(Mis)use of email in student–faculty interaction: Implications for university instruction in Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Japan

Anna Danielewicz-Betz

University of Aizu, Japan
abetz@u-aizu.ac.jp

This paper examines student–faculty communication by email and the lack of clear guidelines that leads to misuse of email in student–faculty interaction, whereby status-incongruent pragmatic markers are employed, resulting in impoliteness and inappropriateness. The main objective is to bridge the gap in research on other than requestive speech acts in this particular type of e-interaction, taking into account various pragmatic markers and cultural determinants of the subjects' email communication styles. The main purpose of the study was to determine whether and to what degree the use of pragmatic markers by students is congruent with the English netiquette in this specific domain. Moreover, the aim was to investigate the relation of the usage of speech acts and pragmatic markers by students to politeness, as well as to cross-culturally compare the data obtained. The research questions were as follows: Which pragmatic markers distinguish students of different nationalities and in different university settings? What are other than requestive purposes for which students deploy email communication? Which pragmatic markers, in general, are associated with student–faculty email? Is there a correlation between the three countries represented in the corpus and (im)politeness based on the data found in all the emails? What are the implications of the study for computer-mediated language learning? The corpus consisted of 1,200 student–faculty emails written in an academic domain by university students from a German university, a Saudi Arabian university, and two Japanese universities (400 emails per country). The research method employed was of mixed qualitative-quantitative nature, with the focus on pragmatic analysis of speech acts with their illocutionary force and functions, as well as on

Regular Paper

their impact on the receiver (perlocution). It was determined that the impolite acts occurred most frequently in the corpus. This shows that students appear not to be aware of the role their email messages play in creating an impression on faculty and that structured instruction in email writing is required to improve the situation. The lack of pragmatic competence was found in all three groups of students, independent of the proficiency level and seniority; whereby explicit course guidance in email writing and its netiquette had a clear positive effect on the student–faculty interaction in terms of appropriateness and the level of politeness.

Introduction

The netiquette of institutionalised email communication between students and faculty in the higher-education setting, despite common usage nowadays, has not been defined sufficiently: there are no specific guidelines regarding form and style. There has also been relatively little research in the field (c.f., Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006). Moreover, most academic syllabi lack explicit instruction in email writing. Consequently, students, growing up in the instant messaging culture, are unsure how to (or not aware that they should) modify the content of their messages when addressing professors. They often seem unaware of the fact that their emails influence professors' impressions of themselves and their academic achievements (c.f., Jessmer & Anderson, 2001).

This paper presents the results of an analysis of a corpus of 1,200 emails from non-native students communicating with their professor in English, focusing on the comparison of German, Saudi, and Japanese students' messages in terms of such pragmatic markers as e-(im)politeness, directness/indirectness, distance/familiarity, forms of address, status appropriateness, style, purpose of communication, speech acts and their forces, as well as face management. The emails in the corpus range from standard (university-context) messaging related to a particular academic course to non-standard non-academic situations, such as personal emails from (former) students with a variety of attachments.

Email communication in university setting

Earlier research conducted since the 1990s already attested to the growing importance of email use for pedagogical and advisory purposes (Lowry, Koneman, Osman-Jouchoux, & Wilson, 1994; Partee, 1996; Poling, 1994; Romiszowski & de Haas, 1989). The educational focus seemed to be placed, however, on the application of technology rather than 'appropriateness' of use, or legal and ethical issues (Burns, 2006). Yet, email has become a crucial element of the communication process within higher education, although best practices are still being developed (Willis, 2005) and explicit instruction in effective email communication is often absent from course curricula (Burns, 2006).

For example, Gatz and Hirt (2000) investigated the influence of email on students' academic and social integration in college. Based on an analysis of the frequency and content of the email communication of the participants in their study, they found that, despite the frequency of their email communication, it contributed very little to promoting academic and social integration in college. By contrast, other studies and scholarly publications suggest that email use has instructive value when it is used to enhance learning environments (Brotherton, 2001; Partee, 1996; Poling, 1994; Trathen & Moorman, 2001, Hui-Fang, 2005; Hassini, 2006). While this particular finding is not totally consistent in the research literature (Miller, 2001), it has been observed that email continues to be used with great

frequency in college classrooms and student affairs offices (Flowers, Pascarella, & Pierson, 2000; Kim & Keller, 2008; Iwasaki, 2008; Weiss & Hanson-Baldauf, 2008) to support student–student, student–faculty, as well as student–student affairs professional interactions. Nowadays, email appears to be one of the main modes of student–faculty communication. In Japan, it is the most convenient means of communication with professors, as students tend to avoid face-to-face contact. Thus, both faculty and student affairs professionals must continue to probe the relationship between the utilisation of this form of computer-mediated communication and student learning and development.

Student–faculty interactions in graduate school and the mentoring that may result from such interactions have been studied extensively in the research literature. Broadly defined, student–faculty interaction involves contact between a faculty member and graduate student and includes conversations and discussions related to course work and assignments, thesis writing progress, job search and professional development issues, as well as informal and social exchanges of information (Kartje, 1996; Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001; Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, & Kearney, 1997). Overall, research indicates that graduate students who engage in this type of student–faculty interaction (e.g., mentoring) profit from the exchange (Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Gaia, Corts, Tatum, & Allen, 2003; Larke, Patitu, Webb-Johnson, & Young-Hawkins, 1999). The research examining effects of student–faculty interaction on undergraduate students also indicates that student–faculty interactions promote and enhance several positive educational and social outcomes for students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Huett, 2004; Weiss & Hanson-Baldauf, 2008).

Due to the lack of non-verbal context of the face-to face communication and the relative brevity, email messages tend to become misinterpreted. This may also negatively affect the impression formation process (Jessmer & Anderson, 2001). Being an asynchronous medium, email tends to delay communication, which in turn may lead to misconstruction of the message (Burns, 2006). On the other hand, Calongne (2002) points out that due to the distance and lack of face-threatening context of direct communication, one can easily overcome inhibitions and ignore politeness conventions characteristic of face-to-face interaction (c.f. also Lewandowski & Harrington, 2006).

Looking at email communication from a different angle, Cheng and Beaumont (2004) and Lerchey and Paras (2000) stress the importance of effective email communication in professional/occupational context of the global workplace. There has not been much research done, however, on the potential of email to facilitate faculty-student interaction that would lead to improvement of the student success rate in terms of academic performance (cf. Duran *et al.*, 2005, Malik, 2000; Weiss & Hanson-Baldauf, 2008). Flowers (2004) analyses the impact of email use on student–faculty interactions in higher education programmes. Taken as a whole, the data from this study suggests that higher education faculty at private institutions spend more time engaging in face-to-face communication with students than they do responding to student emails. By contrast, higher education faculty at public institutions reported spending more time providing individual instruction to graduate students than responding to email. They also reported spending less time advising students than they did responding to email. Punyanunt-Carter and Hemby (2006) investigate college students' gender differences regarding email communication. Their findings reveal that males and females exhibit different perceptions and usage characteristics concerning their computer-mediated communication behaviour when emailing and using other forms of Internet-based interaction. Females reported that they were more likely to check their email and use shorthand in emails directed to a superior (such as a boss or **25**

professor) compared to males. Males, on the other hand, reported that they were more likely to use emoticons regularly in emails and preferred emailing when they could not meet someone in person.

The analysis of the present corpus of emails sent both by female and male students in the German and Japanese co-educational university settings did not result in corroboration of the above observations. No particular gender differences were observed and neither German, nor Japanese students used emoticons in e-communication with faculty. The female Saudi students in the study (no male student data were obtained due to gender segregation in Saudi colleges), by contrast, frequently resorted to emoticons and other ways of expressing emotions and feelings (like rich text with colour, fancy font type and enlarged size) by means of email messages.

Research on speech acts in email communication

The seminal works in Speech Act theory came from the philosophers Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who distinguished among representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations, each with respective illocutionary forces. When we add politeness, representatives and commissives are inherently polite since their illocutionary point is to represent reality (e.g. state, report, assert, announce) and to create an obligation in the speaker, respectively (e.g., promise, offer, etc.). Expressives (e.g., thank, congratulate, praise, etc.) are also courteous and involve positive politeness. Directives (e.g., order, request, recommend, suggest) are inherently eliciting speech acts (Leech, 1983), their illocutionary point being defined as the speaker's effort to get the hearer to do something. Orders or requests, aimed at influencing the hearer to perform an action for the speaker's benefit belong to so-called impositives (Havertake, 1984). When the distance between speakers is reduced, directives are legitimate. Eliciting directives in which the result of the action is supposed to be primarily beneficial to the recipient, such as recommendations and invitations, are non-impositives (c.f. Pop, 2008).

The illocutionary force refers to the intention with which a given speech act is performed. The perlocutionary force, on the other hand, is related to the receiver/hearer, whose interpretation of the message is manifested by a specific behaviour or reaction; indicating that the act is recognised, but not necessarily matching the sender's intentions.

Mildinhall and Noyes (2008) have developed a speech act model of email behaviour considering email interaction in terms of successions of speech acts, i.e. utterances which contain an intention directed toward the recipient. Due to its relatively asynchronous nature, email as a mode of communication is said to generate packets of speech acts that are longer than those used in face-to-face communication in order to ensure efficiency. The authors indicate that a ten-cluster system of email classification may represent a possible taxonomy of email intentions. Mildinhall and Noyes (ibid) further argue that the use of computer-mediated communication places constraints on the ability to generate utterances. In particular, the use of so-called grounding language behaviour (c.f. Clark & Brennan, 1991), such as acknowledgements and interjections tends to be limited. The lack of synchronicity naturally evokes a monologue style that consists of a unidirectional stream of several utterances. In order to adapt to this medium, communicators by necessity must develop a method of partitioning their speech acts. All in all, the authors conclude that an email culture has emerged with several implicit stereotypical 'templates' or conventions for email composition.

Lampert, Dale and Paris (2008) investigate the nature of requests and commitments in email messages, offering precise definitions for classifying requests and commitments, based on the concepts from Speech Act Theory (c.f., Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Leech, 1983; Havertake, 1984; Gu, 1990,1992; Jackson & Stockwell, 1996; Sperber & Wilson, 1995, 2002). The specific surface realisations of requests and commitments in email are considered fuzzy. The paper contributes a well-grounded definitional basis for the classification of task-oriented speech acts in email. The overall goal is to create tools that assist email users by automatically detecting requests and commitments in incoming and outgoing email. This builds on the influential ideas proposed by Winograd and Flores (1986) to classify speech acts in email, with the focus on annotating speech acts at the message level (c.f., Khosravi & Wilks, 1999; Cohen, Carvalho & Mitchell, 2004; Leuski, 2004; Goldstein & Sabin, 2006). Like Corston-Oliver *et al.* (2004), Lampert *et al.* (2008) observe that a single email message may contain multiple requests and commitments on a range of tasks and topics. Along the same mode, Carvalho (2008) proposes the email act taxonomy with such speech acts as greeting, requesting, suggesting, committing, delivering, amending, refusing, and reminding.

