Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and recipient attitudes: Request emails by Iraqi speakers of English

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Acknowledgment

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father, Tahir Aldhulaee, whose encouragement and support did not stop till the last day of his life. His last pray and wish were for me to complete my PhD and go back to him. Unfortunately, he passed away while I was working on this thesis and I did not have a chance to see him off. I would like to thank first my mother whose prayers and encouragement filled me with confidence and persistence to finish my thesis. I also would like to thank my wife and children for their support, encouragement and patience waiting for me to finish this thesis and spend more time with them. I extend my thanks and gratitude to my sister, brothers and friends for listening to my frustrations and prompting me to overcome all the difficulties that I faced throughout my research work.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of Iraqi non-native English speakers when performing requests in email communication and the attitudinal reactions of Australian English native speakers towards the email authors and their linguistic behaviour. 228 authentic email messages were collected from 40 Iraqi participants. Information about the situations in which these emails were composed was collected in semi-structured interviews. In order to explore the attitudinal reactions of Australian email recipients, each email was evaluated by 3 Australian English native speakers. The email messages were analysed in terms of constituent rhetorical moves, request strategies, and internal/external modification of request acts. The evaluations of the INNESs’ emails have been matched with the results of discourse analysis of the emails.

The results show that most of the email messages evaluated positively on the message structure attributes and the sender personality attributes include the move sequence: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request and closing. Optional moves, especially external modification, expressing courtesy, introducing self and thanking/appreciating the recipient, have also been found in these emails. On the other hand, most of the emails evaluated negatively on the message structure attributes and the sender personality attributes include the move sequence: subject line, opening, request and closing. The optional moves are underused in these emails. Most of the request acts evaluated as reasonable, polite and acceptable in future communication have been formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy, query preparatory, and mitigated with internal and external modifiers. The results are discussed in terms of the role of optional moves and mitigating modifiers in adding positive effect to the request email message. The evaluators’ negative perceptions are explained in terms of the limitations of email as a text-based communication medium, the cultural divergence between the two cultural groups, and the occurrence of language errors in INNESs’ email messages. The evaluators’ sympathy towards the senders as being non-native speakers who might face linguistic and pragmatic challenges in writing emails is also discussed as a trigger of positive evaluation of the senders and their messages.
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List of Abbreviations

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication
ACMA: Australian Communications and Media Authority
FtF: Face to Face
AENSs: Australian English native speakers
INNESs: Iraqi non-native English speakers
CofP: Community of Practice
FTAs: Face Threatening Acts
L1: First language
L2: Second language
FL: Foreign language
SLA: Second Language Acquisition
FLL: Foreign language learning
S: Speaker
H: Hearer
IT: Information and Technology
Chapter one: Introduction

In this chapter, I present background information about the issue investigated in this study, state the aims of the study and describe its significance. I introduce the research questions and the approach adopted in their investigation. Finally, I outline the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Statement of problem

Since the 1990s, we have witnessed an increasing use of diverse and sophisticated computer-mediated communication (CMC) forms in multiple social, personal, workplace and educational contexts. Electronic mail (email) is one form of CMC that has been widely adopted in human interaction, rapidly developing and replacing some traditional forms of communication. The rapid growth of communication through email can be ascribed to the advantages of this communication: email is a fast, relatively inexpensive, flexible and robust means of interaction across different locations and time zones. These merits have prompted the use of email for communication across cultures and countries. Email facilitates intercultural communication for various purposes in different settings across national and international borders. However, the use of email in communication between people of different cultural backgrounds may produce tensions due to the technology limitations and differences in cultural assumptions and expectations underlying appropriate linguistic behaviour in this mode of interaction.

The inherent limitations of this CMC medium and their impact on social interaction increase the possibility of misunderstanding and result in pragmatic failure in intercultural communication. The decontextualized nature of email and the absence of non-verbal cues deprive email users from utilising important resources that facilitate communication, such as ongoing feedback, facial expressions, body language and suprasegmental features. Email users may compose their email messages on inaccurate assessment of the context due to the decontextualized nature of email communication. Because of the remoteness in time and place
between the sender and the recipient, email senders may not be able to identify important contextual features of the situation such as the recipient’s role, age and status, unless they already know these features. Similarly, email recipients depend on the codes of the message only for the interpretation of the senders’ linguistic behaviour and they may be unable to adequately understand the senders’ intentions and fail to form accurate impressions about them.

To compensate the limitations of email technology, email users need to be mindful of the language they use and the linguistic cues they employ in communicating their intentions. They have to depend on the actual text in the message for conveying their feelings and intentions and that requires an adequate level of linguistic and pragmatic competence. Walther (1993) and Utz (2000) point out that CMC users may need to employ subtle text-based cues and textual paralinguistic devices as substitutes for non-verbal cues for developing impressions and building productive interpersonal relationships. However, email users, especially non-native speakers, may find it difficult to make decisions regarding the kind of language as most appropriate and effective to achieve their goal in a particular context. The language used in email communication has been described as a hybrid variety that combines features of writing and speech and lacks well-defined rules and characteristics (cf. Baron, 1998).

Email users’ uncertainty about the appropriate and effective language in email communication is escalated in intercultural settings due to the paucity of adequately defined norms which govern the style and language of email in a particular community. Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) argues that one of the reasons that increases the possibility of miscommunication in intercultural email communication is the lack of prescribed rules and conventions that govern email interaction in a target community. Age, sex and cultural differences of email users have led to the absence of consensus regarding the norms that govern the effective use of email (Crystal, 2001). There is a lack of manuals that provide adequate guidance for people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds who wish to use email efficiently. Thus, email users, especially in intercultural communication, are often uncertain about the style and politeness strategies that they need to use.
In multi-cultural Australia, people of different cultural backgrounds and ethnic affiliations use email to communicate with each other for different educational, professional and social purposes. According to the Australian Communications and Media Authority [ACMA] (2009), sending and receiving email are the most popular online activities that Australians engage in. The majority of Australians use email to contact various services and to establish communication channels that represent an alternative to more traditional mediums. Australian native speakers of English are likely to have an understanding of the rules, norms and conventions that represent the expectations underlying appropriate email structure in Australian society (cf. Merrison, Wilson, Davies and Haugh, 2012). However, non-native speakers, particularly those with limited experience of Australian culture, may unintentionally violate these norms and conventions. Such violations can lead to pragmatic failure, causing misunderstanding among the participants of a communication event, and resulting in the negative shaping of attitudes towards perpetrators of these violations.

The Iraqi community is one of many multi-cultural communities in Australia who use email to interact with the Australian host society. The widespread usage of email in Australian society has imposed its use on members of the Iraqi community who have to adhere to the rules and conventions underlying appropriate email communication in Australian culture. El-Dash and Busnardo (2001) argue that the subordinate out-group members tend to assimilate to the dominant in-group to avoid being negatively evaluated by the dominant in-group members. However, the linguistic behaviour and pragmatic performance of Iraqi non-native speakers of English in email communication with Australian English native speakers can be distorted by the inherent limitations of email and the lack of prescribed rules and conventions that govern email interaction in Australian society. Further, as being members of a minority cultural group with distinctive cultural values and norms, Iraqi non-native speakers are liable to draw on their own cultural norms and conventions in email communication with Australian native speakers. They may fail to observe the email etiquette pervasive in the Australian society due to pragmatic transfer from their first language and culture. This issue is escalated by the possibility that Iraqi non-native speakers may lack an adequate knowledge of
the Australian socio-pragmatic rules and language use conventions that shape the structure of an email message in a specific context for a specific purpose.

Performing request speech acts in email communication may also increase the risk of pragmatic failure in Iraqi non-native speakers’ email messages. Request speech acts have been classified, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), as face-threatening acts that often require subtle linguistic behaviour and appropriate communicative strategies to redress their imposition. Thus, non-native speakers need to employ appropriate request strategies and mitigating devices in order to add positive effect to their email messages and protect the recipient’s face. This requires awareness of the social norms and conventions that govern the realization of requests in the target culture as well as knowledge of the appropriate linguistic choices that requesters can make in a particular situation.

The limitations of email technology, the lack of well-defined norms for email communication, the risk of pragmatic transfer, and the face-threatening nature of requests increase the possibility of linguistic and pragmatic deficiencies in non-native speakers’ request emails. These deficiencies can trigger native speaker recipients’ negative perceptions of non-native speaker senders and their linguistic behaviour. In social interaction, according to Garret (2010), interlocutors are likely to develop negative impressions about each other on the basis of linguistic cues including lexis, grammar, accent and dialect. Similarly, pragmatic failure, according to Thomas (1983), can lead to native speakers’ negative perceptions of non-native speakers and their linguistic behaviour. Studies by Chang and Hsu (1998), Hendriks (2010) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011, 2016) have examined native speaker recipients’ perceptions of non-native speaker senders and their request emails. Most of these studies investigated this issue in academic settings through collecting native speakers’ perceptions of emails sent by students to lecturers and university staff members. However, the power relationship between the sender and the recipient is likely to influence the evaluators’ perceptions of the students and their emails. Also, these studies have explained the evaluators’ perceptions in terms of the types of request strategies and modification devices employed in the email message, paying little attention to the email discourse where these strategies and devices occur. To gain a broader understanding of the issue of
language attitudes in intercultural email communication, emails from different settings need to be assessed by evaluators familiar with the setting of the target emails, then these emails need to be analysed at both the request utterance level and the email discourse level.

1.2. Aims of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudinal reactions that Australian English native speakers (AENSs) develop towards Iraqi non-native English speakers (INNESs) and their linguistic behaviour when receiving requests via email communication. It aims to explore the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of Iraqi email senders and the Australian native speakers’ attitudinal reactions towards the senders and their email messages. This includes examining the influence of INNESs’ linguistic behaviour on AENSs’ evaluation of INNESs’ emails, the personality of the senders, the requests acts in these emails and the willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders. The study also aims at exploring the motives behind Australian evaluators’ attitudes through examining the linguistic and pragmatic performance of the senders in their email messages. These motives will be investigated through examining the discoursal structure of INNESs’ email messages and the linguistic realization of the request acts made in these messages.

Investigating the exchange of a face-threatening act (request) via a widely used CMC medium between INNESs and AENSs can highlight the possibility of occurrence of language attitudes in intercultural email communication. It should also illuminate the role of linguistic and pragmatic deficiencies in stimulating negative attitudes and impeding interpersonal relationships between members of the two groups. Through collecting authentic email messages sent by Iraqi senders to Australian recipients, exploring the attitudinal reactions of Australian email users towards these messages, and analysing the requests and the discoursal characteristics of these emails, the study will shed light on the issue of language attitudes, its triggers and its possible consequences in intercultural communication.
1.3. Research questions

The current study posits the following research questions for empirical research:

1. How are AENSs’ attitudes about INNESs and their emails influenced by INNESs’ linguistic behaviour in request emails?
   a. How do AENSs evaluate the structure of INNESs' email messages?
   b. How do AENSs evaluate the requests made in INNESs' emails?
   c. What attitudes do AENSs develop about INNES email senders?
   d. Do these attitudes influence their willingness to maintain future email communication with INNESs?

