henry & Roseberry, 2001a; Swales, 1990). In other words, moves can simply be regarded as the basic elements or functional components of a genre (Swales, 1990). Therefore, as Henry and Roseberry (2001a) stated, the main goal of genre analysis is “to identify the moves and strategies of a genre, the allowable order of moves, and the key linguistic features” (p. 154).

Such move-based genre analysis, however, became

common only after the 1980s. Swales (1981) can be considered one of the pioneers in the introduction of move-based model to genre analysis through his Creating a Research Space model (CARS model). This model was originally used to analyze the introduction section of the research article genre and involved a few main moves and a number of steps expressing each. Nevertheless, it had a huge impact not only on genre analysis but on the teaching of academic writing.

Dudley-Evans (2000) discusses the two main trends of genre analysis since the early Move and Step analysis. The first one “has been the more detailed analysis of the concept of discourse community and of actual discourse community in practice, the other has been the detailed analysis of specific features of language as used in particular genres” (p.7)

It is the second of these two trends that the present study deals with via a chronotopic approach. That is, it analyses the letter of application genre through the in-depth examination of the key linguistic features in each move in terms of their spatial and temporal perspective.

The research conducted on the genre analysis of letters of application is not scarce. Such research mostly deals with the description of the moves constructing such letters through the analysis of a corpus of letters written by L1 and/or L2 writers.

A pioneer of such research is probably Bhatia (1993). In his book *Analyzing genre: Language use in professional settings*, he analyzed a corpus of cover letters and came up with seven main moves constructing them. His aim, though, was to compare cover letters to a seemingly different genre, i.e. sales promotion letters and argue that since they have the same communicative purpose they actually belong to the same genre.

A more detailed study of letters of application and the first in making full use of computer analysis for this purpose was that of Henry and Roseberry (2001a). Examining a computerized corpus of 40 job application letters, they managed to identify eleven moves of such letters and their common order. They also found out some useful strategies, i.e. discourse and syntactic features, used to realize the moves.

Furthermore, Upton and Connor (2001) conducted a study involving a multi-level analysis of a corpus of professional job application letters in three cultures (US, Belgian, Finnish) which aimed at determining their politeness strategy moves. This multi-level analysis consisted of a hand-tagged moves-analysis plus a computerized analysis of lexico-grammatical features of texts. Interestingly, the findings demonstrated that the US writers were more formulaic, the Belgians more individualistic, and the Finns exhibited both traits to lesser degrees.

Dongmei and Ruiying’s (2005) study dealt with RA (research article) abstracts across disciplines. Through

the examination of 150 abstracts from three disciplines (electrical engineering, finance, and surgery) they determined the five main moves of abstracts shared by these three fields.

Another study dealing with move-based genre analysis was that of Wang (2007). He analyzed a corpus of 156 business letters within the framework of Bhatia’s cognitive structuring model. The findings indicated the existence of different moves constructing different types of business letters. They also illustrated that the sequencing of these moves was quite flexible reflecting the dynamic nature of the genre.

Finally, Crossley (2007), in a most innovative way, made use of the idea of the chronotope in order to define the rhetorical unity within the letter of application genre. In doing so, he examined a corpus of 34 English cover letters, 22 of which written by L1 writers and 12 by L2 writers. Through the chronotopic analysis, he identified six moves constructing a cover letter and came up with particular labels for the spatial and temporal perspectives of each.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the significance of Crossley’s (2007) study lies in the fact that, with the help of the chronotope, he separated the moves and formed demarcation lines on the basis of spatial and temporal markers.

The same has been done in the present study. There is, however, a noticeable difference between this study and Crossley’s (2007). Simply put, rather than analyzing English letters written by L1 and L2 writers, this study thrived for more authenticity by examining native letters. That is to say, it compared letters written by L1 writers of English and Persian believing that the contrastive analysis of the native letters of these two languages would lead to more genuine and authentic results and hence would make more worthwhile contributions in instruction. One such result, for instance, which was obtained through this contrastive analysis was that the frequencies of occurrence of some moves were different in the two languages, i.e. some moves occurred in the whole English corpus but just in a few Persian letters. More importantly, another result indicated that the writers of these languages used quite different moves to end their letters.