Nastri, Peña, and Hancock (2006), on the other hand, focus on the study of the construction of away messages from the speech act analysis perspective. They encoded samples of naturally occurring speech using a modified version of the apology strategy typology outlined in the **CCSARP** Coding Manual for Apologies (Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989, pp. 289-294). The modifications were made to capture several salient linguistic and pragmatic structures within their corpus, including the apology strategies as well as positive and negative politeness (c.f., e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987). The authors also discuss different types of non-standard orthographic forms used in away messages. As commonly observed, online communication exhibits numerous examples of non-standard orthographic forms, such as abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., "**FYI**", "**LOL**"), emoticons (e.g., "smileys"), intentional misspellings (e.g., "pleeeeeaaaaazzzzzee!!!"), and non-standard uses of punctuation (e.g., ~*sleeping*~) (c.f. Baron, 2004, 2010; Hancock, 2004a; Herring, 2001; Walther & D'Addario, 2001; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Consistent with Grice's maxims of quantity ("Make your contribution as informative as required." "Don't make your contribution more informative than is required."), and that of relevance ("Be relevant"), such non-standard forms have been assumed to minimise the cost of producing long textual utterances (c.f. Clark & Brennan, 1991; Herring, 2001).

The use of non-standard orthography has frequently been observed in text-based messaging when the cost of producing characters is particularly high (Grinter & Eldridge, 2001; Utz, 2000). These types of non-standard orthographic forms have been studied in various modes of text-based interactions, including instant messaging (e.g., Baron, 2004, 2010; Ling & Baron, 2007; Baron & Segerstad, 2010; Grinter & Eldridge, 2001; Hancock, 2004b), Internet Relay Chat (Werry, 1996), and **SMS** (Thurlow, 2003).

It is worth noting that most pragmatic studies on email interaction deal with requests only (c.f. Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012). One of the few studies that focus on other than requestive speech acts and pragmatic markers is that of Akkaya (2007). It investigates student-teacher interaction via email in relation to nationality, gender, and status differences with reference to the use of pragmatic markers in an academic context.

Research objective, research questions, and limitations of the study

This pragmatic study addresses the gap in research on other than requestive speech acts in student–faculty email interaction, also taking into account various pragmatic markers and cultural determinants of the subjects' email communication styles. Most studies to date have focused mainly on native English speakers as subjects, or – rarely – on a comparison between native and non-native speakers of English (Akkaya, 2007), or on speakers of English of one non-native origin (cf, e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012; Najeeb, Maros, & Nor, 2012); and not on a cross-cultural comparison between non-native speakers. This study also addresses the need for clear norms and rules of pragmatic appropriateness to be specified for this type of e-communication. The mixed qualitative-quantitative analysis is based on an original data corpus, and not on some hypotheses, assumptions, or task-based situations (see e.g. Zhu, 2012).

The main purpose of the study was to examine the student–faculty interaction via email and to determine whether and to what degree the use of pragmatic markers by students is congruent with the netiquette in English in this specific domain. Moreover, the aim was to investigate the relation of the usage of speech acts and pragmatic markers by students to politeness, as well as to cross-culturally compare the data obtained.

The following research questions were formulated to guide my investigation:

1. Which pragmatic markers distinguish students of different nationalities (mostly German, Saudi Arabian and Japanese) and in different university settings?
2. What are the different purposes for which students deploy email communication?
3. Which pragmatic markers are associated with student–faculty email interaction in general?
4. Is there a correlation between the three countries represented in the corpus and (im)politeness based on the data found in all the emails?
5. What are the implications of the study for computer-mediated language learning?

There are a couple of limitations to the present study. Firstly; the emails in the corpus were mostly addressed to the author, apart from the Japanese corpus, where there were two recipients. Secondly, the study was initiated without any particular statistical analysis in mind. Therefore, in future research, more quantifiable data should be collected and comparable variables employed.

Corpus

The present analysis is based on a corpus of 1,200 student–faculty emails written in an academic domain by university students from a German university, a Saudi Arabian university, and two Japanese universities. The students from the German university were mostly German under-, graduate- and post-graduate students, with some representing other nationalities (such as French, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Chinese or Singaporean) and their age ranged from 19–27. As for the Saudi university, the subjects were predominantly undergraduate students of Saudi origin, with a few exceptions of other nationalities, although most of them born in Saudi Arabia (Palestinian, Jordanian, Syrian, or Pakistani students), aged 18–27. They were all undergraduates, due to the fact that only bachelor programmes were offered at the time of my research in the so-called "women's college." However, since many students there tend to study on an extensive basis, i.e. for seven years or longer; in

terms of seniority, some were comparable with the graduate students from Germany. The majority (the minority being graduate students) of the Japanese students were undergraduates (aged 18–22), predominantly of Japanese nationality (with a few international students from China, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka).

All the students were non-native speakers of English, with the proficiency ranging from lower intermediate to advanced, communicating with the faculty in English in the context of higher education. Most of the messages were addressed to the researcher (except for one part of the Japanese emails), who knew the students personally (via frequent and direct face-to-face contact). The close personal contact with most of the student subjects over a period of time facilitated the analysis of the students' communicative intentions (illocutionary force), sometimes awkwardly expressed in writing (hence no guesswork was involved in the coding of speech acts, etc.).

The data were collected over the period of six years. The extracts from the emails quoted anonymously below illustrate certain characteristic stylistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic features that are representative of a respective cultural and institutional setting, pointing out similarities and differences between German, Saudi, and Japanese student–faculty email interaction.

The data were analysed and coded within the framework of speech act theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1979, & Leech 1983; Havertake, 1984; Gu, 1990,1992; Jackson & Stockwell, 1996) and the Politeness Principle (Leech 1983), in particular the Approbation Maxim and the Tact Maxim and their illocutionary acts and functions, with the focus placed on impositives. In this mixed qualitative and quantitative analysis I also drew upon the theories of (im/over)politeness (e.g., Culpeper, 1996; Watts, 2003; Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Danielewicz-Betz & Mamidi, 2010; and Haugh, 2007) and face management (e.g., Ting-Toomey, 2005), making use of such parameters as directness/indirectness, power distance/familiarity, forms of address, status appropriateness, and the style employed.

Table 1: Corpus size specification

Participants	Total number	Age range
Germany	400	19–27
Saudi Arabia	400	18–27
Japan	400	18–22

Illocutionary acts and perlocutionary functions used for coding

Leech's (1983) maxims of politeness tend to correspond to certain acts, as illustrated below:
a. Tact Maxim (in impositives and commissives);
b. Generosity Maxim (in impositives and commissives);
c. Approbation Maxim (in expressives and assertives);
d. Modesty Maxim (in expressives and assertives);
e. Agreement Maxim (in assertives);
f. Sympathy Maxim (in assertives).

Searle's (1979) categories of illocutionary acts (excluding declarations which are irrelevant to the analysis of the data in question) as well as a variety of illocutionary function, taking

politeness into account, (c.f. Leech, 1983, pp. 104–106) were applied to classify the Saudi, German, and Japanese email data, as discussed in the results section.

As for the perlocutionary force, i.e. the effect of the email content on the faculty, the student requests in the data analysed in most cases appear impolite due to the nature of the request. Students are not, for instance, supposed to request detailed information pertaining to exams or press the faculty for any kind of information for that matter. This naturally results in annoyance and irritation on the part of the faculty, whereby imposition is high when students overstep the mark.

Reminders prompted by the faculty trigger off a rather neutral reaction. In other cases, when the students take over the initiative of reminding in their own interest, this may turn into an impolite imposition of their demands. Generally speaking, by getting the faculty to do something, students tend to persuade, irritate, distract, annoy, but also sometimes amuse the addressee.

The impositives in the present data were coded applying Leech's classification (c.f. Leech, 1983: 119-121) as follows:

a. The imperative – the most direct form of imposition, direct command (tactless, risk of disobedience) – the "Give me a higher grade" category.
b. A proposition – "I want you to give me a higher grade."
c. Request forms – "Will you give me a higher grade?", "Are you willing to give me a higher grade?", "Can you give me a higher grade?"
d. Making the implication of an impositive even more remote by using tentative or negatively biased items: "Could you possibly give me a higher grade?"; "Would you mind giving me a higher grade?"

It must be noted, however, that such tentative and hedged impositives are extremely rare in the present data, the following examples serving as exceptions:

> *I'm writing to see if you could kindly write me a letter of recommendation.*

> *I was wondering if you can redo the exam for me after the vacation.*

> *May you kindly send us clearer ḥints.*

Overall, the present analysis offers corroboration of other research results reporting that non-native speakers use more direct, higher in imposition requests and fewer mitigations (c.f., Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, Bardovi-Harlig, 1996 & Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Leech's Approbation Maxim states that one should minimise dispraise of other and maximise praise of other. Sincere approbation dictates that one is to "avoid saying unpleasant things about others and more particularly about the hearer" (c.f. Leech, 1983, pp. 135–136).

Unlike in the German or Japanese cultures, appreciating and praising is very common in the Arab cultures. Therefore, it is also reflected in the students' messages, whereby the following acts are frequently performed:

  ✳ Appreciating the faculty's professional efforts;
  ✳ Praising the faculty's abilities as a teacher;
  ✳ Appreciating the faculty as a person;
  ✳ Praising the faculty as a teacher.

In congruence with the norms of Saudi/Arab culture (c.f. Danielewicz-Betz & Mamidi, 2010), the Saudi emails in the present corpus frequently exhibit the illocutionary force of

flattery rather than mere approbation, whereby the sincere intentions of the author might be questioned and a hidden agenda suspected, as shown below:

> *First i would like to thank you for all what you've done to us during this semester, I'm sure there is not other teacher would do the 1% of what u did to help us improve in our courses...*

> *I am really glad and honored than i took those courses with you, and I am really honored to meet an understanding person like you... and I am really looking forward to take other courses with u next semester....*

In such cases, the perlocutionary force depends on the timing of the appreciation and praise (e.g., before or after the announcement of the final results), i.e. whether an ulterior motive of self-gain is involved or not.

E-politeness and netiquette

With respect to e-politeness, Lambert Graham (2007) explores how expectations of (im)politeness are negotiated within an email community. The communicative practices in such a community indicate that the norms for interaction (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1999, Lavé & Wenger, 1991 and Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999) merge with the norms of (polite) interaction within the computer-mediated communication to create a unique set of expectations for what constitutes polite behaviour. Deviation from the norms frequently results in conflict, but negotiation of norms of politeness is said to give group members an opportunity to (re)negotiate the in-group identity.

In student–faculty communication, polite emails are expected to reflect greater formality; they should therefore be status-congruent or at least status-appropriate; they should also exhibit indirectness rather than directness, as well as lexical and syntactic strategies aimed at mitigating the imposing force (Bieserbach-Lucas, 2006). Overall, students ought to use language that reflects their lower institutional status and the faculty's higher institutional status, on the other hand.

Both the German and Saudi (but also some Jordanian, Pakistani, Palestinian, and Japanese) students come across as impolite at times in their email messages. It seems, however, that in most cases their being impolite or even rude is unintentional, originating mostly either from their English language improficiency, negative pragmatic transfer (Kasper & Ross, 1996; Franch, 1998; Žegarac & Pennington, 2000), or cultural background (Germans being more direct, for example; using fewer hedging strategies and 'politic expressions'; and Saudis exhibiting high social status). Japanese students may – mostly unintentionally – appear impolite as well due to their lack of linguistic and pragmatic competence in English. In other cases, students tend to be just sloppy in their expression, clicking on the "send" button too hastily or simply not finding it important enough to check certain essential facts, like the faculty's academic title, correct name, or the exact course title.