2. How is AENSs' evaluation of the emails and their senders explained in terms of the discoursal and linguistic structure of these emails?
   a. How do INNESs rhetorically structure their email messages?
   b. What request strategies and modification devices do they utilise?
   c. What are the evaluators’ concerns regarding the structure and language of the emails?

1.4. Significance

Most of the previous research on language attitudes has focused on spoken language, especially the occurrence of accented language in social interaction. Few studies (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2016) have investigated the attitudes that English native speakers may develop towards non-native speakers in email exchanges, especially when they receive requests that require a response or an action. These studies focus on recipients’ perceptions of non-native speaker senders and their emails in one setting only, mostly academic. The scrutiny of request speech acts in email communication in relation to language attitudes in various intercultural settings can indicate the factors that lead to negative or positive attitudinal reactions in intercultural email communication.
communication. It can also highlight the role of the sender’s competency and awareness of the rules and norms that govern appropriate email structure and appropriate request realization in promoting positive attitudinal reaction and acceptance in the host community. It can also provide insight into native speaker recipients’ potential reactions towards violation of these rules and norms. It can produce some implications that aim at developing the awareness of English non-native speakers of the expectations that underlie appropriate email communication in the native English speaking society. It can also raise non-native speakers’ awareness of the limitations of email technology and the possible consequences of linguistic and pragmatic deficiencies in request emails sent to English native speaker recipients.

The results of this study can also facilitate intercultural communication through raising native speakers’ awareness and understanding of the possible factors that make non-native speakers violate the norms and language use conventions of the host community. These factors can be situational related to the difficulty of structuring appropriate request emails according the values and norms dominant in the host community. In addition, this study can illuminate language attitudes as a source of other serious issues in social interaction. Language attitudes have been found to be a source of social stereotyping that native speakers of a language develop towards non-native speakers as well as speakers of other varieties of that language. They can also constitute the basis for language-based discrimination that language users from diverse ethnic and cultural affiliations suffer in the mainstream society. Language attitudes can lead to social isolation of members of minor ethnic groups who feel reluctant about communication with members of the host community (e.g. Australian community) if they notice some negative reactions to their linguistic behaviour.

1.5. Research approach

The research design and practice of this study are inspired by the postmodern/discursive approach to politeness. Two main reasons have encouraged the researcher to use the discursive approach as a conceptual framework that
underpins this study. First, it provides a comprehensive account of the factors that researchers have to take into account when analysing and evaluating linguistic behaviour in social interaction. The postmodern/discursive theorists believe that the analysis of linguistic behaviour in social interaction should be based on determining the role of the analyst, focusing on the analysis of context, analysing stretches of interaction, focusing on judgement of politeness, doubting generalisations, and viewing politeness as an accessible resource rather than something inherent in an utterance. Second, politeness, from Australian English speakers’ point of view, is not only associated with the evaluation of the characteristics of linguistic behaviour in a specific context, but also with the evaluation of the speaker personality attributes. Obana and Tomoda (1994, as cited in Haugh, 2007, p. 299) report that Australians view politeness as a term indicating “(a) being friendly, approachable, kind and attentive, (b) respect and consideration, (c) appropriate use of language, and (d) being modest, indirect and humble”. Adopting the discursive approach to politeness as a theoretical framework is consistent with the aims of this study as politeness, according to Australian English speakers, goes beyond the evaluation of the appropriateness of linguistic choices in a specific communication context.

The postmodern/discursive theorists claim that linguistic behaviour can be evaluated through the judgements that interactants construct over stretches of communication in context. Accordingly, the current study aims at collecting authentic email messages from Iraqi participants, collecting contextual information about the contexts of these messages, and having these messages assessed by evaluators from the Australian host community. In order to explore the motives behind the negative or positive evaluation of the email messages, these messages are analysed at the discourse structure level and the request act level. For analysing the email discourse structure, the genre analysis approach is employed to identify the number and sequence of rhetorical moves included in each email message. For analysing the linguistic realization of the request acts, a modified version of the CCSARP scheme (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) is utilised to identify the in/direct request strategies and modification devices employed in the email messages. The evaluation data collected from Australian participants are analysed using quantitative analysis methods and matched with the results obtained from the discourse and linguistic analyses. The matching process aims at identifying the
characteristics of the request emails evaluated negatively or positively on the evaluation attributes.

1.6. Thesis structure

Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature in four main sections. In the first section, a number of notions that influence language use and interpretation in intercultural communication are reviewed. The second section provides an account of pragmatic failure as an issue in intercultural communication, and the triggers and consequences of language attitudes in social interaction. The third section reviews Computer-Mediated-Communication and the possibility of language attitudes in CMC mediums. It introduces the main characteristics of language and language use in CMC with a special focus on email. In the fourth section, an account of request speech acts is provided. Chapter three provides an account of the methodology employed in this study. It starts with describing the theoretical approach underlying the research design and practice utilised in the study. Then it outlines the methods adopted for data collection, the participants recruited, and the frameworks used for data analysis. Chapter four introduces the results obtained in this study. It starts with an explanation of the process of data analysis before it moves to presenting the results regarding the evaluation of the email corpus, the discourse and linguistic analyses of the corpus, and the matching of the email evaluation results with the results of discourse and linguistic analyses. Chapter five discusses the results presented in Chapter four. It provides an interpretation of the results in the light of previous relevant works and perspectives. Finally, the thesis ends with Chapter six, which concludes this study and provides possible implications of the results, the limitations of the research design, and some directions for future research.
Chapter two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The review of literature for this study covers relevant research and theoretical perspectives in three main fields: pragmatics, language attitudes and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). The first section of this chapter provides an account of a number of aspects that shape language use and interpretation in intercultural communication. These aspects include linguistic (im)politeness, pragmatic competence, pragmatic meaning, meaning in context and the construction of meaning across cultures. In the second section, two important notions are presented: pragmatic failure and language attitudes. The aim of this section is to look at definitions of pragmatic failure and language attitudes, their triggers and their consequences in social interaction, especially in cross-cultural settings. The third section examines descriptions of the characteristics of CMC and the formation of attitudes in CMC mediums. Specific characteristics of email are provided including email language, structure and etiquette. In the fourth section, request speech acts and the performance of requests in intercultural email communication are reviewed. This section ends with a review of studies that have investigated attitudinal reactions to request emails sent by English non-native speakers.

2.2. Influential aspects in intercultural communication

2.2.1. Linguistic (im)politeness

In the literature, there is no unified definition for the term ‘politeness’. The complexity and richness of politeness have led to numerous conceptualizations, approaches and models that scholars have developed across the disciplines of linguistics, anthropology and sociology. Politeness research is conducted within the fields of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics since politeness is related to language use and it connects language with the social world (Eelen, 2001). Culpeper and Haugh (2014) define (im)politeness as “a particular attitude towards
behaviour, and one that is especially sensitive to the relational aspects of context” (p. 199). (Im)politeness involves the interpretation of behaviour in context and the attitudinal reaction of people involved in that context towards that behaviour. Culpeper and Haugh suggest that politeness involves positive attitudes towards behaviours and those who perform these behaviours. In the same sense, Kadar and Culpeper (2010) believe that (im)politeness involves the social dynamics of social interaction and “it relates in particular to how a person’s feelings and sense of self are supported or aggravated in conversation” (p. 9). Culpeper and Haugh distinguish two general views of politeness: the socio-cultural view of politeness and the pragmatic view of politeness.

2.2.1.1. The socio-cultural view of politeness

Behaviours are deemed polite or impolite on the basis of the social norms that are dominant in a particular community. Eelen (2001), Haugh (2003), Culpeper (2008) and Culpeper and Haugh (2014) distinguish two types of social norms: the experiential or empirical and the moral or prescriptive. The experiential or empirical norms are based on the community members’ personal experiences of what is likely to happen in a particular situation. Culpeper and Haugh suggest that members’ experiences of different social situations lead them to expect what kind of interaction or behaviour is likely to happen in a particular situation. These experiences help individuals develop an awareness of others’ expectations and how to meet these expectations. Terkourafi (2005 a, b) argues that the regular experience of situations gives individuals the ability to expect what will happen in similar situations and how to perceive others’ behaviours in these situations. The expectations that people develop through their experiences feed politeness attitudes since people tend to judge others’ behaviours and utterances as appropriate, inappropriate, polite or impolite on the basis of these expectations (Culpeper, 2008).

Through our regular experiences of social interactions and occasions, we acquire politeness routines or formulae which are “expressions which have become conventionally associated with politeness attitudes in specific contexts” (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014, p. 201). Haugh (2010) argues that norms of social interaction are
not pre-existing but they are rather co-constructed through interaction. Culpeper and Haugh (2014) point out that the perception of politeness routines or formulae as having positive or negative social meaning is context dependent as politeness is always based on ‘contextual judgement’ (p.201). They argue that although some expressions and behaviours are generally perceived negatively on the basis of the politeness expectations, they can be deemed as appropriate in some other contexts. For instance, the utterance ‘go to hell please’ is generally perceived as socially negative but its usage can denote socially positive meanings in some contexts such as sarcasm situations (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014).

Wenger (1998) uses the notion Community of Practice (CofP) to refer to any social group that has developed norms and rules recognised by the members of the group as appropriate for social practices. Members of a particular CofP, according to Wenger, can have norms underlying their expected linguistic behaviour in a specific context. In email communication, for example, we know how to start and end an email message that we want to send to a lecturer in a university to ask for information about their course. We have developed this knowledge through our experience of email communication in an academic community. Mills (2009) argues that the notion of CofP has been adopted by some linguists as a theoretical basis for contextualised analysis of linguistic behaviour of groups and individuals. However, she contends that CofP norms do not exist in isolation from social norms and cultural values. CofP norms are shaped by the wider societal norms as they are constructed and evaluated in accordance with the norms and values of the wider culture or society in which the CofP exists (Mills, 2009).

The moral social norms, on the other hand, represent individuals’ beliefs about what behaviours should happen in particular situations according to the moral structure of the society (Culpeper, 2008). Moral norms, according to Culpeper and Haugh (2014), are driven by social rules dominant in a particular community and are enforced by social sanctions. Using abusive language or littering on the floor, for example, breaks social rules and can incur sanctions underpinned by social institutions and/or social groups (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014). The sanctions can take a moral dimension through the negative attitudes or disapproval that members
of the social group may show towards those who break the social rules as outlined in the following excerpt from Fraser (1990, p. 220):

[…] each society has a particular set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe a certain behaviour, a state of affairs, or a way of thinking in context. A positive evaluation (politeness) arises when an action is in congruence with the norm, a negative evaluation (impoliteness = rudeness) when action is to the contrary.