In the present study such findings obtained from the chronotopic move-based analysis were used to seek the answer to the following general question:

Are there any similarities and differences in the generic structure between English and Persian cover letters from a chronotopic point of view?

Or more specifically, Are there any similarities and differences in the use of time and space between English and Persian cover letters in moves 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a corpus of 50 letters of application was randomly selected. Half of these letters were in Persian and were taken from a Persian handbook of letter writing (see Morteza-pour, 2008). The other 25 letters were in English and were collected from the Internet. Because the corpus included letters with different sizes, they were first normalized.

These letters were then coded into moves by two trained raters. In this procedure, Crossley's (2007) generic structure of cover letters was employed. Table 1 indicates this structure which consists of six moves and their labels.

**Table 1**  
**Moves of the Cover Letters and Their Labels**  
 According to Crossley (2007)

| Move | Label                          |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 1    | Referring to job advertisement |
| 2    | Stating reasons for applying   |
| 3    | Promoting the candidate        |
| 4    | Enclosing documents            |
| 5    | Requesting contact             |
| 6    | Acknowledging appreciation     |

Next, a Chi-square test was run for each of the moves in order to compare their occurrences in the cover letters of the two languages ( $p < .05$ ).

As for the chronotopic analysis, the identified moves were analyzed for their time markers using Connexor's EngLite Parser (Voutilainen & Tapanainen, 2003). Based on the Connexor parser, main verbs consist of present tense, progressive aspect, infinitive, past tense, past participle, subjunctive or imperative. All these were employed to collect information about the temporal perspectives of each move through frequency analysis. To facilitate this, simple present and its progressive aspect were considered to constitute the present temporal perspective. Similarly, simple past and its progressive aspect constituted the past temporal perspective. Furthermore, modals and imperatives were combined to represent the future temporal perspective since they are generally indicative of future action. The subjunctive and infinitive, however, were ignored as they do not provide any temporal clues out of context. And finally, present perfect and past perfect each constituted their own temporal perspective.

To analyze the spatial perspective of the moves, a word frequency analysis was employed. That is to say, individual moves were examined for the most frequent lexicon and such lexicon were then identified as the most frequent content words that provided spatial information.

Finally, in order to facilitate the contrastive analysis the percentages of the use of the temporal and spatial indicators were presented as well.

### 4. RESULTS

As evident in Table 2, the first and third moves were present in all English and Persian letters i.e. in the whole corpus. Move 2, in contrast, had the least occurrence in Persian letters existing only in five of them. However, it occurred more frequently in English letters (18); hence, the difference in the employment of this move by English and Persian writers was significant ( $p < .05$ ). Move 4, on the other hand, was present in most of the letters in both languages i.e. in 21 Persian and 20 English letters. While all English letters possessed move 5, just eight Persian writers employed it. So, again, the difference in the use of this move in these two languages was significant ( $p < .05$ ). Finally, move 6 was employed by 18 English and 17 Persian letters.

**Table 2**  
**X<sup>2</sup> Test Results for the Six Moves in the Corpus**

|                | Move 1 | Move 2 | Move 3 | Move 4 | Move 5 | Move 6 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Persian        | 25     | 5      | 25     | 21     | 8      | 17     |
| English        | 25     | 18     | 25     | 20     | 25     | 18     |
| X <sup>2</sup> | 0      | 7.34*  | 0      | 0.24   | 8.75*  | 0.29   |