Japanese students tend to be, on average, more polite, especially when explicitly instructed about 'dos and don'ts' of academic email writing. Therefore, in most cases the form of address is appropriate and the subject is specified (although mostly imprecisely). What may be missing and requires to be monitored is the full identification by a student's name, the course code, and the section number rather than merely by the ID number. Students need to realise that their lack of email response on occasions when it is definitely required also contributes to e-impoliteness.

31

All in all, most students' emails exhibit at least certain level of e-impoliteness (c.f. Culpeper, 1996 and 2008; Bousfield, 2008; Locher, 2010). Boxer (2002a) also points out that issuing directives, setting expectations, or determining whether work for a given assignment is sufficient/complete are not examples of status-congruent language functions for students, yet students resort to such strategies wishing to achieve what they want by any means. The constraints in academic use of email are less clearly defined than those of face-to-face communication with faculty.

According to Baron (2002; 2010), contemporary email etiquette draws on convenience and social convention that may be appropriate in other contexts, but not in the university setting. Therefore determining stylistic conventions for appropriate email use may pose difficulties. Similarly, conveying humour or sarcasm (culturally-specific anyway), for instance, may be rendered unsuccessful, not only because of the lack of contextual cues, but primarily due to egocentric qualities of the author, taking it for granted that the recipient will decode the intention of the message (often without correct punctuation or grammar), whereby the possibility of negative impact on perception of the sender is not properly considered. This is pointed out by Burns (2006), who warns that incorrect use of email can affect one's academic career in a negative way; Lewandowski and Harrington (2006) suggest that a given email communication style (e.g., frequent use of so-called stylistic short-hand) may create perceptual bias towards the author. Moreover, professors who have limited means of observing or assessing student academic effort, which nevertheless has important implications for grading, may make judgements about students and infer personality traits from their emails (c.f. Grill, Oberlander, & Austin, 2006).

Furthermore, in relation to politeness, Jessmer and Anderson (2001) look at requests and their influence on the perception of the email author. Those who write polite requests are said to be perceived as more competent, friendly, likeable, hence prompting cooperation on the part of the email recipient. Polite email behaviour can, however, lead to overpoliteness (exhibited in the Saudi students' emails and, sporadically, in the Japanese ones), which, according to Charman-Anderson (2008), is not a kind of behaviour that is easy to change because of being rooted in the fear of social humiliation, or of accidentally insulting or upsetting someone else. All in all, a set of rules for what constitutes polite email behaviour requires negotiation since it is very time-consuming to be excessively polite. Much time may be invested in thinking how to phrase a given piece of information without it sounding abrupt and harsh. Email is a difficult communication medium, and many people cause more problems than they intend because they fail to consider how their words might be misread.

Netiquette (i.e. "net etiquette") is a set of social conventions that constitute the correct or acceptable way of communicating on the Internet that facilitate interaction, ranging from email to blogs, online chat, news groups and forums. Good netiquette involves respecting others' privacy and not doing anything online that will annoy or frustrate other people. Like many Internet phenomena, the concept and its application remain in a state of flux, and vary from community to community. Regarding email, the scarce guidelines, mostly found on the Internet, call for the use of unabbreviated language and avoidance of typing in all caps, which is considered to be the equivalent of shouting or yelling (often ignored by the students in the Saudi sample). Flynn and Flynn (2000) examine a number of strategies for sharpening one's netiquette, claiming that the toughest part of communicating effectively over email is the lack of usual set of communication tools such as facial expressions and the tone of voice. By resorting to emoticons one can enhance emotion in messages to a certain degree. These, however, when overused, may lead to impolite impression.

Even when in a hurry, one can remain polite by resorting to standard abbreviations and shorthand.

Certain acronyms and abbreviations, such as "fyi", "cc", or "re", are part of accepted netiquette and hence perceived as polite. Students, however, do not seem to be concerned about the net protocol too much and click the "send" button without asking themselves whether they would actually say the same in face-to-face interaction, or how they would feel upon reception of such a message. In this mode, Shea (2006) proposes ten core rules of netiquette, including the one about asking oneself the question: "Would I say this to the person's face?", as well as being polite among others by not posting any flame-baits, using non-offensive language, and sounding generally non-confrontational.

On the whole, to my knowledge, there has not been much literature available on netiquette (Hafner, 1998; Baron, 2002; Flynn & Flynn, 1998/2003; Thompson & Lloyd, 2002), and even less specifically applied to the academic domain.

Perceptions of what may be considered appropriate or inappropriate may differ cross-culturally. Nevertheless, the context of academic setting reduces the differences in terms of certain universal expectations that professors, for that matter, have of students who contact them by email. As Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, p. 5) notes, referring to the statements made previously by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993) and Boxer (2002a): "students must behave and use language in status-congruent, or status-appropriate, ways; that is, students must do the sorts of things students are expected to do and must use language that properly acknowledges their own lower institutional status and faculty's higher institutional status. For example, issuing directives, setting expectations, or determining whether or not work done has been sufficient, do not serve as examples of status-congruent language functions for students".

Students' emails become generally inappropriate and impolite when they cross the line between academic and private settings and/or impose on the faculty's privacy. Such emails include those asking the faculty to join a particular chat room or other Internet platform (e.g., a dating one). Especially the Saudi subjects tend to send private emails to a mailing group of recipients (mostly friends and fellow students), in which they include the faculty, forwarding all kinds of jokes (including those on taboo topics), pictures, and other attachments, as well as using fancy font types and colours.

The results of the present study corroborate Cecchetto and Stroinska's (2009) observation that emails from students to faculty members often violate the norms of what is considered polite or even appropriate in academic settings, from the form of address to the form of the greeting and closing. The choice of register, grammatical incorrectness and lexical selections all contribute to the general impression of an inappropriate manner of communication; leaving the addressee with impression of rudeness. Consequently, students may have to pay a price for their lack of e-communication skills as professors may be less accommodating to someone who, in their opinion, was impolite.

E-communication may more or less intentionally trigger off negative reactions and, consequently, lead to friction between interlocutors. Students, familiar with informal type of online communication among peers, frequently do not take the effort to "groom" their style when addressing their professors via email. Therefore, Duran *et al.* (2005) pose a question whether email is an appropriate form of communication within academic settings. As Wills (2004) points out, email can provide a false sense of security encouraging expression of unmonitored ideas or a kind of tone that would never be used face-to face. Graboski (2006) refers to impolite emails as ""lazy emails" that are disrespectful and can adversely **33**

affect a student's image in the eyes of their teacher. It is not only that students tend to be casual; they also write things that they would never say otherwise. Typically, such "lazy emails" would be sent without a salutation (no greeting), students would ask for information about a missed class; use excessive abbreviations, unconventional punctuation (e.g., multiplied exclamation marks that read like yelling), with the whole message sometimes typed entirely in lower case. In extreme cases of e-impoliteness, the emails sound whiny and are annoying, especially when demanding information already available. In many cases such emails are short of being offensive, portraying a given student in a negative light.

Those students who address their instructors with the first name and are sloppier in their emails tend to be more senior, hence they assume more entitlement. The sloppy style is very much influenced by instant messaging and texting. On many occasions, those students have not been explicitly instructed how to interact with their professors.

Judged from the style, manner, and tone employed, one may conclude that students do not always distinguish between emails sent to friends and to teachers. They are uncertain about the email etiquette and do not observe the rules of power distance and hierarchy in written communication. Their emails exhibit impolite tone; inappropriate salutations, abbreviations, grammar and spelling mistakes, as well as complaints (see Bieserbach-Lucas, 2006; Glater, 2006). Glater (2006) also points out that the boundaries that are used to keep students at a healthy distance have been erased. The times when communicating with professors was only possible face-to-face during a weekly office hour are over.

What I find particularly impolite is sending an attachment with a homework assignment without any greeting, not even a one-liner, nor a signature, whereby there is no way to identify the student based on the email account. The same applies to urgent-sounding emails sent over the weekend demanding an immediate response, with follow-up messages sent when one does not respond straight away (but often failing to respond oneself once a favour was granted). Impolite emails also include complaints and unreasonable requests (e.g., to provide detailed information about an exam).

Discussion and findings

In the following section the results of the study are discussed with respect to power/solidarity dimension, degree of deference, distance, familiarity, as well as degree of indirectness /directness and politeness. It appears that the apparent age of the faculty, together with the degree of approachability, flexibility and friendly attitude; seem to play a role in students' decision regarding the level of power distance, familiarity or directness. Students tend to build up more rapport and, consequently, become more familiar with flexible (and less hierarchical) faculty members, treating them as friends rather than representatives of authority. With time, the degree of familiarity may well increase, with students opening up to such an extent as to start sending emails that are unrelated to academic matters, such as personal information, pictures, jokes and all sorts of attachments typically circulated in mailing lists. The problem arises, however, that back in the university setting, when it comes to the assessment of academic performance, the impression of a given student may become (negatively) affected by their overall email style.

As mentioned before, it has been observed that non-native students frequently fail to use mitigations, characteristic of native speaker messages (c.f. e.g. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, Bardovi-Harlig, 1996 and Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Non-native students, especially the

Saudi students in the present corpus, tend to be very direct, getting to the point straight

away (*"I want"*), using imperatives (*"don't include that type of questions"*), intensifiers, and aggravating moves (expressing threats and dissatisfaction, stressing urgency), thus mini-mising the student–faculty power distance, and creating specific sense of urgency (*"asap"*, *"right now"*). Moreover, the claim that non-native students generally use "please" marked as having "requestive force" (c.f. Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007) has also been corroborated in the present study, as the following example shows:

> now......give me an A in the final exam tooo *PLEEEEASEE*ee...i need it

> *Looking forward to seeing the straight As in my transcript*

In my German, Saudi, and Japanese data, requests, although frequent in number, constitute only one of the email speech acts performed by the students in their messages to professors (for the complete list of the speech acts found in the corpus, see Appendix A). Yet, as said before, most of the recent studies have solely focused on student requests (e.g., Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Zhu, 2012; Najeeb, Maros, & Nor, 2012). The pres-ent findings are partly supported by the results of a study of email requests from native speakers of different varieties of English by Merrison, Davies, Haugh, and Wilson (2009). The authors call for more attention to be paid to differences in pragmatics across varieties of English. The main differences detected in the study consider 'doing deference' (more directness, less implicitness, less contingency, fewer uses of professional titles), account-ing (especially providing 3rd-party accounts), claiming identity of a 'good' student/person (doing fewer "but-justifications"), giving virtual 'gifts' (fewer apologies, appreciations, other other-oriented face work), as well as "doing other closeness" (more claims to communal/ personal common ground, more self disclosure, more aggravators). It has been found that British students treat academic staff in loco parents, whereas Australian students treat academic staff more as equals.