Culpeper and Haugh (2014, p. 200) claim that in everyday life, the moral norms are described as “good manners”, “social etiquette”, “social graces” and “minding your ps and qs” that children acquire from their parents. Manuals of etiquette, according to Fraser (1990), have been published to reveal the view of politeness as positive judgment made according to the congruence of behaviours with the social norms in a particular community. In politeness research, the moral norms have been found influential in terms of language use and the linguistic choices that interlocutors make in everyday situations (cf. Trosborg, 1995; Beal, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Al-Ali and Alawneh, 2010).

2.2.1.2. The pragmatic view of politeness

In the field of pragmatics, politeness has been deemed as an aspect of language use as it is accomplished through language. According to Lakoff and Ide (2005), the term ‘linguistic politeness’ refers to two major beliefs. First, politeness is largely a linguistic behaviour. Therefore, it is a valid topic for linguistic research through the analysis of the linguistic features that people use when performing an (im)polite behaviour. Second, linguists draw on pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge as core elements in studying language phenomena. According to Amaya, Lopez, Moron, Cruz, Borrero, and Barranca (2012), the majority of theoretical approaches to politeness stress the idea that politeness aims at achieving a degree of social harmony through decreasing aggressiveness or avoiding conflict between interactants. Interlocutors use certain communicative strategies and make appropriate linguistic choices in order to avoid conflict and maintain social
harmony. This trend has been emphasized by traditional politeness theories such as those by Grice (1975), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987).

Traditional theorists (Grice, 1975; Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1989) define politeness as a way of avoiding offence and reducing aggressiveness and friction in social interaction. For instance, Lakoff (1989, p. 102) defines politeness as “a means of minimizing the risk of confrontation in discourse – both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening”. Traditional theorists share the view that politeness is the main factor that induces interlocutors to use specific linguistic forms when performing linguistic actions. Grice (1989) proposes the ‘Cooperative Principle’, that is, “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (p. 26). He further elaborates the Cooperative Principle and distinguishes four maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner as rules that govern polite verbal behaviour in social interaction. Grice argues that our talk exchanges are cooperative efforts in which the participants recognize a purpose or a set of purposes and a mutually accepted direction. The participants’ cooperation helps them to make expectations about what they will say, how they will say it, how specific they will be and so on.

Leech (1983) adds a Politeness Principle based on the view of politeness as minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs. He proposes a set of maxims that aim at raising interlocutors’ awareness and observation of politeness in social interaction. Leech’s Politeness Principle includes six maxims: tact (minimizing cost and maximizing the hearer’s benefit), generosity (minimizing the speaker’s benefit and maximizing that of the hearer), approbation (minimizing dispraise and maximizing praise of the hearer), modesty (minimizing self-praise and maximizing self-dispraise), agreement (minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement between the speaker and the hearer), and sympathy (minimizing antipathy and maximizing sympathy between the speaker and the hearer). These maxims aim to help the interlocutors make effective communicative choices to maximize social harmony and avoid conflict in social interaction.
In their politeness theory, Brown and Levinson (1987) contend that politeness is a product of an individual’s rational use of language to achieve his/her goals and the feeling that they need to maintain their own face and that of their communication partners. The notion of ‘face’ was introduced first by Goffman (1955) to refer to self-esteem and public self-image that individuals claim for themselves. Based on Goffman’s notion of face, Brown and Levinson distinguish between positive face: the individual’s desire for his/her own attributes and possessions to be acknowledged by others, and negative face: the individual’s desire for his/her actions not to be imposed on or impeded by others. A rational member of society tends to maintain his/her own positive or negative face and that of others.

Brown and Levinson argue that in social interaction, interlocutors’ face can be threatened or lost due to the occurrence of some linguistic actions that can cause damage to their face. They call these actions ‘Face Threatening Acts’ (FTAs), such as criticism, complaints, requests and refusals. They suggest politeness strategies to mitigate the impact of FTAs in social interaction, such as avoiding the FTA, going on record, using negative politeness strategies, using positive politeness strategies, and going off record. These politeness strategies are based on the assumption that the more indirect a speech act is, the more polite it tends to be. Brown and Levinson also claim that the amount and type of politeness strategies needed in a particular context depend on the weightiness of the power relationship between the participants, the social distance between them, and the rank of imposition.

Although some of the traditional scholars have claimed the universality of their frameworks, their assumptions have been criticized for their Anglocentrism (Wierzbicka, 2003). Eelen (2001) highlights some weaknesses of the traditional politeness perspectives, such as their inability to describe impoliteness in the same way they explain politeness, their neglect of the hearer’s active position, and their static view of social reality. Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has been frequently adopted and used as a point of reference in politeness research; nevertheless, it has attracted a considerable criticism in the last few decades (cf. Ide, 1989, Matsumoto, 1989; Sifianou, 1992; Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003; Haugh, 2007). Ide (1989) and Matsumoto (1989) question the claim of universality of Brown and Levinson’s theory, arguing that politeness is performed
in different ways based on different sociocultural values in different cultures. Davies, Haugh and Merrison (2011) criticize politeness theory for its reductive view of context and its neglect of other variables that may affect linguistic behaviour, such as affect, gender and age. Mills (2011) argues that Brown and Levinson have focused on the notion of mitigating face threat in their definition of politeness, while politeness has many other functions. She points out that people may choose to use some phrases associated with politeness to perform other functions apart from the mitigation of face threat, such as indicating social roles in the interaction context and their position within the social hierarchy.

2.2.1.3. The postmodern/discursive approach to politeness

The discursive turn in politeness research, introduced in works like Eelen (2001), Mills (2003, 2011), Watts (2003), Locher and Watts (2005) and Terkourafi (2005a, b), has shifted the focus on the study of politeness in isolated phrases and utterances to the study of politeness in discourse. Terkourafi (2005a) identifies two main aspects that differentiate the discursive theories from the traditional ones. The first is that the discursive theorists question the efficacy of the Gricean framework of Cooperative Principle that stresses the informative nature of interaction instead of rapport management, and the speaker’s intention over what is perceived by the hearer. The second aspect is their challenge of speech act theory and the focus on longer discourses instead. The discursive theorists (e.g., Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003, 2011) reject the focus on the utterance level assumed by speech act theory. They call for the study of (im)politeness in longer stretches of discourse. According to the discursive theorists, (im)politeness does not reside in isolated phrases and sentences, but in judgements about the linguistic behaviour formed over a number of turns or longer stretches of interaction (Mills, 2011).

Thus, discursive researchers are more concerned with contextualised expressions in studying the (im)politeness phenomena. Unlike the traditional approach to politeness that predicts the use of pragmatic strategies to act politely as determined by social variables, the discursive approach focuses on the dynamic and situated characteristics of politeness (Watts, 2003). Amaya et al. (2012) indicate that the
discursive approach has shifted researchers’ focus from static to dynamic aspects of politeness. They argue that it has changed researchers’ interest from the endeavour to establish shared norms to examining (im)politeness phenomena in specific contexts when explaining cultural (im)politeness in social interaction. Davies et al. (2011) emphasize the crucial role of context in shaping interlocutors’ behaviour as it includes the situational and social variables that influence their linguistic choices, such as their social roles, relationships, age, gender and status. The focus on context coincides with the general tendency of postmodern theorists to shift their focus from culture to situation, and some scholars have coined terms that indicate this shift, such as situated politeness (Davies et al., 2011). Therefore, some discursive scholars tend to avoid generalizations because of their belief in the crucial role of context in shaping (im)politeness expressions and their view that politeness is not inherent in utterances (Mills, 2011).

Another characteristic that distinguishes the discursive approach to (im)politeness is its emphasis of the role of the addressee in determining the polite or impolite linguistic behaviour in social interaction. Eelen (2001) suggests that scholars need to distinguish between two forms of politeness: politeness 1 and politeness 2. The first refers to sociocultural group members’ perception of what constitutes politeness in interaction, whereas the latter refers to researchers’ interpretation of politeness phenomena and their generalizations about politeness and impoliteness. He argues that researchers should center their analyses of politeness phenomena on politeness 1. According to Locher and Watts (2005), the priority of politeness 1 over politeness 2 is emphasised due to the belief that no utterance is inherently face threatening as it is the interlocutors’ understandings that define polite or impolite behaviour in a particular context. Thus, the discursive approach is deemed as ‘hearer-oriented’ as it explains (im)politeness phenomena according to addressees’ evaluations rather than speakers’ intentions (Terkourafi, 2005a, p. 241).

2.2.2. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence is another aspect that has a significant impact on interactants’ effective participation in intercultural communication. It has been
studied within the field of interlanguage pragmatics for its significant role in successful use of a second (L2) or a foreign language (FL). Interlanguage pragmatics is concerned with language learners’ ability to use the target language effectively in context, as illustrated in the following definition by Kasper and Rose:

As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language.

(Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 5)

According to Kasper and Rose (2002), in order to be successful users of a target language, non-native speakers need to master both production ability (the ability to produce appropriate linguistic forms in context) and comprehension ability (the awareness of what constitutes an appropriate linguistic behaviour in context). Thus, both production and comprehension are part of non-native speakers’ pragmatic competence. However, as Trosborg (2010) argues, the production and comprehension of an appropriate linguistic behaviour when interacting with the target native speaking community may require an awareness of the culture of that community. This requirement may indicate the germane relationship between language and culture. Some studies in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) research (Young, Sachdev and Seedhouse, 2009; Piasecka, 2011) show that language and culture are inseparable. These studies claim that L2/FL learners may need to explore the cultural values and norms that govern the target language use in order for them to be able to establish successful communication in different situations. This fact may place another burden on the L2 learners’ shoulders beside the effort to master the linguistic system of the target language. According to Kasper and Rose, interlanguage pragmatics is not only concerned with the process of the appropriate production and comprehension of linguistic forms in context, but it is also concerned with the process of acquiring pragmatic competence in a second language. Pragmatic competence is deemed as an important part of the general communicative competence of non-native speakers of a language.
Hymes (1972) introduces the term *communicative competence* to refer to the ability to use language correctly in a given situation. He emphasizes the important role of social context or communicative situation in which language is used. Canale and Swain (1980) posit four components of communicative competence: *grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence* and *strategic competence*. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the mastery of the sociocultural rules that govern language use, and which enable language users to employ linguistic forms and structures appropriately in a given situation. Bachman (1990) divides communicative competence into two main categories: *organizational knowledge* and *pragmatic knowledge*. She has used the term *pragmatic knowledge* to refer to pragmatic competence. She defines this term as the ability to relate words and utterances to their meanings, the intentions of language users and the relevant characteristics of the context in which the interaction occurs. She further divides pragmatic knowledge into three subcategories: *lexical knowledge* (the knowledge of meanings of words), *functional knowledge* (the knowledge of the utterances and the intentions of the language user), and *sociolinguistic knowledge* (the knowledge of the sociocultural rules that underlie language use).