\*  $p < .05$

#### 4.1 Referring to Job Advertisement (Move1)

##### 4.1.1 Spatial Perspective

**Table 3**  
**Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 1**

|         |                                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| English | Newspaper                          | 23        | 36.5       |
|         | Advertisement                      | 15        | 23.8       |
|         | Position                           | 19        | 30.1       |
|         | Response                           | 6         | 9.5        |
| Persian | Advertisement                      | 25        | 24         |
|         | Newspaper                          | 23        | 22.1       |
|         | Mentioned                          | 18        | 17.3       |
|         | Company                            | 16        | 15.3       |
|         | On the date of ( <i>Movarekh</i> ) | 13        | 12.5       |
|         | Cooperation                        | 9         | 8.6        |

According to Table 3, the most common words shared between Persian and English letters were "advertisement" and "newspaper". While "advertisement" was used with equal frequencies in English and Persian (23.8% & 24%), the percentage of the occurrence of the word "newspaper" was different in these languages, that is, it was used more frequently in English (36.5%) than in Persian (22.1%). A noteworthy point to be made here is that, unlike Persian writers, English ones did not use the word "newspaper" itself but sufficed to state the name of the newspaper. Other spatial markers of this move include "position" and "response" in English letters and "mentioned", "on the date of", and "cooperation" in Persian letters.

### 4.1.2 Temporal Perspective

As evident in Tables 9 and 10 (see appendix), a noticeable difference existed in the temporal perspective employed by Persian and English writers in this move. Although present tense was the most common tense used in both languages, its use percentage differed significantly in Persian (75%) and in English (47%). The same point was true about the use of past tense as the second most common tense in both Persian (12.5%) and English (32.3%). In addition, while future tense comprised 20.5% of tenses used in English letters, it did not occur in Persian. Instead, Persian writers made use of present perfect and past perfect tenses which were absent in English.

English: present > past > future

Persian: present > past > past perfect > present perfect

### 4.1.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: I am writing in response to the position of Senior Office Manager as advertised in the March 24<sup>th</sup> *Washington Post*.

Persian: *Ba tavajoh be agahi mondaraj dar roozname Etelaat movarekhe 14 e tir, injaneb amadegie khod ra jahate hamkari elam midaram.* (Regarding the advertisement mentioned in Etelaat newspaper on the date of Tir 14<sup>th</sup>, I declare my willingness for cooperation.)

## 4.2 Stating Reasons for Applying (Move2)

### 4.2.1 Spatial Perspective

**Table 4**  
Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 2

|         |            | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|------------|-----------|------------|
| English | Position   | 14        | 41.1       |
|         | Experience | 11        | 32.3       |
|         | Company    | 9         | 26.4       |
| Persian | Position   | 3         | 20         |
|         | Reason     | 3         | 20         |
|         | Suitable   | 3         | 20         |
|         | Experience | 2         | 13.3       |
|         | Interest   | 2         | 13.3       |
|         | Willing    | 2         | 13.3       |

As Table 4 exhibits, the most common word in both English and Persian letters regarding move 2 was “position”. It, of course, did not occur as often in Persian (20%) as in English (41.1%). The other word shared between the two languages was “experience” with 32.3% occurrence in English and 13.3% in Persian. There were also other spatial markers in this move including “company” in English and “reason”, “suitable”, “interest”, and “willing” in Persian.

Interestingly, there were differences between the ways English and Persian writers stated their reasons. While Persian writers focused more on their interests and experiences as the reasons for applying for the job, English writers discussed another aspect as well i.e. the contribution they could make to the company. In other

words, unlike Persian writers, English ones referred to both how the job could be suitable for them and how they could be suitable for the job and the company. Yet another difference was that the reasons Persian writers stated tended to be shorter than the ones stated by English writers.

### 4.2.2 Temporal Perspective

Based on Tables 9 and 10 (see appendix), present tense was the tense most commonly used by both Persian (87.5%) and English (60.6%) writers. Also, present perfect was employed somehow equally in both languages. The only significant difference in this temporal perspective was the 24.2% use of future tense (mostly modals) by English writers with their absence in Persian letters. Finally, past perfect did not occur in either language.

English: present > future > present perfect

Persian: present > present perfect

### 4.2.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: Throughout my career I have accrued a multitude of skills including business control program development and revenue enhancement strategies. I am confident that my application of these, my previous experience, and my other qualifications would be an asset to your company.