One can say that, generally speaking, German students tend to treat academic staff as representatives of the university system who are there to assist them. As for Saudi stu-dents, there are several roles that faculty should perform in their opinion, such as in loco parentis, consultants, counsellors, personal tutors, and the like. On the whole, however, Saudi students may treat academic staff, especially foreign faculty, as friends or even soul mates to be confided in:

> *I learned and improved a lot, and I didn't only get to meet a good teacher but a good friend too.*

As for the Japanese students, their professors – *sensei* – are mostly treated as the sources of authority, answer-providers, and advice-providers:

> *I have a question, would you answer me for my question?*

> *How do you think Japanese students can respond as soon as possible to English question?*

> *Would you tell me the question when you are not busy?*

The results of the present analysis do not corroborate the thesis posed by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), Bou-Franch and Lorenzo-Dus (2005), Chi-Fen (2006), as well as Duthler (2006) that students, in general, write more formal emails to professors and that politeness evidence has been detected in student–faculty emails. The German-Saudi-Japanese corpus points to the contrary, with the exception of so-called "assignment emails", where students are guided and instructed to specifically practise formal (business) email communication. The **35**

Japanese students are very quiet in class: they hardly ever speak and have to be prompted to communicate in writing. But when it comes to making sure that (especially late) assignments have been received and marked, or a satisfactory grade allocated, they can be very communicative indeed, sending frequent (also follow-up) emails and using a rather high level of imposition:

> *I can go to the following grade by 2 more points. Please give me 2 more points!*

> *This is my new presentation. You're urged to have my presentation corrected.*

On the whole, however, Japanese messages follow a certain pattern, as this typical example illustrates:

> Subject: About _____
>
> Dear Prof. /name/
>
> I'm _____ /first and second name/
>
> I cannot submit homework listening assignment (Class 10: Multimedia language learning).
>
> I forgot submit this assignment and was doing part-time job.
>
> If you don't mind it, could you allow me to submit this assignment?
>
> Best Regards,
>
> _____ /student **ID** number/
>
> _____ / first and second name/

Table 2: Coding categories

High	Low
Status- and power-distance congruent forms of address	Exaggerated positive politeness strategies, over-politeness
Conventional greetings	Personal content
Subject specification	Breach of high power distance
Conventional indirectness markers	Status incongruent forms of address
Hedged requests	Lack of conventional greeting
Negative politeness strategy	No subject specification
Specification and justification of the email purpose	High level of directness: imperatives, directives, expressives, 'want' statements, expectation statements, aggrevators
Formal, written style	Lack of sincerity ('hidden agenda')
Low overall imposition	Informal, spoken or instant messaging style
Conventional orthography and punctuation	High overall imposition
Plain text design	Non-standard orthography and punctuation
Sincere intention	Emoticons and rich text design
Author identification	Non-identification of author

Coding and statistical analysis

The coding categories used in the qualitative analysis of the present corpus are summarised in table 2 above. They were used when judging a given email 'appropriateness' and domain congruency. The coding categories were classified on a politeness and appropriateness scale from high to low.

Disregarding the distribution across the three countries, the frequency of occurrence of the main types of speech act categories, with their respective functions, looks as follows:

Table 3: Total number of speech acts and functions

Assertive – Collaborative	278
Directives/impositives – Competitive	604
Commissives – Convivial	282
Expressives – Convivial	587
Expressives – Conflictive	49

As one can see, the directives/impositives – competitive acts are the most frequent, followed by expressives – convivial.
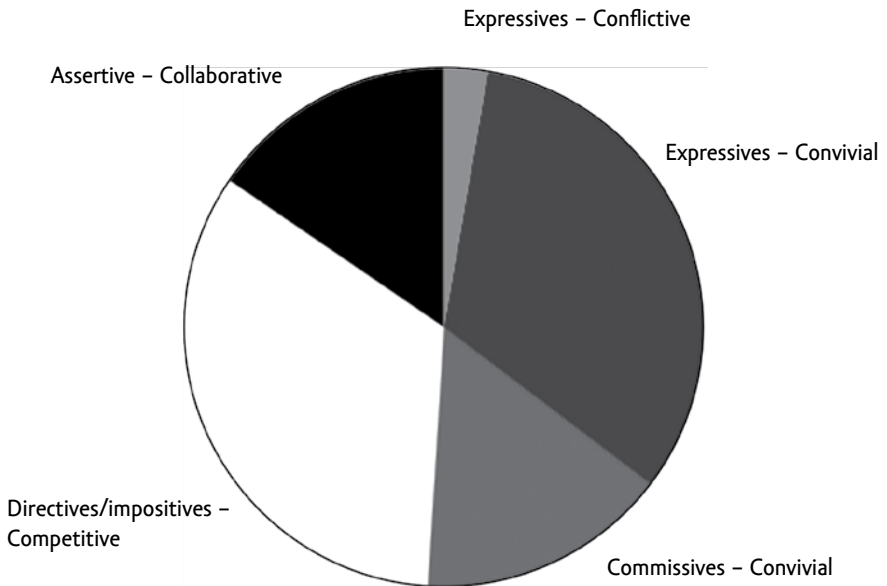

Figure 1. Frequency of the five types of speech acts in total data

Figure 2 shows the frequency of occurrence of all the five illocutionary acts and functions, as distributed across the three countries in question.
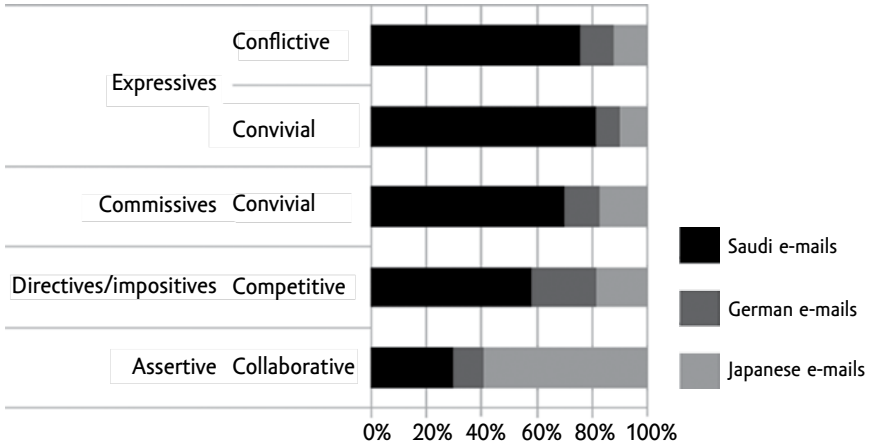
Figure 2. Frequency of five types of speech acts by country

From the table listing all the illocutionary acts and functions, as related to politeness, we can calculate the following figures:

Discourteous/Impolite acts: 862
Polite acts: 660
Neutral politeness: 278

Table 3: Speech act frequency (Germany, Saudi Arabia, and Japan) as related to politeness

Illocutionary act – function	In Saudi emails	In German emails	In Japanese emails	Total
Assertive – Collaborative – neutral politeness	83	30	165	278
Directives/impositives – Competitive – negative politeness/discourteous goal	350	143	111	604
Commissives – Convivial – intrinsically polite, positive politeness, courteous goal	198	34	50	282
Expressives – Convivial – intrinsically polite, courteous goal	269 Questionably polite: Expressing concern (124) Expressing panic, self-doubt (37) Worrying (48) – discourteous	50	59	378
Expressives - Conflictive – intrinsically impolite, discourteous goal to cause offence	37	6	6	49

This translates into the politeness figures across the three countries in question, as depicted in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Total number of speech acts across the three countries in relation to politeness

State of politeness	Saudi Arabia	Germany	Japan
Polite	467	84	109
Neutral	83	30	165
Impolite	596	149	117

Furthermore, on the basis of the frequency of polite, neutral, and impolite acts, we can calculate the mean and standard deviation values (see table 5).

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation in relation to politeness across the three countries

Value	Saudi Arabia	Germany	Japan
Polite	467	84	109
Neutral	83	30	165
Impolite	596	149	117
Total	1146	263	391
Mean	382	88	130
Standard deviation	267	60	30

I looked for a correlation between the three countries represented in the corpus and (im)politeness based on the data found in all emails, whereby one politeness variable or value can occur more than one time in one email. The total number of emails was 400 for each country.

The null hypothesis (**H0**) is that the country/culture has no influence on the state of politeness.

The calculated value of Chi-squared is 250.29. For the 3×3 matrix the degree of freedom is 4. The tabular value for Chi-squared with a significance of $p = 0.05$ is 9.49. So, the obtained value of Chi-squared is significant (actually very significant) and we can conclude that the null hypothesis does not apply. Hence it can be seen that the countries examined have a strong influence on the state of politeness, which was to be expected. The present analysis requires further elaboration.

In order to better understand the figures above, it has to be explained that although the total number of emails per country amounts to 400, due to multiplicity of speech acts within one email, several speech acts with numerous illocutionary forces may occur per single email, as illustrated below:

Good morning – **GREETING**

Ms. ____ how are you ?

and how is your daughter? how does she do? tell me about her is she ok now?

I hope she is good and feels comfortable. – **INQUIRING ABOUT WELL-BEING / SMALL TALK**   39

in this email I want to tell you that I will travel now :(– **INFORMING**

and I want you again to apologize me that I could not attend the exam

really I am sorry for that I do not want to miss the exam – **APOLOGISING**

but what can I do :(my situation force me to miss the exam – **EXCUSING**

and I want to thank you for your kindness :$ – **THANKING**

I will miss you and your classes :) – **MISSING, EXPRESSING EMOTIONS**

have a nice vacation :) – **WISHING**

No particular gender differences were observed along the pragmatic parameters taken into consideration in the present study between female and male senders of the email messages in the German and Japanese academic settings. The Saudi respondents were all female. The role of gender was not, however, part of the main investigation. In a future study, more attention will be paid to gender characteristics, addressing such questions as to what extent gender plays a role in e-communication. Aside from teacher-learner relations, are there any male-female relations present, or any other positions that could be intrinsically important?

As for the student identification, typically, the Saudi students use nickname usernames. They frequently send unsigned emails with assignment or test-related queries. The Japanese students mostly use their university accounts that only reveal a student's ID number. Some may occasionally send out a message from a private account, apologising for this fact. German students tend to write at least a one-liner when attaching an assignment and mostly sign their emails. Most Saudi students and some Japanese students (although there is a notable difference between the first year students and those who have received some explicit instruction on email writing) in the corpus send their assignments without signing the email, leaving it to the faculty to guess who it is from.

Commonly, in their emails, the German students do not refer precisely to the course attended, using a general term 'business English', for example, despite explicit instruction in this matter at the beginning of each course. The Saudi and Japanese students, by contrast, usually make precise reference to the course, if not the course section.

Interestingly enough, some German students address faculty by the surname (Mrs/Mr X), some (very rarely) by the academic title and the surname, others by the first name only. Some students do not even know the faculty's name and may choose to guess the name on the basis of the email account. Despite the hierarchical, high-power distance cultural characteristics, demonstrated in the importance of titles in Germany, students rarely use the status-congruent faculty's academic title – or, rather, seem ignorant of it. The Saudi students address their faculty by the academic title followed by the first name (e.g., "Doctor Hala") or by Ms followed by the first name (e.g., "Ms Christine") or just by "Miss". As for the Japanese students, they mostly abide by the official "professor" or "sensei" in Japanese, followed by the surname form of address, although "Prof. + the first name", "Dr + the surname or first name", or even the first name forms of address do occur. They may also, on some occasions, omit the salutation altogether.