Similarly, Celce-Murcia, Dormyei and Thurell (1995) introduce five components of communicative competence: *linguistic competence, strategic competence, sociocultural competence, actional competence* and *discourse competence*. They indicate that the actional competence and sociocultural competence of their model are concerned with the actual language use that is based on illocutionary meanings and intentions. They define actional competence as knowledge of expressing and interpreting communicative intentions, that is, “matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech act sets)” (p. 17). Therefore, they divide the domain of actional competence into two main components: *knowledge of language functions* and *knowledge of speech act sets*. The sociocultural competence in Celce-Murcia et al.’s model emphasizes “the speaker’s knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use” (p. 23). Celce-Murcia et al. argue that language is not an independent coding system but it is integrated to the individual’s identity and social
organization and embedded in the culture where it is used for communication. Thus, they argue that language should be learned in its social and cultural contexts to attain language acquisition.

The essential role of pragmatic competence in the effective use of a second language has attracted scholars’ attention to the necessity of including pragmatic knowledge in L2 learning and teaching. Studies in interlanguage pragmatics (Rose and Kasper, 2001; Davies, 2004; Cohen, 2008) emphasize the importance of pedagogical intervention to develop pragmatic competence through explicit as well as implicit instruction. Scholars who embrace this trend provide some reasons that support their call for teaching pragmatic competence. First, some scholars (Rose and Kasper, 2001; Eun and Tadayoushi, 2006) argue that pragmatic knowledge of L1 is being taught by parents who teach their children how to behave linguistically in social situations. In the same way, L2 pragmatic knowledge should be taught explicitly to L2 learners to help them to develop their ability of using the target language appropriately in social interaction. Second, in spite of the claim that there are many pragmatic universals among languages and cultures, some studies illustrate that positive transfer does not occur automatically (Rose and Kasper, 2001). In addition, negative transfer can occur, as non-native speakers are likely to draw on rules of language use in their L1. Therefore, pedagogical intervention seems important to cultivate positive transfer and to diminish negative transfer. Third, the lack of exposure to authentic language use, especially in foreign language learning contexts, may deprive learners from acquiring L2 pragmatics. Therefore, it is important to compensate the paucity of the authentic target language use with explicit and implicit instruction in the classroom that aims at developing the learners’ pragmatic competence.

2.2.3. Pragmatic meaning

Both semantics and pragmatics are concerned with utterance meaning at different levels. According to Leech (1983), semantics focuses on *sense* (the literal meaning of an utterance), while pragmatics focuses on *force* (the meaning of the utterance in speech situations). Thomas (1983) argues that the distinction between semantics
and pragmatics lies in the distinction between “sentence meaning” and “speaker meaning” (p. 92). She illustrates that the first is related to the range of possible senses and references of an utterance that is provided by semantic rules, while the latter is related to the intended illocutionary force of the speaker’s utterance. A sentence, according to Li-ming and Yan (2010), may have several literal meanings, but it has one intended meaning that depends on the context, the situation and the shared knowledge of the participants.

Pragmatic meanings go beyond what is said and therefore the identification of such meanings is not a straightforward task and requires more than one process to be reached. The speech act theory, initiated by Austin (1962), claims that a linguistic utterance does not only describe a situation or state a fact, but it also performs a certain action. Austin presents a new approach of analysing meaning according to the linguistic conventions related to utterances, the situation in which these utterances occur, and the associated intentions of the speaker. Following Austin, Searle (1969) highlights the relationship between the meaning of a sentence and its meaning as a speech act. He argues that the study of the meaning of a sentence should not be distinct from the study of the sentence as a speech act since every meaningful sentence can be used to produce one or more speech acts. For Searle, speech acts are more concerned with the intentions that language users produce in a particular context because they are related to language use for communication between a producer and a receiver of a written or spoken text.

In the same way, Grice (1989) claims that it is the intended meaning that interlocutors need to identify and observe in social interaction. For Grice, a speaker means something if he/she intends that the hearer recognises what is the intended meaning of his/her utterance. Thus, he distinguishes between two types of speaker’s meaning: what is said and what is implicated. The understanding of the meaning of what is said is based on the recognition of the conventional meaning of words, their order and their syntactic roles in the sentence. However, as Grice claims, the intended meaning is beyond what is said and it is realised through identifying the implicated meaning. Grice uses the term ‘implicature’ to refer to the implicated meaning of an utterance. He identifies two main representations of implicature: ‘conventional implicature’ (the implicated meaning which is determined through
the conventional meaning of words) and ‘conversational implicature’ (the implicated meaning which is identified through observing the Cooperative Principle) (p. 25-26).

A number of recent works (Thomas, 1995; Mooney, 2004; Greenall, 2009) claim that Gricean maxims are not always observed in social interaction and intentionality is related to how a particular communicative act functions in a particular society. Mey (2001) points out that when considering a speech act, one should not only examine the circumstances of the individual utterance, but also the general circumstances related to the wider context of that utterance, as intentions are dependent on the social context of the speech acts and the relationship between the speech event participants. Therefore, he argues that a speech act is always a “pragmatic act, rather than a mere speech act” (p. 94).

2.2.4. Meaning in context

Gricean conversational implicatures and his notion of Cooperative Principle were scrutinized and criticized for constraining the pragmatic meaning within the syntactic characterization of utterances without a sufficient consideration of the context in which they occur. Contextualists such as proponents of relevance theory (e.g. Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Carston, 2002) emphasize the role of context in determining the meaning of what is said. Van Dijk (1999, p. 292) defines context as “the structure of those properties of the communicative situation that are ostensibly relevant for participants in the production and comprehension of text and talk”. Contextualists claim that various layers of pragmatic meaning representations can be identified between what is said and what is implicated and there are different kinds of inferential processing involved in understanding the communicated meanings. Culpeper and Haugh (2014) explain that understanding pragmatic meaning involves two types of processing: utterance processing and discourse processing. The utterance processing involves cognitive and communicative aspects linked through the notion of relevance as proposed in relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). The processing of pragmatic meaning is based on linking the utterances to the relevant cognitive information that users have, including common ground information, which leads the users to form new
information, strengthen an existing assumption or weaken an existing assumption. The relevance between the cognitive information and the communicative aspects of the utterance in context will facilitate the understanding of the pragmatic meaning of the utterance.

Culpeper and Haugh (2014) claim that in the discourse processing of meaning, the interpretation of an utterance is achieved in an incremental fashion and is based on what precedes and follows the utterance in the sequence. Thus, understanding the pragmatic meaning is based on “incremental and sequential intertwining” of utterances in a sequence where incrementality refers to the processing of constituents of pragmatic meaning within the utterance while sequentiality refers to the processing of meaning across turns or utterances (Culpeper and Haugh, p. 139).

Allan (2001) uses the term ‘co-text’ to refer to what comes before and/or after an utterance in a given language sequence. He also argues that the accurate interpretation of words and phrases relies on the correlation of these words and phrases with others in the co-text, which provides information that helps the addressee to disambiguate these words and phrases. According to Allan, the co-text of an utterance allows one interpretation of the utterance and helps the participants to reach its pragmatic meaning in the communication context.

Besides co-text, Allan (2001) identifies three elements of context that play an essential role in the process of producing and comprehending meanings: the world and time spoken or written of, the situation of utterance, and the situation of interpretation. Allan argues that in order to be able to understand spoken or written texts, we need to construct a mental model of the world in which these texts are represented. The world and time spoken or written of include things and people that the participant knows, imagines or supposes to help him/her reach appropriate understanding of the written or spoken utterance. They also include the common ground knowledge (the knowledge about the language and the conventions of its use and the knowledge that people develop as they experience the world around them) that the participants draw on to comprehend others’ intended meaning. The situation of utterance, “the place at and the time in which Speaker makes the utterance”, and the situation of interpretation, “the place at and time in which the utterance is heard, seen, and/or read” (p. 24) provide deictic and indexical
references such as personal pronouns, locatives and demonstratives and determine the use of linguistic items such as adverbials and directional verbs relative to the location of the speaker and the hearer that help the participants make sense of utterances. Allan suggests that understanding language is a constructive process in which the elements of context enhance the hearer’s ability to correctly infer the speaker’s meaning. Furthermore, as Kramsch (1998) contends, the construction and interpretation of meanings are influenced by the cultural reality of the social group, as language is shaped through culture which imposes norms of interaction and interpretation on language users.

2.2.5. The construction of meaning across cultures

Research within the field of cross-cultural pragmatics has produced insights that address the issue of whether the ways of language use of interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds are universal or culture-specific. Some theories and perspectives on language use (e.g., Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1989) tend to generalize the idea that the linguistic behaviour they introduce represents the normal behaviour for all interlocutors from different backgrounds. Proponents of the universal orientation to language use pay less attention to linguistic behaviour as a culture-specific behaviour that is highly influenced by the cultural background of the speaker. Wierzbicka (2003) uses the term “ethnocentric illusion” (p. 67) to criticize the claim that all people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds speak in the same way as those studied by the proponents of universalism.

A considerable number of works (e.g., House and Kasper, 1981; Wierzbicka, 1985; Sifianou, 1992; Fukushima, 2000; Reiter, 2000; Yu, 2002; Abdolrezapour and Eslami-Rasekh, 2012; Merrison et al., 2012) have investigated language use interculturally. Most of these studies concluded that interlocutors’ choice of linguistic patterns and communicative strategies is influenced by the cultural values and norms that underlie appropriate linguistic behaviour in social interaction. For instance, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) point out that the cultural variation among the speakers of the eight languages they studied is a main factor that impacts
the linguistic realization of requests and apologies collected in their study. Wierzbicka (2003) lists the following four principles that underlie the orientation to study language as a culture-specific phenomenon:

1. In different societies, and different communities, people speak differently.
2. These differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic.
3. These differences reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values.
4. Different ways of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of, in terms independently established different cultural values and cultural priorities.

Wierzbicka (2003, p. 69)

As important components of individuals’ knowledge, cultural values, beliefs and norms make an important contribution to the formation of presuppositions that underlie a communication event. Stalnaker (1972, as cited in Atlas, 2006, p. 33) uses the term “pragmatic presupposition” to characterize the propositions that interlocutors utilise in a specific context and develop as a basic knowledge that shapes their language use. Mey (2001) argues that the pragmatic presuppositions underlying language use represent a link between the linguistic behaviour and language users’ knowledge that is needed to produce appropriate communicative acts and to interpret others’ linguistic behaviour. Thus, the different ways of speaking across different cultural groups can evince the assumption that language is not an independent entity as it is influenced by the sociocultural environment in which it is used for social interaction. Culture and language are intertwined and they influence each other. Some scholars (cf. Trosborg, 2010) even reiterate the saying that language is culture and culture is language. Holmes (2008) emphasizes the relationship between language and culture as language provides means for representing knowledge and the value system of a cultural group.