Persian: *Be dalile alaghe va tajrobe ziyad dar tadrīs mayel hastam baraye in shoghl darkhaste kar konam.* (Due to my great interest and experience in teaching I am willing to apply for this position.)

## 4.3 Promoting the Candidate (Move3)

### 4.3.1 Spatial Perspective

**Table 5**  
Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 3

|            |              | Frequency  | Percentage |      |
|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------|
| English    | Experience   | 29         | 24.7       |      |
|            | Ability      | 16         | 13.6       |      |
|            | Skill        | 15         | 12.8       |      |
|            | Management   | 13         | 11.1       |      |
|            | Work         | 12         | 10.2       |      |
|            | Business     | 10         | 8.5        |      |
|            | Industry     | 9          | 7.6        |      |
|            | Organization | 7          | 5.9        |      |
|            | Year         | 6          | 5.1        |      |
|            | Persian      | Experience | 19         | 16.9 |
|            |              | Company    | 19         | 16.9 |
| Graduated  |              | 18         | 16         |      |
| Major      |              | 17         | 15.1       |      |
| Year       |              | 15         | 13.3       |      |
| University |              | 13         | 11.6       |      |
| Work       |              | 11         | 9.8        |      |

According to Table 5, move 3 had a quite broad sense of space and, in terms of its spatial markers, it was the most flexible one since the greatest variety of lexicon occurred in this move. The words “experience”, “year”, and “work” constitute the common spatial markers shared between English and Persian letters with “experience” being the most common one in both languages (24.7% in

English and 16.9 % in Persian). The other spatial markers of this move include “ability”, “skill”, “management” and “business” in English and “company”, “graduated”, “major”, and “university” in Persian.

Regarding the information candidates gave about themselves, Persian writers were more likely to discuss their educational background. English writers, on the other hand, were somehow more prone to discuss their abilities and skills.

#### 4.3.2 Temporal Perspective

As illustrated in Tables 9 and 10 (see appendix), in this move English and Persian writers seemed to subscribe to the same temporal perspective with their shared use of present, present perfect, past, and future. As usual, present tense had the most frequent use. A difference, though, lied in the fact that present tense was employed significantly more and past tense significantly less by Persian writers (respectively, 62.6% and 5.9%) than by English writers (42.8% and 15.2%). As for the future tense, it mostly involved the use of modals and occurred almost equally in both languages. Finally, past perfect was absent in both languages.

English: present > present perfect > past > future

Persian: present > present perfect > future > past

#### 4.3.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: I am currently a highly capable and experienced event planning manager. During my seven years in this position, I have demonstrated leadership in training, volunteerism, and marketing/public relations. Throughout my tenure at Lake City Media Marketers I frequently put my coordination and time management skills to use in planning large media-friendly events. I enjoy the challenges involved in my work and applying my abilities to real world situations.

Persian: *Injaneb daraye madrake foghe lisans dar reshteye hesabdari az daneshgahe Tehran mibasham. Chahar sal sabeghe kar be onvane moavene modire forush dar sherkate Saipa daram. Az sale 1380, masule aksare karhaye daftari dar edareye forush boode am. Dar in modat, ba raveshhaye mokhtalefe forush va estelahat va raveshhaye hesabdari ashena shode am.* (I have an M.S. in accounting major from Tehran University. I have four years of experience in working as an assistant sales manager in Saipa Company. Since 1380, I have been responsible for most of the clerical works of the sales office. During this period, I have got familiar with different sale methods and accounting terms and methods.)

### 4.4 Enclosing Documents (Move 4)

#### 4.4.1 Spatial Perspective

As Table 6 shows, in contrast with the previous move, move 4 was somehow formulaic in nature and possessed a relatively narrow sense of space. The only spatial marker of this move shared by English (24.1%) and Persian (30.5%) writers was the word “attachment”. Moreover,

the words “resume” and “enclosed” in English letters and “submit” and “documents” in Persian letters comprised the other common spatial markers within this semantic space.