High power distance, low solidarity, and low familiarity are predominantly exhibited by the German and Japanese students. The Saudi culture, on the other hand, commands a somehow mixed status of the faculty as a respected person of higher status, on the one

hand, with solidarity and familiarity overlapping with high power distance to the point that a favourite faculty member may be treated as a friend to be confided in.

There are also differences observed in relation to the degree of directness. The German students, due to their cultural background, L1 interference, and the lack of pragmatic competence in English; and the Japanese students due to their comparably low proficiency in English, neither use mitigators nor hedges. Additionally, the Germans frequently get a rather plain and blunt message across; expressing their opinions in a very direct way. This also involves signals of disagreement and expressing negation without hesitation. The way the Saudi students express directness and familiarity is rather related to their public demonstration of emotions: a successful message means getting one's problems 'off the chest' and conveying the message through the heart (hence many heart emoticons, rich text design with a bright colour background, and the like).

As for the perceived imposition and breach of netiquette, in principle, the German students in the study do not negotiate their grades, especially via email. They never send emails enquiring about the final grade, unless they have a justified reason to do so (such as a transcript for a study abroad or an internship). If at all, they do so only to find out whether the grades are available yet. Some exchange student enquiries may sound more urgent due to the fact that their stay is usually limited to one semester and there is a deadline to be observed. The Japanese students may in cases of failing a course, although rarely, resort to direct impository attempts at improving the grade at the last minute. The Saudi students, by contrast, frequently challenge their grades using directives and an imposing tone. Being embedded in a specific cultural context, however, the impositions (threats, demand, or emotional appeals) cannot always be perceived at their face value.

The German students hardly ever and the Japanese ones never ask for so-called 'exam hints' (a phrased commonly used by the Saudi subjects) and definitely do not request answers to the questions that may occur in the test. Communicating with a faculty shortly before the exam is not a norm in Germany (although exceptions may occur before an important state exam). Unlike the Saudi students, the Germans do not dare enquire directly what questions they may expect in the exam and it is usually sufficient for them to know the type of questions and the overall scope of the exam. The Japanese students do not ask such questions at all; they may only wish to reassure themselves as to the place and time of the exam. Overall, they send email to faculty members rather reluctantly, mostly when this is in their interest and when otherwise they would be somehow disadvantaged.

The German students usually send (repeated in 'urgent cases') academic requests, e.g. regarding a letter of recommendation or proofreading their job applications. Unfortunately, some of them do not consider it necessary to thank for the favour afterwards, simply taking it for granted. The German students also typically request information about a course or enrolment procedure; they may also ask for a course script, a language certificate, or for their exam papers to be graded ahead of the results deadline. Apologising (also in advance) for missing a class, hedged e.g. with a complement about a previous class and/or expression of regret/excuse for not being able to attend a class – is relatively common within the German academic context, but rather rare with the Saudi students in my data.

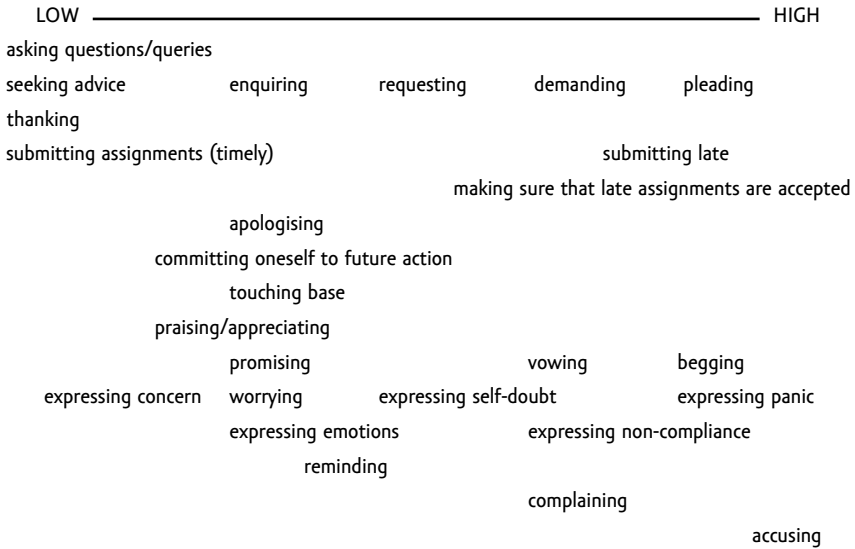The levels of imposition are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

LOW ──────────────────────────────────── HIGH

asking questions/queries

seeking advice   enquiring   requesting   demanding   pleading

thanking

submitting assignments (timely)   submitting late

                                    making sure that late assignments are accepted

                    apologising

          committing oneself to future action

                    touching base

          praising/appreciating

                    promising   vowing   begging

    expressing concern   worrying   expressing self-doubt   expressing panic

                    expressing emotions   expressing non-compliance

                        reminding

                                        complaining

                                                    accusing

Figure 3: Levels of imposition

Face management

> *Ooh miss please don't make me feel bad! I was just telling my mother that the only class I was so sad for missing is the sociolinguistic class.*

The concept of face is crucial both in the Saudi (c.f. Danielewicz-Betz & Mamidi, 2009, 2010) and Japanese cultures (e.g., Matsumoto,1988; Haugh, 2005). Hence, it is common for the Saudi students to take utmost measures not to lose face in interaction with others. Interestingly enough, somehow in the process of managing their own face, they neglect the face needs of the faculty they address and, consequently, may perform face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Simmons, 1994), as the following example show:

> *I really feel sad that you thought i am liar ...if i am lair i wont did any thing that promise i will do it before.... when i told you i will do another research i did it when i told you i will take the exam the next day i did it and even when i told you i will did the presentation i mean it and i came to you office .... if you don't know me ask all the Teachers who taught me if i am lier or not ..Dr.____ i have a good repetition in the university and i know all of my teachers love me and i appreciate them a lot even you ..really Dr you harm my feeling .*

As for the German students, when writing in English, they mostly sound rather polite and do not threaten the faculty´s face. The tone may change, however, once they switch to German, as demonstrated by the following example:

> *wie bereits besprochen, habe ich heute mein Zertifikat im Fremdsprachenzentrum abgeholt.*

42

Leider wurde dieses Zertifikat lediglich mit der Note 3+ benotet. Da der mündliche Vortrag am Montag von Frau ____ (schriftliche Leistung: 3–) und von mir zu jeweils gleichen Teilen vorbereitet wurde, ist es mir nicht verständlich, weshalb es mir nicht möglich war, ebenfalls die endgültige Note 2– zu erreichen. Ich bitte Sie höflichst um eine kurze Stellungnahme.

[As discussed before, I have collected my certificate from the foreign language centre today. Unfortunately, the grade on the certificate is a C+. Since I gave a presentation last Monday together with Ms ____ (written result: C–) and equally contributed toward the preparation of it, I cannot understand why it´s not possible for me (as for her) to obtain a B– as the final grade. I ask you politely for a comment regarding this.]

The Saudi data is richer in this respect: students will use any persuasive tactic, including face threatening impositions to achieve what they want, especially before an exam or when it comes to negotiating grades:

I passed by ur office on Wed but u weren't there!!

plz we don't want comparing/give the difference between two things because it's hard.

*I just missed one mark on the participation so may you kindly add the rest to something else. Please please pleaseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee Dr, I'm really concerned and I don't want that to affect my **GPA**, I'd study the entire book if I had the chance just to prove that I care N I take ur course seriously !!*

Surprisingly enough, the Japanese students do use face-threatening acts, although sporadically, whereby the question arises whether this is done on purpose or rather reflects their lack of English (pragmatic and stylistic) proficiency:

Hello, I think I've find something fishy about your moodle web site, and I decided to send this email.

(…) Did you do this on purpose, or by just a mistake?

*I don't even want to think about spending money for webcam or something like that. I **SERIOUSLY** want to avoid uploading video to the internet, no matter how safe anyone say. I can't understand why I have to do such things for just an assignment. This make me really, **REALLY**, upset. If you can, please avoid using this type of assignment from now on. Sorry for the rude attitude, but I think this must never be happened again. This assignment made my feelings very unpleasant.*

As for orthography and punctuation style, the Saudi students use distinctly more non-standard spelling and punctuation marks, combined with excessive emoticons, and rich text design (vivid colours, unusual fonts and font size). The German and Japanese students, by contrast, do not use emoticons or non-standard spelling and punctuation style.

Contrary to the Saudi students, the Germans never make reference to personal matters, and only on exceptional occasions provide excuses related to family problems. Their excuses are mostly health or work-related (most German students work on the side). The Japanese students tend to send course-related emails only, although they might occasionally send an excuse related to death in the family or an extra-curricular or job hunting activity preventing them from attending a class. As for the Saudi students, once they have become familiar enough with the faculty, they continue sending personal emails that have nothing to do **43**

with the academic setting: they may, for instance, include the faculty in their mailing lists and send them all sorts of images, taboo jokes, quotes of the day, and the like.

Implications for teaching computer-assisted communication

Generally speaking, improvement of student email writing skills regarding such parameters as politeness, level of directness, content guidelines, etc. is achievable, provided that explicit instruction is offered in class (including tutorials, exercises, tests, and exam questions), followed by the observance of all the guidelines introduced in the ensuing email interaction. Specifically, when, for instance, a student fails to identify himself/herself, the reply from their instructor could be: *Who are you? Which course and section are you in?*; thus prompting compliance with the rules of e-communication.

Moreover, it is important to point out the importance of not only grammatical competence in L2 (L3, etc.), but also that of cultural and pragmatic competence components. This implies following socio-pragmatic rules of a given language, embedded in a broader cultural context, and including politeness and application (or avoidance) of certain speech acts.

Additionally, clear netiquette rules for student–faculty interaction in the academic setting should be established, with students having to face some kind consequences of their inappropriate email behaviour. This could be in the form of non-response (even in 'urgent' cases) to an 'inappropriate' email on the part of the instructor; anonymous mentioning in class; specific comment provided to a given student in face-to-face interaction; or perhaps it could even bear some impact on the overall course grade.

Additionally, more and more students prefer to receive at least part of their higher education in English-speaking countries (c.f. Zhu, 2012, referring to Chinese students). Yet, the deficiencies concerning the target language choices of polite requestive and other strategies might lead to inappropriate communication with native English speakers. As Taguchi (2012) points out, while the teaching of pragmatic competence has gained greater attention as pragmatics in the communicative competence models has begun to gain explicit attention, teaching of socio-pragmatic competence has obviously not gained enough attention (c.f. Zhu, 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Therefore, teaching of pragmatic competence should be performed in the EFL/formal classroom settings. Following Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2008) suggestions, textbook materials that emphasise the pragmatic aspects like lexical choices for making polite speech acts should be designed and developed in EFL/ESL settings. Iwasaki (2008) also suggests that making email a mandatory part of English class coursework would ensure that students become familiar with the Internet community tools for education. Practice of email writing can also enhance learners' confidence and speaking skills in L2 situations (c.f. Kim & Keller, 2008). As research has shown, participating in academic email exchange can foster student empowerment and learner autonomy, which promotes student interest and motivation in the target language (Hui-Fang, 2005).

Moreover, as Gonglewski, Meloni and Brant (2001) point out, the English learners of lower proficiency may also profit from the academic email exchanges, learning, for instance, to set a topic, make a comment or ask a question in the same way they would have to negotiate spoken communication.