Sharifian (2011) introduces another way to investigate the relationship between culture and language by highlighting the relationship between the shared cognitive knowledge in a cultural group and the linguistic behaviour of the members of that group. Cultural cognition, according to Sharifian, refers to the shared conceptualisations and patterns of knowledge distributed across the minds of the
members of a cultural group. It emerges and develops through the interactions between members of a cultural group. Sharifian points out that the extent to which individuals gain and develop the units of cultural cognition of a certain group depends on their participation in communication with the cognitive network that consists of the minds of the members of that group. He argues that the conceptualisations and patterns of knowledge are maintained through a process of continuous negotiation between members of a cultural group through time and across generations. Leung, Qiu, Ong and Tam (2011) point out that the sociocultural values and norms pervasive in a cultural group represent the embodied cultural cognition that can be represented through social behaviour. Therefore, the individuals’ sense of belonging to a certain cultural group is determined by the extent to which they share and communicate patterns of cultural cognition of that group. “Cultural groups are formed not just by the physical proximity of individuals but also by relative participation of individuals in each other’s conceptual world” (Sharifian, 2011, p. 4).

Cultural schema is a notion used recently and widely in linguistics, which is assumed to have an influence on language use in both intracultural and intercultural communication (cf. Langacker, 1991; Chafe, 1994; Palmer, 1996; Sharifian and Palmer, 2007). According to Reber and Reber (2001), schemas can be defined as “cognitive, mental plans that are abstract and that serve as guides for action, as structures for interpreting information, as organized framework for solving problems, etc” (p. 649). Sharifian and Jamarani (2011) point out that a schema is a cognitive phenomenon that mainly results from cultural experience and it is often represented in language use. At the pragmatic level, the production and interpretation of intentions associated with linguistic expressions of different speech acts are in fact based on cultural schemas that interlocutors may share in a certain context (Wierzbicka, 1996). In an intracultural context, according to Wierzbicka (1996), communication is based on a homogenous interpretation of the linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours and therefore the participants are likely to achieve a successful communication; however, the matter seems to be different in an intercultural context where interlocutors may have heterogeneous interpretations based on different cultural schemas.
Wierzbicka (2010, p. 43) discusses the notion of *cultural scripts* which she defines as “tacit norms, values and practices widely shared, and widely known (on an intuitive level) in a given society”. Cultural scripts represent the pre-existing knowledge that underlies the interpretation of an event sequence (Cekic, 2010). They shape the way people behave linguistically and physically in a specific situation, such as in a medical appointment, a teacher-student conversation and a phone conversation. Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004) claim that different linguistic behaviours of different societies can be explained in terms of different cultural values pervasive in these societies, or at least, different cultural priorities of these values. They argue that culture-specific parameters of individuality, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and power and distance indexes introduced earlier by Hofstede (1980) have different values in different communities. Therefore, interlocutors from different cultural communities may have asymmetrical linguistic behaviours according to different assessment of the context in which the communication occurs based on different values and perceptions assigned to these cultural parameters. The extent to which these parameters influence language use depends on their weightiness in each cultural community. Therefore, Goddard and Wierzbicka call for the use of cultural scripts as a technique for exploring cultural norms, values and practices that are more accessible for cultural insiders who can depict or at least give some basic outlines of the sociocultural values, norms and practices pervasive in their cultural communities. According to their perspective, cultural scripts can provide insights into the relationship between community members’ ways of speaking and their cultural backgrounds.

Wierzbicka (1996) contends that in intercultural communication, interlocutors may differ in the use and interpretation of language due to the heterogeneous cultural knowledge they may have. Thus, participants in intercultural communication, according to Wierzbicka (2003), need a good deal of knowledge about their interlocutors’ culture and society to interpret correctly the communication value of their messages. Without this knowledge, they may misuse or/and misinterpret linguistic forms and communicative strategies and that may result in pragmatic failure that has serious consequences in social interactions.
2.3. Pragmatic failure and language attitudes

2.3.1. Pragmatic failure

The term ‘pragmatic failure’ was coined by Thomas (1983) who provides the following definition for it:

…misunderstandings which arise, not from any inability on the part of H [hearer] to understand the intended sense/reference of the speaker’s words in the context in which they are uttered, but from an inability to recognize the force of the speaker’s utterance when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognize it. (p. 94)

Pragmatic failure occurs in encounters in which the hearer (H) perceives the illocutionary force of the speaker’s (S) utterance as different from the speaker’s intention. The hearer’s failure to perceive the intended meaning of the speaker can lead to a pragmatic failure. Thomas introduces four examples of occasions in which pragmatic failure occurs:

a. H perceives the force of S’s utterance as stronger or weaker than S intended s/he should perceive it;
b. H perceives as an order an utterance which S intended s/he should perceive as a request;
c. H perceives S’s utterance as ambivalent where S intended no ambivalence;
d. S expects H to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on system of knowledge or beliefs which S and H do not, in fact, share.

(p. 94)

Thomas (1983) distinguishes two types of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. She argues that the first occurs when the pragmatic force assigned by a non-native speaker to a given utterance is systematically different from the force normally assigned to it by native speakers of the target language, or when negative transfer from L1 distorts non-native speakers’ realization of speech acts in L2. Thomas points out that pragmalinguistic failure stems from overlapping sources such as pragmalinguistic transfer from L1,
teaching-induced errors and pragmatic overgeneralization. Sociopragmatic failure, on the other hand, is committed by non-native speakers due to the fact that they perceive what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour in context according to sociocultural values, beliefs and norms that are different from those predominant in the target language community. Thomas ascribes sociopragmatic failure to the cross-cultural differences in the assessment of social parameters (e.g., power, distance and imposition), the attempt to abandon a face-threatening act, and interlocutors’ rights and obligations.

Based on Thomas’ (1983) distinction between the two aforementioned types of pragmatic failure, Muir and Xu (2011) posit four categories of pragmatic failure related to the interpretation and production of pragmatic force. The first is *interpretive pragmalinguistic failure* that occurs when a non-native speaker fails to decode the contextually appropriate meaning of an utterance or misinterprets its illocutionary force in the target language. For instance, an interlocutor interprets the utterance ‘can you open the door?’ as an inquiry about the hearer’s ability to open the door rather than a request to open the door. The second is *interpretive sociopragmatic failure* that is related to the socio-cultural differences between L1 and L2. This can lead to a different assessment of the social conditions of the context, which in turn can lead to misinterpretation of others’ linguistic behaviour. For instance, a British English native speaker may find the utterance ‘see you’, that Australians usually use when they end an encounter with someone, inappropriate in a situation where the speaker does not really know the hearer and he/she may not see him/her again. The third type of pragmatic failure is *productive pragmalinguistic failure* that stems from the mismatch between a certain utterance and an intended illocutionary force. For instance, if an English non-native speaker uses the utterance ‘open the door for me’ as a request to a stranger native speaker, that request will be perceived as rude or impolite and it will probably not achieve the purpose of communication. The fourth type is *productive sociopragmatic failure* that occurs when non-native speakers draw on a socio-cultural system different from that of native speakers in performing communicative actions. For instance, an international university student in Australia may use some honorific terms such as ‘sir’ and ‘professor’ to address his/her lecturer who prefers to be called by the first name.
Pragmatic failure has attracted attention from many researchers who have investigated the linguistic performance of non-native speakers from different cultural backgrounds in a variety of speech acts and in different contexts. The use of speech acts in studies that investigate the pragmatic performance of non-native speakers (e.g., greeting (Jaworski, 1994); apology (Kasanga and Lwanga-Lumu, 2007); request (Achiba, 2003; Reiter, 2000); refusal (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990)) may stem from the fact that speech acts require a sophisticated pragmatic knowledge and an awareness of the forms and strategies available in the target language, and the norms and conventions underlying the production and interpretation of speech acts in the target community. In addition, the interest in the study of pragmatic failure may stem from the assumption that this phenomenon can lead to serious consequences in cross-cultural communication. Thomas (1983) highlights that pragmatic failure can cause negative stereotypes and attitudes towards non-native speakers and their cultural groups. Some studies in interlanguage pragmatics (e.g., Beal, 1990, 1992; Franch, 1998; Schrader-Kniffki, 2007; Garcia, 2009) demonstrate that non-native speakers’ pragmatic failure can cause serious consequences including negative language attitudes.

2.3.2. Language attitudes

Attitudes have been studied extensively within the realm of psychology and social psychology as they shape behaviours and impact social relationships. Oppenheim (1982, p. 39) outlines the nature of attitude and its manifestations in the following definition:

[A] construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects of behaviour.

According to Oppenheim’s definition, attitude is an implicit mental construct that cannot be directly observed or measured, but it can be expressed through some verbal and/or behavioural manifestations. Thus, the fact that attitudes cannot be
observed directly does not imply their insignificant role in shaping behaviour. Oppenheim points out that attitudes can influence many of our verbal and behavioural actions and this influence can be inferred from verbal and behavioural manifestations, some of which he lists in his definition. Language use, according to Winsa (1998) and Goddard (2002), is an important manifestation of attitudes that can develop in everyday communication. Winsa argues that linguistic behaviour is regarded not only as a facet with which we express attitudes but also a stimulus that triggers others’ attitudinal reactions towards our use of language.

Attitudes that are based on language use have become an important issue that has attracted the attention of sociolinguists. Garret (2010) claims that language attitudes are regarded as the psychological dimension of language use that is based on the individuals’ assessment of others’ linguistic behaviour. In any social interaction, people are likely to develop impressions and attitudes about their interlocutors depending on linguistic cues, e.g., words, grammar, accent, dialect, etc. (Garret, 2010). According to Garret, language use can invite different attitudinal reactions, as language is a main means of expressing social meaning. He points out that language attitudes frequently occur in our daily communication, but they are more obvious if they are negative or expressed explicitly. Garrett argues that language attitudes do not only influence our reactions to other language users, but also influence our language choices as they provide some predictions of others’ reactions to our language use. Accordingly, the importance of language attitudes stems from their impact on social relationships among individuals and between the individuals and social groups. Language attitudes have an important role in shaping individuals and groups’ relationships in linguistically diverse societies. Winsa (1998) points out that in a linguistically diverse community, judgements that are based on linguistic behaviour can cause the feeling of inferiority of speakers of minor languages and that can have an important impact on their social relationships with the mainstream community.

The germane relationship between language attitudes and social relationships has prompted a scientific interest in the tendency to form attitudes in social interaction. Some scholars (Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Antheunis, Schouten, Valkenburg and Peter, 2012) explain the tendency of interactants to form impressions and attitudes
about each other in terms of Uncertainty Reduction Theory by Berger and Bradac (1982). According to this theory, in social interaction, interactants seek to reduce uncertainty about each other’s behaviour. They depend on any information that they can infer from others’ behaviour to form impressions that can help them to predict each other’s behaviour and to develop interpersonal relationships. Berger and Bradac argue that people tend to form attitudes and impressions about others from the first time they interact with them as these attitudes and impressions help them to feel more comfortable in their interaction. One of the strategies that this theory suggests in order for the participants in social interaction to obtain information about their communication partners is the use of interactive strategies (the direct interaction between interlocutors).