**Table 6**  
**Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 4**

|         |               | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| English | Resumé        | 20        | 32.2       |
|         | Attach        | 15        | 24.1       |
|         | Enclosed      | 13        | 20.9       |
|         | Consideration | 4         | 6.4        |
|         | Review        | 4         | 6.4        |
|         | Detail        | 3         | 4.8        |
|         | Copy          | 3         | 4.8        |
| Persian | Submit        | 21        | 35.5       |
|         | Documents     | 20        | 33.8       |
|         | Attachment    | 18        | 30.5       |

#### 4.4.2 Temporal Perspective

According to tables 9 and 10 (see appendix), a noticeable difference was noted in the temporal perspective between English and Persian letters. The general temporal perspective of this move in Persian letters was present tense (91.3%). There was also an infrequent use of present perfect (8.6%) by Persian writers. English writers, on the other hand, employed present and present perfect with almost equal frequencies (44.4% and 38.8%). They also less frequently used future (mostly imperatives) which was not employed by Persian writers. Finally, past perfect and past tense did not occur in either language.

English: present > present perfect > future

Persian: present > present perfect

#### 4.4.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: I have enclosed my resume for your review and consideration.

Persian: *Dar peyvast madareke lazem ra taghdim midaram.* (I submit the necessary documents in the attachment.)

### 4.5 Requesting Contact (Move 5)

#### 4.5.1 Spatial Markers

**Table 7**  
**Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 5**

|         |              | Frequency   | Percentage |      |
|---------|--------------|-------------|------------|------|
| English | Look forward | 16          | 20.5       |      |
|         | Interview    | 14          | 17.9       |      |
|         | Opportunity  | 9           | 11.5       |      |
|         | Contact      | 8           | 10.2       |      |
|         | Question     | 7           | 8.9        |      |
|         | Discuss      | 6           | 7.6        |      |
|         | Time         | 5           | 6.4        |      |
|         | available    | 5           | 6.4        |      |
|         | Meet         | 4           | 5.1        |      |
|         | Call         | 4           | 5.1        |      |
|         | Persian      | Interview   | 6          | 31.5 |
|         |              | Presence    | 5          | 26.3 |
|         |              | Contact     | 4          | 21   |
|         |              | Possibility | 4          | 21   |

As Table 7 demonstrates, the common spatial markers of this move shared between English and Persian letters were “interview” and “contact”. These two words had higher percentages in Persian letters (31.5% and 21%) than in English ones (17.9% and 10.2%). It is worth mentioning that there was a phrase typical to this move used by most English writers, that is, “I look forward to hearing from you”. In fact, it even constituted the whole move in some English letters. Persian letters, however, lacked such typical phrase. Other most frequently used words in Persian letters include “presence” and “possibility” and those in English ones include “look forward”, “opportunity”, “question”, and “discuss”.

#### 4.5.2 Temporal Perspective

As evident in Tables 9 and 10 (see appendix), Persian and English letters adhered to similar temporal perspectives regarding move 5. They both used present and future tense and neither employed present perfect, past, and past perfect tenses. In addition, the most frequent tense in both languages was future tense. There was, however, a significant difference in the frequency of the use of the tenses between Persian and English writers. Present tense was employed more frequently by English writers (47%) and less by Persian ones (16.6%). Future tense, on the other hand, was more frequently used by Persian writers (83.3%) and less by English ones (52.8%). Yet another difference involved the use of first conditional sentences. There were some cases of their employment in English letters while they did not occur in Persian. A final noteworthy point to be made here is that this was the only move in which the most frequently used tense was not present tense and in which the temporal pattern was the same for both languages.

English and Persian : future > present

#### 4.5.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this position with you. If you have questions or would like to schedule an interview please contact me. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Persian: *Dar surate emkan, lotfan ba shomareye 8770025 be manzure mosahebe tamas begirid.* (If possible, please call this number 8770025 in order to schedule an interview.)