Additionally, email is a safe medium for asynchronous 'conversation', whereby less confident learners do not have to worry about having to perform in front of the others and on the spot. This also constitutes an important aspect for Japanese English language learners. Since an email exchange can be kept private, they do not have the pressure of speaking

in front of their peers, which can be a daunting experience if a learner acknowledges his or her own overall proficiency. Integrating email technology into a language course further encourages learner autonomy, which is one of the first and most important steps to language acquisition (c.f. Sabieh, 2002). As Sheer and Fung (2007) argue, email has also become a social outlet that can strengthen the teacher-student bond. A professor may use email to develop good relationships with students by engaging in social topics such as hobbies and interests, discussing extra-curricular activities, or disclosing personal problems.

Further implications for modern business workforce are pointed out by Balotsky and Christensen (2004). The authors propose the development of teaching pedagogy that better reflects the skills required for success in the 21st-century business environment. They argue that educational institutions should provide both traditional and IT-mediated alternatives, mainly because of workplace demands that call for students' proficiency in the use of the enabling technologies.

One of the technological solutions is to place the email guidelines for students on the university website and on the Intranet and make sure that administration and faculty draw students' attention to these and execute compliance with the email etiquette, making it part of the university policy.

An example is provided by Curtin University of Western Australia. Their email etiquette includes numerous points under such headings as common courtesies, keeping out of trouble, signatures, email subjects, constructing good email messages, attaching files, and some others (c.f. http://www.ctcs.uconn.edu/ecemail_etiquette.pdf).

Weiss and Hanson-Baldauf (2008) propose, based on survey responses from students and faculty, improving email communication with students and alleviating frustration by allocating time at the beginning of each semester to setting clear expectations and guidelines for email use. Topics to address should include apprehension about using email, appropriate use of email communication, hours during which faculty will respond to email, formality of the communication, grammar standards for the messages, information necessary to include in messages, ways faculty prefer to be addressed and to address students in return, expectations of responsiveness, and appropriate subject lines.

Conclusion and future outlook

As seen from the frequency statistics, the impolite acts constitute the majority of acts in the whole corpus. This shows that students require instruction in email writing that is academic domain congruent. The Saudi subjects excelled both in polite and impolite emails. They also used the highest number of varied illocutionary acts altogether. The lack of pragmatic competence was determined in all three groups of students, independent of the proficiency level and seniority; whereby course instruction in email writing and its netiquette has a clear positive effect on student–faculty interaction in terms of appropriateness and the level of politeness.

The results of the present study show that students appear not to be aware of the role their email messages play in creating their professors' impressions about them, which may result in a bias based on one's emailing style. Students often become over-familiar with the academic staff and use a variety of illocutionary acts, uncommon in face-to-face encounters. They frequently do not consider adjusting their email style to the academic domain, addressing their professors the same way they do their friends.

It has been noted that students resort to performance of a variety of speech acts with **45**

numerous (mostly impository) illocutionary functions, not paying much attention to the negative perlocutionary effect of their messages on the reader, often caused by a high degree of imposition, distraction and/or irritation. The intentions that at first seem inappropriate and offending (e.g., an urgent demand or a requestive tone), often arise due to cultural differences, negative pragmatic transfer, and insufficient command of written English. In most cases, they can, however, be ultimately clarified in direct face-to-face communication.

All in all, it becomes apparent that students require formal instruction in email writing as well as specific guidelines as to how to formulate their messages in a formal academic setting. Clearly those students who have attended English writing courses and received specific class instruction regarding netiquette and formal email 'dos and don'ts' perform better and manage to significantly improve their computer-mediated communication.

Since the study sample was limited to the corpus of emails addressed mainly to the author (with the exception of some Japanese emails), the results should not be applied to all university students. For obvious reasons, many factors, including the culture, type of university, student–faculty relation, subject matter, etc. may influence the way email communication is constructed and employed.

One of the future goals it to obtain impartial anonymous data from a number of faculty members across more comparable academic settings and cultures, with the corpus being more quantifiable and statistically analysable, across a smaller number of precisely defined categories. Secondly, I wish to devote some attention to specific guidelines for student–faculty interaction, based on the new study results, making reference to materials on how to teach email writing and develop tasks facilitating the learning process.

Further questions to be addressed include the changing position of the teacher or language educator and its impact on out of class communication. Are methods or approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom reflected in the style and formality of English usage in e-communication?

Specifically, an analysis could be carried out on what the traditional positions are of the teacher in Japan and other countries and what practices undermine or contradict these beliefs. A distinction can then be drawn between changing notions of the learner and the teacher and acceptable communication amongst these positions. Moreover, since there is often no established place for teaching language register required for email communication in university curricula, a future study could deal with course focuses and methods (including blended and online learning) that are geared towards e-communication.

References

Akkaya, A. (2007). Student-teacher email interaction: Pragmatic markers of gender, nationality and status of the students. ProQuest.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bach, K. (1998). Speech acts. In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy.* London: Routledge.

Bach, K., & Harnish, R. (1979). *Linguistic communication and speech acts.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Balotsky, E. R., & Christensen, E. W. (2004). Educating a modern business workforce an integrated educational information technology process. *Group & Organization Management, 29*(2), 148–170.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics? In R. Kenneth & G. Kasper (Eds), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 13–32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Hartford, B. (1990). Congruence in native and nonnative conversations: Status balance in the academic advising session. *Language Learning, 40*(4), 467–501.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Hartford, B. (1993). Learning the rules of academic talk: A longitudinal study of pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15,* 279–304.

Baron, N.S. (1984). Computer-mediated communication as a force in language change. *Visible Language, 18*(2), 118–141.

Baron, N.S. (1998). Letters by phone or speech by other means: The linguistics of email. *Language and Communication, 18,* 133–170.

Baron, N.S. (2002). Who sets email style? Prescriptivism, coping strategies, and democratizing communication access. *The Information Society, 18,* 403–413.

Baron, N.S. (2003). Why email looks like speech: Proofreading, pedagogy and public face. In J. Aitchison & D.M. Lewis (Eds), *New media language* (pp. 85–94). New York: Routledge.

Baron, N.S. (2004). See you online: Gender issues in American college student use of instant messaging. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 23*(4), 397–423.

Baron, N. (2010). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Baron, N.S., & Segerstad, Y. H. (2010). Cross-cultural patterns in mobile-phone use: public space and reachability in Sweden, the USA and Japan. *New Media & Society, 12*(1), 13–34.

Baron, N.S., Squires, L., Tench, S., & Thompson, M. (2005). Tethered or mobile? Use of away messages in instant messaging by American college students. In R.S. Ling & P.E. Pedersen (Eds), *Mobile Communications: Re-Negotiation of the Social Sphere* (pp. 293–311). London: Springer-Verlag.

Baym, N.K. (1995). The emergence of community in computer-mediated interaction. In S.G. Jones (Ed.) *Cybersociety: Computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 138–163). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Beebe, L.M., & Cummings, M.C. (1996). Natural speech act data versus written questionnaire data: How data collection method affects speech act performance. In S.M. Gass and J. Neu (Eds), *Speech acts across cultures* (pp. 65–86). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Beebe, L.M., Takahashi, T., and Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. Andersen and S. C. Krashen (Eds), *On the development of communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55–73). New York: Newbury House.

Bergs, A., & Kesseler, A. (2003). Literacy and the new media: Vita brevis-lingua brevis. In J. Aitchison and D. Lewis (Eds), *New media language* (pp. 75–84). London: Routledge.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2002). *How's tomorrow? Pragmatic features of student requests for appointments.* Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL), Salt Lake City, UT.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2004). *Speech acts in email: A new look at pragmatic competence.* Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Association of Applied Linguistics, Portland, OR.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2005). Communication topics and strategies in email consultation: Comparison between American and international university students. *Language Learning & Technology, 9*(2), 24–46.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2006). Making requests in email: Do cyber-consultations entail directness? Toward conventions in a new medium. In K. Bardovi-Harlig, J.C. Félix-Brasdefer, & A. Omar (Eds), *Pragmatics and language learning* (pp. 81–108). Honolulu, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, University of Hawai'i.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2007). Students writing emails to faculty: An examination of e-politeness among native and non-native speakers of English. *Language Learning & Technology, 11*(2), 59–81.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S., & Weasenforth, D. (2000). *"Please help me": L1/L2 variations in solicitations in electronic conferences.* Paper presented at the 20th Annual Second Language Research Forum (SLRF), Madison, WI.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S., & Weasenforth, D. (2001). *Institutional discourse in the real world: Professors' judgements of student requests.* Paper presented at the Georgetown Roundtable of Languages and Linguistics, Washington, DC.

Billmyer, K. (1990). "I really like your lifestyle": ESL Learners learning how to compliment. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics, 6*(2), 31–48.

Bloch, J. (2002). Student/teacher interaction via email: The social context of Internet discourse. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 11,* 117–134.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics, 11,* 131–146.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1991). Interlanguage pragmatics: The case of requests. In R. Phillipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood-Smith, & M. Swain (Eds), *Foreign/second language pedagogy research* (pp. 255–272). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Blum-Kulka, S., & Levenston, E.A. (1987). Lexical-grammatical pragmatic indicators. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 9,* 155–170.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper. G. (1989). The CCSARP Coding Manual. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House and G. Kasper (Eds), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 273–294). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bonebrake, K. (2002). College students' Internet use, relationship formation, and personality correlates. *Cyber Psychology & Behavior, 6,* 551–557.

Bou-Franch, P., & Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2005). *Enough DCTs: Moving methodological debate in pragmatics into the 21st century.* Paper presented at the 16th International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning, Bloomington, IN.

Bousfield, D., & Locher, M.A. (Eds). (2008). *Impoliteness in language. Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice.* New York: Mouton de Gruyter

Bousfield, D. (2008). *Impoliteness in interaction* (Vol. 167). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Boxer, D. (2002a). *Applying sociolinguistics: Domains and face-to-face interaction.* Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Boxer, D. (2002b). Discourse issues in cross-cultural pragmatics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 22,* 150–167.

Brenner, K. (2006). A course in writing business email. *Essential Teacher, 3*(2), 46–49.

Brotherton, P. (2001). Students connect with mentors through email. *Techniques: Connecting Education and Careers, 76*(8), 38–40.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals of language use: Politeness phenomena. In E.N. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness* (pp. 56–324). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use.* Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Burkhardt, A. (1990). Speech act theory: The decline of a paradigm. In A. Burkhardt (Ed.), *Speech acts, meaning, and intentions: Critical approaches to the philosophy of John R. Searle* (pp. 91–128). New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Cameron, D. (2003). Globalizing "communication". In J. Aitchison & D.M. Lewis (Eds), *New media language* (pp. 27–35). New York: Routledge.

Carvalho, V.R., & Cohen, W.W. (2005). On the collective classification of email speech acts. *Proceedings of the 28th annual international **ACM SIGIR** conference on Research and development in information retrieval.*

Carvalho, V.R., Wu, W., & Cohen, W.W. (2007). Discovering Leadership Roles in email Workgroups in **CEAS**-2007.

Carvalho, V.R. (2008). *Modelling intention in email.* Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Maryland.

Cecchetto, V., & Stroinska, M. (2009). *Facework in email communication in the context of international classroom.* A paper presented at **LIAR II**, Linguistic Impoliteness And Rudeness II conference, Lancaster University, United Kingdom, 30 June – 2 July 2009.