Through direct interaction, interlocutors are likely to gather information about their communication partners and to form impressions and attitudes of each other. In face-to-face interaction, for example, it has been argued that interlocutors may not solely depend on the verbal behaviour to form attitudes, but also make use of non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, intonation, and others in forming these attitudes (cf. Byron and Baldrige, 2007). The absence of these cues in other forms of communication, such as computer-mediated communication, may stimulate the interactants to depend mainly on the language itself in their inferences (Walther, 1992; Antheunis et al., 2012). Nevertheless, in both face-to-face interaction and computer-mediated communication, language attitudes play a vital role in shaping interlocutors’ reactions; therefore, they have attracted research interest in exploring the factors that trigger attitudes in social interaction.

2.3.3. Triggers of language attitudes

Uncertainty Reduction Theory claims that the formation of attitudes on the basis of language use and the characteristics of others’ linguistic behaviour is sustained by a normal tendency of people to form opinions about others in social interaction. Meyerhoff (2011) asserts the tendency of people to compose a detailed picture of whom they are talking to, based on the way they speak. Similarly, Garret (2010) points out that the characteristics of the language that people use in social
interaction can be used as criteria on which their interlocutors form assumptions about their personal and social traits. Meyerhoff points out that someone who is talking to a stranger on the phone, for example, can realize some of the personal, educational and cultural characteristics of that stranger within minutes or even seconds, such as gender, social and regional affiliation, and personal traits (friendly, rude, nice, competent and so on). She argues that people elicit very powerful assumptions about their interlocutors from the language the interlocutors use and these assumptions can be positive, to the advantage of the interlocutors, or negative, to their disadvantage.

Language attitudes occur in social interaction at all levels of language use including lexis, grammar, accent, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation (Garret, 2010). The explicit differences of language use at these levels can cause attitudinal reactions in social interaction. At the lexical level, the lexical choices that interactants use may have some influence on others’ attitudes toward these choices and their users. In her investigation of the attitudes of non-Maori New Zealanders towards the use of Maori language in New Zealand English, Bres (2010) reports that some of her findings indicate the reluctance of some participants to use Maori words due to the fear of others’ reaction. Bres argues that the use of Maori words is influenced to some extent by the attitudes that New Zealanders hold towards the Maori language and this may influence the attitudes towards the speakers of Maori language.

Accent has attracted scholars’ interest in investigating the role of using different accented language on the listeners’ evaluation of the speakers. Some studies (Matsuda, 1991; Lippi-Green, 1997; Kinzler, Shuttts, DeJesus and Spelke, 2009) report serious negative consequences that second language speakers suffer due to their foreign language accented speech. Kinzler et al. (2009) investigated 5-year-old monolingual English speaking children’s social preferences based on their listening to accented speakers. The results of their study indicate that native English-speaking children prefer to be friends with speakers of their native language rather than with speakers of a foreign accent in spite of the comprehensibility of the accented speakers’ speech. Kinzler et al. argue that accent, like visual cues; has a significant impact on individuals’ decisions about their social preferences and relationships.
Grammatical errors are deemed as another source of negative language attitudes especially in interactions between non-native and native speakers of a language. The influence of grammatical errors not only affects the comprehensibility of non-native speakers’ language, but also affects the native speakers’ perceptions of non-native speakers. According to Hale (2004), non-native speakers’ grammatical errors can cause irritation in social interaction even if they do not influence comprehensibility. Cheshire (1998) investigated the influence of using double negatives in English on attitudes. In her results, she reported that British standard English speakers showed negative attitudes not only towards the use of double negatives but also towards the speakers who use double negatives. Garret and Austin (1993) investigated the judgements of university undergraduate students and English language teachers about the apostrophe errors in English. They found that participants showed negative perception towards apostrophe errors, especially those before the final s in regular plural nouns.

Spelling and punctuation errors have also been found to be triggers of negative perceptions in written forms of social interaction. In their study of the impact of grammatical and spelling errors in emails by English non-native speakers on native speakers’ attitudes, Vignovic and Thompson (2010) find that email messages including these errors trigger native speakers’ negative evaluation of the senders’ conscientiousness, intelligence, agreeableness and trustworthiness. Similarly, Byron and Baldridge (2007) report that the senders of email messages written in all capital letters are perceived as less likable than those who write emails with correct capitalization. Other aspects of language use such as code switching and the use of minority languages can also affect the reaction towards language users in social interaction. On the basis of findings from a number of studies, Garret (2010) highlights how interlocutors tend to form judgements about each other based on the language they use in a particular context. He argues that these judgements can lead to serious consequences that may include very negative attitudes and stereotypes about individuals and their ethnic affiliation, social class, status, and personal traits.
2.3.4. Pragmatic failure as a trigger of language attitudes

Pragmatic competence, according to Kasper and Rose (2002), is related to the appropriate linguistic choices that non-native speakers can make in a particular context according to the values, norms and conventions of the culture in which the L2 is used as a main language. These linguistic choices depend on the speakers’ assessment of the social and contextual factors that influence language use in a particular situation. However, as Schauer (2009) argues, the use of appropriate language in context may not be an easy task, especially for foreign language learners who have a limited exposure to language use in authentic contexts. Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) demonstrate that learners in a foreign language context lack awareness of the role of pragmatic knowledge in the appropriate use of the target language in social interaction. Thoms (1983) contends that pragmatic failure may represent a substantial hindrance that may constrain non-native speakers’ communication in the target language. She adds that pragmatic failure can also reflect badly on a non-native speaker as a person because it can lead to negative attitudes and stereotypes. The inappropriate use of language in context can cause miscommunication, misjudgements and even negative attitudes (cf. Beal, 1990). Zarobe and Zarobe (2012) argue that pragmatic errors can lead to misunderstanding and difficult social relationships since they are often perceived as impolite or rude.

In intercultural communication, studies assert that non-native speakers’ deviant linguistic behaviour can receive negative reactions from native speakers (e.g. House and Kasper, 1981; Beal, 1990, 1992; Franch, 1998; Schrader-Kniffki, 2007; Garcia, 2009). Garcia (2009) examined the linguistic realization of reprimand speech act in three different Spanish-speaking cultural groups: Peruvian, Venezuelan and Argentinean. She collected reprimand samples from subjects from the three groups using role-play interactions between a boss and an employee. The results of Garcia’s study showed differences between the three groups in their selection of the strategies to perform reprimanding. Peruvian subjects used a rapport-challenging orientation and coerced the interlocutor as they emphasized the asymmetric power relationship between the boss and the employee. Venezuelans and Argentineans also adopted a rapport-challenging orientation, but they expressed a desire for
involvement, empathy and respect. Garcia indicated that the three groups might rely on different socio-cultural values related to behavioural expectations, interactional wants and face sensitivities. She also indicated the possibility of miscommunication and negative attitudes between interlocutors from the three cultures when they come across similar interactions.

Beal (1990) investigated some typical problems of cross-cultural communication between French and Australian workers when they exchanged requests in a workplace. Beal collected her data through observing the linguistic behaviour of the French and Australian workers in a French company and interviewing subjects from both groups to identify their attitudes towards each other. The interview data indicated that both Australian and French subjects held negative attitudes about each other. While Australian subjects used the adjectives, ‘arrogant’, ‘blunt’, ‘rude’ and ‘overexcited’ to describe their French co-workers, French subjects described their Australian co-workers as lacking involvement and sincerity (p. 17). Based on the observation data, Beal argued that these negative attitudes stemmed from the different politeness strategies that French and Australian employees used for performing requests, different assessment of what constitutes a face-threatening act, and different views toward face wants and other wants.

Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) claim that pragmatic failure can trigger native speakers’ negative perceptions due to the deviation of non-native speakers’ linguistic behaviour from that of native speakers. In their study of request realization by Jordanian learners of English, they examined the linguistic behaviour of Jordanian learners in a comparison with that of American native speakers when they performed request speech acts in English. The analysis of the request samples collected from the Jordanian subjects and American subjects indicated differences in the structure of request acts, and the types and frequencies of request mitigating strategies. While American subjects chose to spell out their requests directly without any prolonged introduction, Jordanian subjects made long-winded request structures spending time and effort on establishing common grounds before uttering the actual request. American and Jordanian subjects also differed in the frequencies and types of the external and internal linguistic devices that they used to mitigate their requests. The researchers ascribed these differences to Jordanian subjects’
pragmatic failure resulted from the negative transfer from their L1 and natal sociocultural system. Jordanian non-native speakers based their linguistic behaviour on their collectivistic socio-cultural norms of interaction that differed from those of American native speakers. Therefore, as Al-Ali and Alawneh argue, miscommunication and negative attitudes are likely to occur when Jordanian non-native speakers come into interaction with American native speakers.

2.3.5. Consequences of language attitudes

2.3.5.1. Stereotypes

Stereotypes have been defined as “the overgeneralized, exaggerated, and oversimplified beliefs that people use to categorize a group of people” (Decapua and Wintergerst, 2004, p. 64). They include information and assumptions about a group of people beyond the surface qualities and generate expectations about the behaviour of the group members in a particular situation (Dovidio, Esses, Glick and Hewston, 2010). Scollon and Scollon (2001) classify stereotyping into positive and negative. In positive stereotyping members of the out-group are regarded as identical, whereas in negative stereotyping they are viewed as being ‘polar opposites’ (Scollon and Scollon, 2001, p. 173). According to El-Dash and Busnardo (2001), stereotypes stem from the tendency of in-group members to categorize themselves positively and to maximize the difference between the in-group and out-group. In any society, the dominant in-group members try to maintain their self-esteem in self-categorization and impose their dominant value system and ideology on the subordinate out-group. The subordinate out-group members may assimilate to the dominant group in order to avoid being negatively evaluated by the dominant in-group members (El-Dash and Busnardo, 2001). However, the assimilation to the dominant group may not be an easy task if there is a rigid boundary between the two groups.

Negative attitudes towards members of the out-group can be part of the boundary between the in- and out-groups. Saleem and Anderson (2013) emphasize the germane relationship between social stereotypes towards a particular social group
and the attitudes towards the members of that group. Dovidio et al. (2010) point out that attitudes can act as assumptions about the behaviour of members of a social group and these assumptions can lead to negative stereotypes about that group. Most of these assumptions result from the observed behaviour of the group members that can be generalized as a characteristic of the normal behaviour of the whole group.