### 4.6 Acknowledging Appreciation /Asking for Recruitment (Move 6)

#### 4.6.1 Spatial Markers

As mentioned earlier, the content of this move was different in Persian and English letters. So, its spatial markers were, naturally, different in these languages. These spatial markers include the words “thank”, “consideration”, and “review” in English and “recruitment”, “measure”, “beg”, and “order” in Persian. But still, in spite of the difference in content, there was an important similarity between English and Persian letters regarding the spatial perspective of this move. That is, it

possessed a quite narrow sense of space since, compared to the other moves, it had the most restricted range and the least variety of spatial markers especially in English letters. As a result, it was highly formulaic and there were typical phrases used by English and Persian writers for this semantic space (see Table 8).

**Table 8**  
**Most Common Spatial Markers in Move 6**

|         |               | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| English | Thank         | 18        | 43.9       |
|         | Consideration | 14        | 34.1       |
|         | Time          | 9         | 21.9       |
| Persian | Recruitment   | 16        | 28.5       |
|         | Take measures | 15        | 26.7       |
|         | Beg           | 10        | 17.8       |
|         | Order         | 9         | 16         |
|         | Request       | 6         | 10.7       |

#### 4.6.2 Temporal Perspective

Tables 9 and 10 (see appendix) reveal a noticeable difference in the temporal perspective between Persian and English letters. The only tense used by English writers here was present tense. Persian writers, however, used both present (51.5%) and future (mostly imperatives) (48.4%) with somehow equal frequencies. Yet another difference involved the employment of subjunctive mood which was frequent in Persian and did not occur in English. Finally, the language used by Persian letters for this move was actually much more formal and complex than the one used by English writers.

English: present

Persian: present > future

#### 4.6.3 Examples from the Corpus

English: Thank you for your time and consideration.

Persian: *Khaheshmand ast dastur befarmaeed nesbat be estekhdame injaneb eghdame lazem be amal avarand.* (I request that you give orders for the necessary measures to be taken for my recruitment.)

## DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, there were certain similarities and differences in the spatial and temporal perspectives of the analyzed moves between English and Persian cover letters.

In the spatial perspective, for instance, the writers of the two languages were both highly formulaic in moves 4 and 6. Move 5 was also quite formulaic in English letters but not in Persian ones. Nevertheless, it can be noted that no striking difference was observed in the overall spatial perspective of each move between English and Persian letters. That is to say, some of the most common spatial markers of each move were shared by both languages. Move 6, however, was an exception and it was quite natural for Persian and English letters not to adhere to

the same spatial perspective in this move due to the distinctive content and purpose this move has in each of these languages.

As for the temporal perspective, there were differences between English and Persian letters to varying degrees in all the moves except move 5 in which both languages adhered to exactly the same temporal perspective. Furthermore, the most noticeable difference in the temporal perspective between the two languages probably existed in the first move. Also, it was the only move in which past perfect was employed by Persian writers while its use was not observed in any moves of the English letters.

In addition, the most outstanding result, obtained through X<sup>2</sup> tests, was that English and Persian writers used different moves to end their cover letters. That is to say, the English letters of application genre community expects the last move in such letter to be “acknowledging appreciation” while the Persian community expects it to be “asking for recruitment”. Yet, another noteworthy result revealed that “stating the reason” and “requesting contact” moves are much less expected in the cover letter genre in Persian than in English.

These results clearly denote the important fact that, as Upton and Conner (2001) stated, genre expectation is culture-specific varying from culture to culture and that “crossing cultural boundaries requires re-learning at least part of the genre in light of its construction in the new culture” (p. 314). Therefore, negotiating a genre across cultures and being aware of the possible areas of difference would be quite essential for writers wishing to communicate with members of another culture (Crossley, 2007; Henry & Roseberry, 2001b; Swales, 1990; Upton, 2002; Upton & Conner, 2001). In fact, by ignoring the cross cultural comparison of the genre L2 writer might end up failing to get across the purpose and intention of the writing and to meet the expectation of the L1 genre community, and consequently not being taken seriously by the community. That is why the chronotope turns into a precious tool contributing to better informing L2 writers of the spatial and temporal conventions expected by the L1 genre community.