Chi-Fen, E.C. (2001). *Making email requests to professors: Taiwanese vs. American students.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, St-Louis, **MO**. (**ERIC** Document Reproduction Service No. **ED** 461 299).

Chi-Fen, E.C. (2006). The development of email literacy: From writing to peers to writing to authority figures. *Language Learning & Technology, 10*(2), 35–55.

Cherny, L. (1999). *Conversation and community: Chat in a virtual world.* Stanford: **CSLI** Publications.

Chickering, A.W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clark, H.H. (1996). *Using language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clark, H.H., & Brennan, S.E. (1991). Grounding in communication. In L.B. Resnick, J.M. Levine, & S.D. Teasley (Eds), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (pp. 127–149). Washington **DC: APA** Press.

Cohen, A.D., & Olshtain, E. (1993). The production of speech acts by **EFL** learners. ***TESOL** Quarterly, 27*(1), 33–56.

Collins, M. (1998). The use of email and electronic bulletin boards in college-level biology. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching, 17*(1), 75–94.

Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics, 25,* 249–367.

Culpeper, J. (2008). Reflections on impoliteness, relational work and power. In D. Bousfield & M.A. Locher (Eds), *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice* (pp. 17–44). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Danet, B. (2001). *Cyberpl@y: Communicating online.* Oxford: Berg.

Danet, B., Ruedenberg-Wright, L., & Rosenbaum-Tamari, Y. (1997). "Hmmm...Where's that smoke coming from?": Writing, play and performance on Internet Relay Chat. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 27*(4).

Danielewicz-Betz, A., & Mamidi, R. (2009). (Over/Im)politeness and other face management strategies in the context of Saudi Arabian culture. Paper presented at IPRA conference in Melbourne, 13–17 July 2009.

Danielewicz-Betz, A., & Mamidi, R. (2010). *Three dimensions of relational work in Saudi Arabia: (Over)politeness, praise and appreciation.* Unpublished manuscript.

Davidson, M.N., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2001). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate researchers of color. *Review of Educational Research, 71,* 549–574.

Davis, B.H., & Brewer, J. (1997). *Electronic discourse.* Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Dingwall, S. (1992). Leaving telephone answering machine messages: Who's afraid of speaking to machines. *Text, 12* (1), 81–101.

Douglas, K.M., & McGarty, C. (2002). On computers and elsewhere: A model of the effects of Internet identifiability on communicative behaviour. *Group Dynamics, 6*(1), 17–26.

Douglas, K.M., & McGarty, C. (2001). Identifiability and self-presentation: Computer-mediated communication and intergroup interaction. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 40*(3), 399–416.

Dourish, P. (2001). *Where the action is: The foundations of embodied interaction.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Drake, B., Yuthas, K., & Dillard, J.F. (2000). It's only words – Impacts of information technology on moral dialogue. *Journal of Business Ethics, 23*(1), 41–59.

Duthler, K.W. (2006). The politeness of requests made via email and voicemail: Support for the Hyperpersonal Model. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*(2). Retrieved from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/duthler.html.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2008). Internal and external mitigation in interlanguage request production: The case of Greek learners of English. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture, 4*(1), 111–137.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2011). "Please answer me as soon as possible": Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers' email requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(13), 3193–3215.

Ehrlich, S. F. (1987). *Social and psychological factors influencing the design of office communication systems.* In Proceedings of ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems and Graphics Interface (CHI+GI 1987), 323–329, New York: ACM Press.

Flowers, L.A., Pascarella, E.T., & Pierson, C.T. (2000). Information technology use and cognitive outcomes in the first year of college. *Journal of Higher Education, 71,* 637–667.

Flynn, N., & Flynn, T. (2000). *Writing effective email.* London: Kogan Page Ltd.

Flynn, N., & Flynn, T. (2003). *Writing effective email.* Crisp Pub Incorporated.

Franch, P.B. (1998). On pragmatic transfer. *Studies in English language and Linguistics, 998*(1).

Fraser, B., & Nolen, W. (1981). The association of deference with linguistic form. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 27,* 93–109.

Gatz, L.B., & Hirt, J.B. (2000). Academic and social integration in cyberspace: Students and email. *The Review of Higher Education, 23,* 299–318.

Gee, J. P. (2002). Literacies, identities, and discourses. In M.J. Schleppegrell & M.C. Colombi (Eds), *Developing advanced literacy in first and second languages: Meaning with power* (pp. 159–175). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Glater, J. D. (2006). To: Professor @University.edu subject: Why it's all about me. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/21/education/21professors.html?

Goffman, E. (1956). *The presentation of self in everyday life.* New York: Doubleday.

Gonglewski, M., Meloni, C., & Brant, J. (2001). Using email in foreign language teaching: Rationale and suggestions. *The Internet TESL Journal, 7*(3), 1–12.

Grabowski, L. (2006). Impolite emails irritate profs. *The Michigan Daily,* 8 March 2006.

Grice, P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grinter, R. E., & Eldridge, M. (2001). Y do tngrs luv 2 txt msg? In W. Prinz, M. Jarke, Y. Rogers, K. Schmidt, & V. Wulf (Eds), *Proceedings of the Seventh European Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (ECSCW 2001)* (pp. 219–238). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Gu, Y. (1990). Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14*(2), 237–257.

Gu, Y. (1992). Politeness, pragmatics and culture. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research, 4,* 002.

Hafner, K. (1998). Tracking the evolution of email etiquette. *New York Times,* December 10, 1998, C1.

Hale, C., & Scanlon, J. (1999). *Wired style: Principles of English usage in the digital age.* New York: Broadway Books.

Hancock, J.T. (2004a). Verbal irony use in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 23*(4), 447–463.

Hancock, J.T. (2004b). LOL: Humor online. *Interactions Magazine, 11*(5), 57–58.

Hancock, J.T., & Dunham, P.J. (2001). Language use in computer-mediated communication: The role of coordination devices. *Discourse Processes, 31*(1), 91–110.

Hartford, B., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1992). Experimental and observational data in the study of interlanguage pragmatics. In L.F. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning. Volume 3* (pp. 33–52). Urbana, IL: DEIL

Hartford, B., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). "At your earliest convenience": A study of written student requests to faculty. In L.F. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning. Monograph Series Volume 7* (pp. 55–69). Urbana, IL: DEIL.

Hassini, E. (2006). Student–instructor communication: The role of email. *Computers & Education, 47*(1), 29–40.

Haugh, M. (2005). What does 'face' mean to the Japanese? Understanding the import of 'face' in Japanese business interaction. In F. Bargiela-Chiappini & M. Gotti (Eds), *Asian Business Discourse(s)* (pp. 211–239). Berlin: Peter Lang.

Haugh, M. (2007). The discursive challenge to politeness research: An interactional alternative. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture, 3*(2), 295–317.

Havertake, H. (1984). *Speech acts, speakers, and hearers.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Herring, S.C. (Ed.), (1996). *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives.* Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Herring, S.C. (2001). Computer-mediated discourse. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 612–634). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Herring, S.C. (2002). Computer-mediated communication on the Internet. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology, 36,* 109–168.

Herring, S.C. (2004). Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online behavior. In S.A. Barab, R. Kling, & J.H. Gray (Eds), *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning* (pp. 338–376). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hirokawa, R. Y. (1988). Group communication research: Considerations for the use of interaction analysis. In C.H. Tardy (Ed.), *A handbook for the study of human communication: Methods and instruments for observing, measuring, and assessing communication processes* (pp. 229–245). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Holcomb, C. (1997). A class of clowns: Spontaneous joking in computer-assisted discussions. *Computers and Composition, 14*(1), 3–18.

House, J. (1989). Politeness in English and German: The functions of please and bitte. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds), *Cross-Cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 96–122). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Hubler, M.T., & Bell, D. (2003). Computer-mediated humor and ethos: Exploring threads of constitutive laughter in online communities. *Computers and Composition, 20*(3), 277–294.

Huett, J. (2004). Email as an educational feedback tool: Relative advantages and implementation guidelines. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning, 1*(6).

Hui-fang, S. (2005). Email dialogue journaling: Attitudes and impact on L2 reading performance. *Educational Studies, 31*(2), 197–212.

Isaacs, E., Walendowski, A., & Ranganathan, D. (2001). Hubbub: A wireless instant messenger that uses earcons for awareness and for "sound instant messages." In *Proceedings of the Conference on Computer-Human Interaction (CHI '01)* (pp. 179–186). Seattle: ACM Press.

Isaacs, E., Walendowski, A., Whittaker, S., Schiano, D. J., & C. Kamm. (2002). The character, functions, and styles of instant messaging in the workplace. In *Proceedings of the Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW '02)* (pp. 11–22). New Orleans, LA: ACM Press.

Iwai, C., & Rinnert, C. (2001). Cross-cultural comparison of strategic realization of pragmatic competence: Implications for learning world Englishes. *Hiroshima Journal of International Studies, 7,* 157–181.

Iwasaki, I. (2008). From cyberspace to the classroom: Using email to enhance the EFL environment. *Hannan Ronshu 44*(1), 15–20.

Jackson H., & Stockwell, P. (1996). *An introduction to the nature and functions of language.* London: Stanley Thornes.

Jessmer, S., & Anderson, D. (2001). The effect of politeness and grammar on user perceptions of electronic mail. *North American Journal of Psychology, 3,* 331–346.

Judd, E.L. (1999). Some issues in the teaching of pragmatic competence. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 152–166). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic transfer. *Second Language Research, 8,* 203–231.

Kasper, G. (2001). Classroom research on interlanguage pragmatics. In K.R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 33–60). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kasper, N.M., & Ross, S. (1996). Transfer and proficiency in interlanguage apologizing. *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language,* 155–187.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K.R. (2002). Pragmatic development in a second language. *Language Learning: A Journal of Research in Language Studies, 52*, 1.

Kim, M.-S., & Bresnahan, M. (1994). A process model of request tactic evaluation. *Discourse Processes, 18*, 317–344.

Kim, C.M., & Keller, J.M. (2008). Effects of motivational and volitional email messages (**MVEM**) with personal messages on undergraduate students' motivation, study habits and achievement. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 39*(1), 36–51.

Kraut, R., Kiesler, S., Boneva, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V., & Crawford, A. (2002). Internet paradox revisited. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*(1), 49–74.

Lampert, A., Dale, R., & Paris, C. (2008). The nature of requests and commitments in email Messages. In Papers from the 2008 **AAAI** Workshop.

Lampert, A., Dale, R., & Paris, C. (2009). Segmenting email message text into zones. Proceedings of Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (**EMNLP** 2009), Singapore, August 6-7, 2009.

Lambert G.S. (2007). Disagreeing to agree: Conflict, (im)politeness and identity in a computer-mediated community. *Journal of Pragmatics, 39*(4), 742–759.

Lea, M., & Spears, R. (1992). Paralanguage in computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Organizational Computing, 2*, 321–341.

Lea, M., & Spears, R. (1995). Love at first byte? Building personal relationships over computer networks. In J. T. Wood & S. Duck (Eds), *Understudied Relationships: Off the Beaten Track* (pp. 197–233). Newbury Park, **CA**: Sage.