The linguistic behaviour of members of social groups in a particular society plays an important role in the formation and generalization of stereotypes. Breakwell (1992) demonstrates that language is a fundamental characteristic of ethnicity and self-identity and a prominent feature of cultural differences between social groups. Furthermore, as Dovidio et al. (2010) contend, it has been deemed as a means that plays a vital role in the transmission of stereotypes. El-Dash and Busnardo (2001) point out that in social interaction between members from the dominant in-group and the subordinate out-group, the in-group members may try to impose their own norms and conventions of language use on social interaction between the two groups. Therefore, any violation of these norms and conventions by members of the subordinate group may trigger some negative attitudinal reactions that can develop into negative stereotypes towards the out-group. The linguistic behaviour of individuals in interaction with others from another group membership can trigger attitudes, which in turn can develop or maintain social stereotypes, as Garrett (2010, p. 33) points out:

In the language attitudes field, then, language varieties and styles can trigger beliefs about a speaker and their social group membership, often influenced by language ideologies, leading to stereotypic assumptions about shared characteristics of those group members.

Among studies on language attitudes which have examined the relationship between language use and social stereotyping is the work of Jørgensen and Quist (2001) who studied Danish native speakers’ perception of speakers of Danish as a second language. Jørgensen and Quist concluded that Danish native speakers were likely to develop negative attitudes about migrant communities based on their evaluation of the migrants’ language. Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010) investigated Dutch native speakers’ attitudes towards four regional accents in the
Netherlands. They recruited a sample of listener-judges to rate speech samples from the four accents. The results showed that the attributes and qualities of the regional accents triggered language attitudes, which in turn led to social stereotyping.

2.3.5.2. Language-based discrimination

Another serious consequence of language attitudes is “language-based discrimination” (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 153). Language-based discrimination has been defined as “the unfair treatment of an individual or a group of individuals on account of their language or speech features such as accent” (Ng, 2007, p. 106). Wright and Bougie (2007) point out that language-based discrimination is a kind of social discrimination in which a target group (e.g. immigrants) is distinguished from the dominant group in terms of language. Ng (2007) considers language-based discrimination as widespread and complex, and it can best be explained in terms of the multiple relationships between language and social discrimination. One of these relationships is what Ng calls ‘linguistic enactment of discrimination’ (p. 107). Ng argues that in a multilingual conversational setting, discrimination is linguistically enacted if people use or switch to a language in which some interlocutors are more competent than others. Bilinguals may suffer discrimination if they are less competent in L2 than monolinguals (the native speakers of the L2) in a speech event in which both bilinguals and monolinguals participate. Ng claims that the linguistic enactment of discrimination is evident in English as it is now an international lingua franca that is widely adopted in international gatherings and organizations. The lack of competence in English and the endeavour of bilinguals to use English to accommodate native speakers may represent a discriminatory practice against disadvantaged bilinguals.

Several empirical studies have been conducted to investigate language-based discrimination in contexts where members of minor ethnic groups interact with members from the dominant group. Roberts, Davies and Jupp (1992) provide many examples of language-based discrimination in workplaces in England. They contend that workers from ethnic and racial minorities suffer discrimination as they speak differently from their native co-workers. Similarly, Lippi-Green (1997)
asserts the existence of language-based discrimination against non-native speakers who tend to lose their jobs because of their language proficiency. Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh (1999) argue that non-standard dialect provides enough information for the identification of the speaker’s ethnic background and that may trigger discrimination. Their examination of language-based discrimination in the housing market in the United States demonstrates that landlords discriminate against prospective tenants on the basis of the dialect they use as their ethnic affiliation is recoverable from their speech. Lippi-Green (2012) refers to the issue of ethnic and racial discrimination on the basis of language differences in the United States. She explains this issue in terms of the ideology of language subordination and the higher power attached to the standard language. Lippi-Green points out that people may lose their jobs or face unfriendly reactions because they do not use the correct pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary of the standard language. She calls for a legal equation between language-based discrimination and other forms of discrimination against skin colour, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.

2.4. Language attitudes in Computer-Mediated Communication

Thorne (2008) defines computer-mediated communication as a multimodal, internet-mediated communication in which everyday communication in professional, educational and interpersonal settings is mediated by ubiquitous computing. Hardaker (2010) points out that CMC has become a major means for human social interaction nowadays where it provides fast and easy communication between users separated by time and place. Herring, Stein and Virtanen (2013) believe that with the emergence of more developed telecommunications, CMC has undergone a widespread growth as a channel of communication for various purposes. Online chat, email, online conferencing, electronic forums, Facebook, Twitter, and others are now quite common computer-mediated forms for interaction across different aspects of social life around the world.

Within the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics, CMC has become an important field of studying the pragmatic behaviour of its users who represent, according to Taylor (2009), an online community with diverse cultural
and individual characteristics. This diversity is likely to cause divergence in the linguistic and pragmatic performance of CMC users as they may have different assumptions about what constitutes an appropriate behaviour in CMC according to their own cultural values, beliefs, norms and conventions (cf. Chang and Hsu, 1998; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Thus, Murray (2000) argues that after the development of CMC as a worldwide medium of communication, it has become necessary for second language learners and teachers to be aware of the norms of language use in CMC to facilitate communication in the cyberspace. In addition, language use in the cyberspace, as Walther (1996) and Baron (1998) indicate, is also constrained by the inherent features of CMC and the available resources for communication in a CMC medium. With the pervasion of CMC in different aspects of modern life, there has been a research endeavour to highlight the nature and characteristics of the language used in CMC. Baron (2001, 2003) examined the traits of the language used in some CMC mediums, such as email, in a comparison with that employed in Face-to-Face (FtF) communication. Herring (2001) and Crystal (2001, 2006) investigated the linguistic characteristics of CMC and the social, situational and demographic factors that influence language use in CMC mediums.

2.4.1. Impression-formation in CMC

According to Hancock and Dunham (2001), participants in social interactions depend on the direct and indirect information available in the communication context to form impressions about each other. Hancock and Dunham indicate that impression-formation in FtF encounters relies on autonomous cues, such as the physical appearance of interlocutors, and on social markers available in the context of interaction. The linguistic behaviour of interlocutors in FtF encounters is accompanied by paralinguistic and non-verbal cues that help interlocutors to gather sufficient information for forming adequate impressions. However, Sproull and Kiesler (1986) argue that in a text-based computer-mediated communication medium, such as email, the cues necessary for impression-formation are eliminated or modified and that may make CMC mediums unsuitable for interpersonal communication. Dubrovsky et al. (1991) demonstrate that there is a line of research
that supports the ineffectiveness of CMC for interpersonal communication as it provides ‘scant social information’ (p. 119). Some theories support the claim that CMC has a reduced capacity to communicate emotional and personal information and that may attenuate its capacity of impression-formation in social interaction. These theories have been described by Culnan and Markus (1987) under the umbrella term of “cues filtered-out perspective”. They include social presence theory (Short, Williams and Christie, 1976) and reduced social context cues perspective (Sproull and Kiesler, 1986). The shared assumption of these theories is that the lack of non-verbal social cues in a communication channel like CMC may reduce interpersonal relations because of the depersonalized nature of communication and the reduced awareness of communicators.

Since the 1990s, the cues filtered-out perspective was scrutinized and received a great deal of criticism. Baym (1995) dismissed the cues filtered-out theories for devoting the impersonal character of CMC and neglecting its social effect. Hancock and Dunham (2001) criticize the limitations of the cues filtered-out approach for neglecting the breadth and intensity of the impressions formed in CMC. In their comparative study of the impressions formed in CMC and FtF interaction, they argue that the impressions developed in CMC are less detailed but more intense than those developed in FtF interaction. Walther, Anderson and Park (1994) criticized the studies that support the cues filtered-out perspective as being based on erroneous analysis of data that over reported the characterization of CMC as impersonal. They claim that these studies have neglected "time frames" (p. 464) as an influential variable in CMC interaction that can lead to the development and expression of social relations.

The social information processing theory by Walther (1992) predicts the development of interpersonal relationships among CMC users over time. Walther argues that CMC participants are likely to become acquainted with each other by forming simple impressions through textual exchanges that can lead to more refined interpersonal knowledge and relational communication. Walther posits four requisite elements that represent the development stages of interpersonal CMC interaction: relational motivators, impression formation, interpersonal epistemology and relational exchange. Walther rejects the assumption that the non-
verbal cues in communication are the only means by which participants are able to form impressions about each other. He contends that linguistic and textual cues can be used as the basis for the formation of impressions in CMC. CMC users depend on linguistic cues and text-based content to generate knowledge about others' beliefs, motives and intentions. This knowledge is based on the formation of attitudes and impressions and can lead to relational development.

According to the social information processing theory, CMC interactants start with the formation of impressions about each other and develop to more interpersonal and emotional interaction. However, some research (Wallace, 1999; Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon and Sunnafrank, 2002; Epley and Kruger, 2005) has shown that impressions can be difficult to convey and manage in electronic forms of communication. This difficulty may result from the physical absence of CMC interactants in the context of interaction and the reliance on the text-based behaviour in conveying and developing impressions and attitudes during the communication event. Epley and Kruger (2005) claim that in FtF interaction, spontaneous non-verbal cues represent a reliable guide that indicates the interlocutors' personality attributes and abilities; therefore, interlocutors are more likely to reach accurate judgements about their communication partners in FtF encounters than in CMC contexts. Similarly, Hastings and Payne (2013) point out that interaction via a text-based CMC medium such as email can escalate conflict that can result from the misinterpretation of the sender's intention due to email's inherent structural characteristics.

2.4.2. CMC competence

In order to trigger the communication partners’ positive impressions and to avoid misunderstanding, it is essential for CMC interactants to be competent in using CMC mediums. Spitzberg (2006) emphasises the necessity of developing interactants' CMC competence through developing a subtle knowledge and awareness of the constraints and facilities available in a CMC technology. He suggests a theoretical model of CMC competence that aims to raise CMC users' awareness of the basic requirements for a successful CMC interaction in context.
In this model, Spitzberg argues that if CMC competence increases, the desired outcomes of interaction such as appropriateness, effectiveness, coorientation, satisfaction and relationship development can increase as well. The achievement of these outcomes depends on a set of interrelated factors: the user's characteristics (motivation, knowledge, skills), media and message characteristics, contextual factors, and the receiver's expectancies.

Spitzberg (2006) points out that motivation is the initial energizing element that empowers knowledge and skills. He defines CMC motivation as "the ratio of approach to avoidance attitudes, beliefs, and values in a given CMC context" (p. 640). Motivation can contribute positively to the process of CMC use in social interaction if the user possesses a range of positive attributes such as willingness to use new technologies, satisfaction, gratification, extroversion, and positive attitudes towards such technologies. In addition, Spitzberg provides evidence from literature that personal benefit of CMC usage, comfort with internet usage and technology-specific competence can increase a person's motivation in CMC. Motivation in CMC is also positively related to CMC knowledge and the prediction of CMC competence. Spitzberg defines CMC knowledge as "the cognitive comprehension of content and procedural processes involved in conducting appropriate and effective interaction in the computer-mediated context" (p. 641). It consists of both content knowledge (understanding of what is included in CMC interaction: topics, rules, concepts, etc.) and procedural knowledge (understanding of how content knowledge can be applied in a CMC context). Spitzberg points out that a person's CMC knowledge is based on his/her self-efficacy with CMC technology, and the multidimensional constructs of familiarity, expertise, use and literacy.