Hence, the prominent implications of this study in instruction and material development come to light. Firstly, it has an important implication in the instruction of this genre to the L1 writers of English and Persian. In fact, it would make the teachers aware of the unique chronotope, i.e. spatial and temporal perspectives, of each move of a cover letter. Such awareness would consequently foster their teaching of this genre since, as Zare-ee’s (2009) study illustrated, the explicit teaching of genre moves results in the significant changes in the quality of the learners’ writing and can be of great help to them.

Secondly, and more importantly, this study has a remarkable implication in ESP instruction to Iranian

learners. That is, as a result of the contrastive analysis, Iranian writers would become aware of the differences in the chronotope of each move in Persian and English cover letters. These areas of difference are of particular importance since, if overlooked, can lead to the writing of the letters which do not match the expectations of the English genre community due to the use of inappropriate structures. As a result of such differences, for example, rather than starting their cover letter with the simple typical sentence “*I am writing in response to your advertisement in Times*”, the Iranian writer’s first sentence might turn out to be “*I am willing to submit this application for the available post in response to your advertisement which had been printed in today’s Times newspaper*”. Or, instead of ending the letter with the short sentence “Thank you for your time”, the Iranian writer could close it with a strong request for recruitment, such as “*I beg you to give orders for the necessary measures to be taken for my recruitment*”. It is self-evident that natural as these second sentences would be in Persian letters, they are quite inappropriate in English ones. Therefore, such awareness of the differences could be much useful for Iranian writers and especially for Iranian English teachers because it would cause them to teach more efficiently through equipping them with the ability to predict the potential mistakes and possible areas of difficulty and those which would be more likely to cause confusion for the learners and thus need more focus and attention.

Finally, the significance of this study for the material developers would be getting them to take into consideration such chronotopic approach to genre instruction in their ESP textbooks. To this end, the textbooks would be required to include and highlight the spatial and temporal markers of the moves of this genre. Also, the ESP textbooks provided exclusively for Persian learners would be required to make students conscious of the differences between Persian and English cover letters and focus on these chronotopic differences through the necessary exercises.

As the potential of the chronotopic approach has not yet been fully recognized and flourished, further research needs to be conducted using this approach to analyze other genres and to compare them with the genres analyzed through the same approach in other languages.

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## Appendix

**Table 9**  
**Results for the Temporal Analysis of Persian Letters**

|                 | Move 1     | Move 2     | Move 3      | Move 4      | Move 5      | Move 6      |
|-----------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Present         | 24<br>75%  | 7<br>87.5% | 42<br>62.6% | 21<br>91.3% | 2<br>16.6%  | 17<br>51.5% |
| Present perfect | 1<br>3.1%  | 1<br>12.5% | 13<br>19.4% | 2<br>8.6%   |             |             |
| Past            | 4<br>12.5% |            | 4<br>5.9%   |             |             |             |
| Past perfect    | 3<br>9.3%  |            |             |             |             |             |
| Future          |            |            | 8<br>11.9%  |             | 10<br>83.3% | 16<br>48.4% |

**Table 10**  
**Results for the Temporal Analysis of English Letters** (frequency and percentage)

|                 | Move 1      | Move 2      | Move 3      | Move 4     | Move 5      | Move 6     |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Present         | 16<br>47%   | 20<br>60.6% | 45<br>42.8% | 8<br>44.4% | 24<br>47%   | 18<br>100% |
| Present perfect |             | 5<br>15.1%  | 32<br>30.4% | 7<br>38.8% |             |            |
| Past            | 11<br>32.3% |             | 16<br>15.2% |            |             |            |
| Past perfect    |             |             |             |            |             |            |
| Future          | 7<br>20.5%  | 8<br>24.2%  | 12<br>11.4% | 3<br>16.6% | 27<br>52.8% |            |