Leddy, M. (2005). How to email a professor. Retrieved from http://mleddy.blogspot.com/2005/01/how-to-email-professor.html

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics.* London and New York: Longman.

Li, Y. (2000). Surfing emails. *English Today, 16*(4), 30–34, 55.

Lieberman, E., & Miller, R.C. (2007). Facemail: Showing faces of recipients to prevent misdirected email. In Proceedings of Symposium on Usable Privacy and Security (**SOUPS**) 2007, 122–131.

Ling, R., & Baron, N. S. (2007). Text messaging and **IM** linguistic comparison of American college data. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 26*(3), 291–298.

Locher, M.A. (2010). Introduction: Politeness and impoliteness in computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture, 6*(1), 1–5.

Lowry, M., Koneman, P., Osman-Jouchoux, R., & Wilson, B. (1994). Electronic discussion groups: Using email as an instructional strategy. *Tech Trends, 39*(2), 22–24.

Mackey, D. (2005). *Send me a message: A step-by-step approach to business and professional writing.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Malley Blum, S. (2006). Whose digital literacy it is, anyway? *Essential Teacher, 3*(2), 50–52.

Marbach-Ad, G. and Sokolove, P. (2001). Creating direct channels of communication: Fostering interaction with email and in-class notes. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 31*, 178–182.

Martin, M.M., Myers, S.A., & Mottet, T.P. (1999). Students' motives for communicating with their instructors. *Communication Education, 48*, 157–164.

Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics, 12*(4), 403–426.

McKenna, K.Y.A., Green, A.S., & Gleason, M.E.J. (2002). Relationship formation on the Internet: What's the big attraction? *Journal of Social Issues, 58*(1), 9–31.

Merrison, A.J., Davies, B., Haugh, M., & Wilson, J. (2009). Do us a favour, Doc?: Comparing email requests from students in higher education in Britain and Australia. A paper presented at **IPRA** conference, Melbourne, 12–17 July 2009.

Mildinhall, J.W., & Noyes, J.M. (2008). Toward a stochastic speech act model of email behaviour. In Proceedings of the **CEAS** 2008 – The Fifth Conference on Email and Anti-Spam, 21–22 August 2008, Mountain View, California, **USA**. 2008.

Miller, M.D., & Corley, K. (2001). The effect of email messages on student participation in the asynchronous on-line course: A research note. Retrieved from http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall43/miller43.html

Morkes, J., Hadyn, K.K., & Nass, C. (1999). Effects of humor in task-oriented human-computer interaction and computer-mediated communication: A direct test of **SRCT** theory. *Human-Computer Interaction, 14*(4), 395–435.

Murphy, B., & Neu, J. (1996). My grade's too low: The speech act set of complaining. In S. Susan M. Gass, & J. Neu (Eds), *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in second language* (pp. 191–216). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Najeeb, Z.M., Maros, M., & Nor, N.F. (2012). Politeness in emails of Arab students in Malaysia. **GEMA***: Online Journal of Language Studies, 12*(1), 125–145.

Nardi, B.A., Whittaker, S., & Bradner, E. (2000). Interaction and outeraction: Instant messaging in action. In Proceedings of the **ACM** Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (**CSCW** '00) (pp. 79–88). New York: **ACM** Press.

Nastri, J., Peña, J., & Hancock, J.T. (2006). The construction of away messages: A speech act analysis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*(4).

Paolillo, J.C. (1999). The virtual speech community: Social network and language variation on **IRC**. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 4*(4). Retrieved from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol4/issue4/paolillo.html

Partee, M.H. (1996). Using email, web sites & newsgroups to enhance traditional classroom instruction. *T.H.E. Journal, 23*(11), 79–82.

Payne, C.C. (1997). Opening the door with email: From no tech to low-tech. (**ERIC** Document Reproduction Service No. **ED**412936.)

Poling, D.J. (1994). Email as an effective teaching supplement. *Educational Technology, 34*(5), 53–55.

Pop, A. (2009). An analysis of politeness as function of speech acts (**SA**s) and target reader in print medical advertising. *Language at the University of Essex (Lang**UE**) 2008 Proceedings,* 94–106.

Punyanunt-Carter, N.M. (2009). College students' gender differences regarding email. *College Student Journal.* FindArticles.com. 30 Aug, 2009. Retrieved from http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCR/is_3_40/ai_n26976650/

Quan-Haase, A., Cothrel, J., & Wellman, B. (2005). Instant messaging for collaboration: A case study of a high-tech firm. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 10*(4).

Rinnert, C., & Kobayashi, H. (1999). Requestive hints in Japanese and English. *Journal of Pragmatics, 31,* 1173–1201.

Romiszowski, A.J., & de Haas, J.A. (1989). Computer mediated communication for instruction: Using email as a seminar. *Educational Technology, 29*(10), 7–14.

Rose, K.R. (1996). American English, Japanese, and directness: More than stereotypes. *JALT Journal, 18*(1), 67–80.

Rose, K.R. (1999). Teachers and students learning about requests in Hong Kong. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 167–180). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sabieh, C. (2002). The influence of email on language learning: A positive impact. Paper presented at the 22nd Symposium, Annual Center for Developing English Language Symposium, Cairo, Egypt.

Searle, J.R. (1969). *Speech acts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J.R. (1979). *Expression and meaning: Studies in the theory of speech acts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J.R., & Vanderveken, D. (1985). *Foundations of illocutionary logic.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shea, V. (1994). *Core rules of netiquette.* San Francisco: Albion Books

Shea, V. (2007). *The core rules of netiquette.* Retrieved from http://www.albion.com/netiquette.html

Sheer, V.C., & Fung, T.K. (2007). Can email communication enhance professor-student relationship and student evaluation of professor? Some empirical evidence. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 37*(3), 289–306.

Simmons, T.L. (1994). Politeness theory in computer-mediated communication: Face threatening acts in a "Faceless" Medium. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Aston University, Birmingham, England.

Spears, R., & Lea, M. (1992). Social influence and the influence of the "social" in computer-mediated communication. In M. Lea (Ed.), *Contexts of computer-mediated communication* (pp. 30–65). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Spring, T. (1999). The ten commandments of email. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/TECH/computing/9903/31/commandments.idg/

Sproull, L., & Kiessler, S. (1986). Reducing social context clues: Electronic mail in organizational communication. *Management Science, 32*(11), 1492–1512.

Sproull, L., & Kiessler, S. (1991). *Connections: New ways of working in the networked organization.* Boston: MIT Press.

Swales, J.M., & Feak, C.B. (2000). E*nglish in today's research world: A writing guide.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Taguchi, N. (2012). *Context, individual differences and pragmatic competence.* Multilingual Matters Limited.

Thompson, J.C., & Lloyd, B.A. (2002). Email etiquette (netiquette). In Pulp and Paper Industry Technical Conference, 2002. Conference Record of the 2002 Annual (pp. 111–114). IEEE.

Thurlow, C., & Mroczek, K. (Eds) (2011). *Digital discourse: Language in the new media.* Oxford University Press, USA.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). A face negotiation theory. In Y.Y. Kim & W.B. Gudykunst (Eds), *Theory and intercultural communication* (pp. 47–92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ting-Toomey, S. (1994). *Challenge of facework: Cross-cultural and interpersonal issues.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Ting-Toomey, S. (2005). The matrix of face: An updated face-negotiation theory. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 71–92). London: Sage Publications.

Trathen, W., & Moorman, G. (2001). Using email to create pedagogical dialogue in teacher education. *Reading Research and Instruction, 40*, 203–224.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints and apologies.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Utz, S. (2000). Social information processing in MUDs: The development of friendships in virtual worlds. *Journal of Online Behavior, 1* (1). Retrieved from http://www.behavior.net/JOB/v1n1/utz.html

Waldeck, J., Kearney, P., & Plax, T. (2001). Teacher email message strategies and students' willingness to communicate online. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 29,* 54–70.

Walther, J.B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research, 19*(1), 52–90.

Walther, J.B., & D'Addario, K.P. (2001). The impact of emoticons on message interpretation in computer-mediated communication. *Social Science Computer Review, 19*(3), 324–347.

Warburton, E. C., Chen, X., & Bradburn, E.M. 2002. Use of telecommunications technology by postsecondary instructional faculty and staff in fall 1998 (NCES 2002-161). Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

Warschauer, M. (1999). *Electronic literacies: Language, culture, and power in online education.* Mahwah, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Watts, R.J. (2003). *Politeness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weiss, M., & Hanson-Baldauf, D. (2008). Email in academia: Expectations, use, and instructional impact. *Educause Quarterly, 31*(1), 42.

Weizman, E. (1989). Requestive hints. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 71–95). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Weizman, E. (1993). Interlanguage requestive hints. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 123–137). New York: Oxford Press.

Werry, C.C. (1996). Linguistic and interactional features of Internet Relay Chat. In S.C. Herring (Ed.), *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 47–61). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Wilson, D., & Sperber, D. (2002). Relevance theory. In L. Horn & G. Ward (Eds), *Handbook of pragmatics* (pp. 607–632). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Winograd. T. (1986). A language/action perspective on the design of cooperative work. Proceedings of the 1986 ACM conference on Computer-supported cooperative work.

Winograd, T., & Flores, F. (1986). *Understanding computers and cognition: A new foundation for design.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Yates, J.A., & Orlikowski, W.J. (1992). Genres of organizational communication: A structurational approach to studying communication and media. Academy of *Management Review, 17*(2), 299–326.

Zhu, W. (2012). Polite requestive strategies in emails: An investigation of pragmatic competence of Chinese EFL learners. *RELC Journal, 43*(2), 217–238.

Zimbler, L.J. (2001). Background characteristics, work activities, and compensation of faculty and instructional staff in post-secondary institutions: Fall 1998 (NCES 2001-152). Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

Žegarac, V., & Pennington, M.C. (2000). Pragmatic transfer in intercultural communication. *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures,* 165–90.

Acknowledgements

Appendix A

Illocutionary acts and functions in Saudi, German, and Japanese emails

Illocutionary act	Illocutionary function/ politeness	In Saudi emails	In German emails	In Japanese emails
Assertives	Collaborative neutral politeness, except for boasting (impolite)	Complaining Attaching	Informing Getting in touch	(Re)submitting Asking, announcing, reporting Expressing difficulty Worrying
Directives / impositives	Competitive negative politeness discourteous goal, invitations (intrinsically polite)	Demanding Pleading Enquiring Reminding Begging for forgiveness	Asking Enquiring Reminding	Asking Enquiring Expressing non-compliance with course requirements Seeking advice Making sure that late/ extra assignments are read
Commissives – commitment to some future action	Convivial intrinsically polite, positive politeness, courteous goal	Committing oneself to future action Vowing Offering to do something Thanking Inviting socially Offering an excuse	Committing oneself to future action Thanking Offering an excuse	Thanking Offering an excuse Promising Vowing
Expressives – making known S's psychological attitude	Convivial, intrinsically polite, positive politeness, courteous goal	Apologising Appreciating Praising Expressing satisfaction Expressing concern Expressing panic, self-doubt Worrying Missing	Apologising	Apologising Appreciating
Expressives	Conflictive, intrinsically impolite, discourteous goal – to cause offence	Complaining about the final results grades Accusing	Complaining	Complaining