Spitzberg argues that both CMC motivation and knowledge are positively related to CMC skills. He identifies four clusters of CMC interpersonal skills: attentiveness, composure, coordination and expressiveness. He claims that these four clusters of interpersonal skills are translatable from FtF interaction, but they are constrained by the structural characteristics of the CMC mediums. The structural characteristics include media and message factors which have an impact on CMC competence. Spitzberg claims that media interactivity, efficiency and adaptability are positively related to CMC competence. Similarly, congruence of
message content and function with personal functional objective, and congruence of message task-orientation and openness with contextual and media factors are positively related to CMC competence.

In terms of the role of context in CMC, Spitzberg (2006) believes that CMC interaction can vary according to the cultural, chronological, relational, environmental and functional features of context. Cultural features such as beliefs, values, rituals and patterns of behavior can influence interactants’ online linguistic behavior. Spitzberg also identifies the effect of the chronological facet of context on CMC at two levels: interactants’ age and the developmental changes of CMC mediums, and the timing and sequencing of messages in a CMC medium. In terms of the relational facet of context, Spitzberg argues that message content in the cyberspace is influenced by the type of relationship between the interactants and their views towards their online relationships. The environmental facet of context, according to Spitzberg, is represented in the place and situation of CMC interaction and related to the features of the medium used for interaction. For the functional facet of CMC context, Spitzberg asserts that message content and structure in CMC may differ according to the function of that message. These contextual facets represent the basis of the receiver’s expectancies that are products of his/her experience with CMC. Any message transmitted in a CMC medium, e.g. email, is filtered through the receiver’s expectancies and this filtration will determine whether the message has fulfilled the CMC competence outcomes or not.

2.4.3. Electronic mail (Email)

According to Dürscheid and Frehner (2013), email is the most important CMC mode that has become a common communication channel for most internet users. The employment of email as a communication channel in social, educational and professional settings has rapidly developed due to the inherent advantages of this medium (Crystal, 2006; Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Vignovic and Thompson, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Recent research on email communication (Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Vignovic and Thompson, 2010) demonstrates that email can be a rich and varied medium for exchanging emotional and social
messages. Whittaker, Bellotti and Moody (2005) indicate that email is the most successful computer application yet invented and it has a significant role in developing collaborative work and social communication.

The widespread use of email stems from its inherent features that sustain its success as a means of human communication. Carvalho (2011, p. 1) declares that email is a fast, cheap, convenient and robust CMC medium that facilitates collaboration across different locations and time zones. Similarly, Whittaker et al. (2005) explain email’s success as a popular medium for human communication in terms of its privileges compared to FtF communication. They highlight that email is an affordable and fast communication medium that has overwhelmed the place and time constraints in social interaction. It can be used to achieve different communicative purposes, as well as other important tasks such as delivering and archiving documents, and managing tasks and contacts. For all the above privileges of email communication, according to Whittaker et al., people prefer to use it as a means for their daily communication with individuals and organizations, and this fact may explain the widespread of this medium more than any other forms of CMC.

2.4.3.1. Email language

The linguistic characterization of email language can be illustrated in terms of two major sets of features. The first set consists of specific features of email language which have been identified through comparing the characteristics of the language used in email to those found in writing and speech. As Baron (1998) points out, identifying the relationship between email language on one hand, and writing and speech on the other represent the basis for the attempts to describe email linguistics. The second set includes the general linguistic character that email, as a CMC form, shares with other forms of CMC. The lack of non-verbal cues has been deemed as a major feature that characterizes email language as well as the language used in other forms of asynchronous CMC.

In terms of the specific characterization of email language, Baron (1998) points out that the description of email language as a written or spoken format is ineffectual.
as it includes features from both formats. In an attempt to lay out the main social and linguistic features of email as a communicative system, he posits a profile of email that consists of four major components: social dynamics, format, grammar and style. He examines a set of representative variables from each component, such as physical proximity and linguistic features, in a comparison with those available in written and spoken language. The results of his study indicate that some of the above components are close to one end of the dichotomous writing/speech spectrum, while others are characterized as a mixture of writing and speech. More precisely, the social dynamics of email resemble writing as they both share a similar physical proximity of the participants; however, the format of email is heterogeneous as it includes features borrowed from writing and speech. Lexicon used in email is closer to speech than writing due to the use of informal words and expressions in email messages; however, email syntax is described as a mixture of writing and speech. The style of email, according to Baron, tends to resemble speech as both email and speech share some features related to the level of formality, the use of politeness markers and humour. Thus, as Chang and Hsu (1998), Gains (1999) and Murray (2000) claim, the language of email can be considered a hybrid variety that combines features from both writing and speech; however, the degree of closeness between email language and writing or speech might be determined by context and the socio-cultural background of the sender.

Some studies that have investigated the use of email messages by users from different backgrounds indicate differences in style that these users prefer. In their analysis of the email messages written by Chinese English learners and American English native speakers, Chang and Hsu (1998) find that Chinese participants’ email communication resembles either formal letters or telephone conversations, while American participants treat email communication as written memos. Chang and Hsu argue that the nature of email language as a hybrid of writing and speech and the different preferences in style of American and Chinese participants may explain the differences in the layout of email messages collected in their study. Gains (1999) demonstrates that the use of different format of email messages is also evident in email communication across different settings. In his examination of email messages exchanged within an insurance company, and within and between universities in the United Kingdom, he finds differences in the format of email
messages across commercial and academic settings. While email messages collected from the insurance company are written in a standard written English, conversational features are found in the messages collected in the academic setting. These findings may support Murray’s (2000) claim that “in CMC the complex interaction of contextual aspects results in specific bundles of linguistic features, the medium being only one aspect of the context” (p. 400). For Murray, email users may compose messages with formal writing style or informal speaking style according to the context (topic, participants and setting) of their communication.

The lack of non-verbal cues represents the general merit that characterizes email language as well as the language used in other CMC mediums. Although some scholars (Nowak, 2003; Byron and Baldridge, 2007) point out that the absence of non-verbal cues in email, as well as other forms of CMC, has an advantage of freeing the participants from social differences, a body of empirical research in CMC has revealed the crucial role of non-verbal cues in communicating emotional and social messages. Byron and Baldridge (2007) argue that CMC users usually search for nonverbal cues to form impressions about their communicators which can help them to understand the intentions of others’ messages and to form attitudes about those with whom they are communicating. In the case of email communication, recipients of email messages make use of any available information and cues, such as signatures, communication styles, emoticons, punctuation marks and spelling or typing errors, to form impressions and judgments about the sender. Walther and D’Addario (2001) point out that email users work within the limitations of this medium to achieve successful relational communication using a variety of means including emoticons. Nevertheless, emoticons and other email textual cues, unlike physical nonverbal behaviour in FtF communication, may not accurately reflect the intentional connotations of the message; therefore, email recipients depend heavily on the language of the message in interpreting the sender’s intentions. The paucity of non-verbal cues, according to Walther (1992), may prompt email users to depend solely on the linguistic content of the message in exchanging meanings and intentions. Walther asserts the tendency of CMC users to depend solely on text-based cues that are based on language use and the discourse structure of messages.
2.4.3.2. Email message structure in English

The rapid adoption of email as a channel of communication in various contexts has not allowed the establishment of norms and rules for its use (Byron, 2008). Baron (1998) ascribes the lack of an accurate description of email structural elements and rules to three factors that cause the difficulty of constructing a “unified grammar of email” (p. 144). The first factor is the developing nature of email technology that leads to changes in email linguistics and capacity, which in turn lead to changes in assumptions about the linguistics of email. The second factor is represented by the increased number of email users who are diverse in their individual and cultural characteristics and this diversity can lead to different perceptions of the structure of appropriate email messages. The third factor is the partial maturation of the email genre that is related to user maturation in formulating email messages that are based mainly on linguistic cues. Furthermore, email as a communication technology, according to Crystal (2001, 2006), can influence the structure of email discourse. Crystal points out that the mailer software dictates the structure of the email message as email users have to comply with the available options in the templates provided when they try to compose a new message. He attempts to describe the structure of email discourse in English on the basis of an analysis of 500 email messages of different topics in different settings that he received from people with whom he has different relationships. He identifies two main components of the email message. The first is the header or heading of the message and the second is the body of the message.

Headers consist of core elements (the sender’s e-address, the recipient’s e-address, the subject line and the date and time), and optional elements (carbon copy (Cc), blind carbon copy (Bcc), attachment and priority marker). Most of the heading elements are added automatically by the email software, therefore there is a limited variation in the use of headers. Some variation can be deducted in the formulation of the subject line that represents an important part of the heading component. The importance of the subject line, according to Crystal, stems from its role as an indicator of the content of the message and as an impulse that stimulates recipients to read or neglect the message. The body of the message consists of a message (an obligatory element), greeting and farewell. According to Crystal, an email greeting
can be a salutation or an opening and it is an optional element that is included in some messages but omitted in others. A greeting may be omitted in email communication in which the sender may not know anything about the recipient, in cases of junk email, or in a message that is sent as a reply to a thread of messages that turns the email communication into a conversation between the correspondents. Crystal also indicates that the formula of greeting in email is constrained by the social relationship, the subject matter, time-pressure and mood.

Farewell in email communication, according to Crystal (2006), has two basic functions. First, it is used as a boundary marker that indicates the end of the message. Thus the recipient can be informed about the actual content of the message that he/she needs to read as most messages may include some redundant details that are added automatically by the software. Second, the farewell can provide an extended identification of the sender that is available not only for the recipient of the message but also to others who may receive a copy of the message through the forwarding service. Crystal also highlights the two basic elements of farewells in email communication: the best wishes and the identification of the sender. For the best wishes element, the sender can choose from a variety of expressions that indicate a range of functions (affection, gratitude, expectation, communicative intent, and so on), but the sender’s decision of including any of these formulas depends on the degree of formality of his/her message. The sender identification element consists of a variety of formulas including initial letters, title, first name, first name and surname, qualification and position. The structure of the identification element is also constrained by the degree of formality of the message as determined by the relationship with the recipient.

The body of the message is the essential part that conveys the sender's objectives of communicating through email. Crystal (2006) argues that the structure of an email message is constrained by two main factors: the limitations of the screen and the email software, and the dynamic nature of the dialogue between the sender and the recipient. He indicates that the belief that the email message should be visible within a single screen view may determine the amount of text included and the structure of the message. Email users tend to make their contribution in an email exchange short and informative as they assume that the recipients of their messages
may only read the first part of the message and may not scroll down to read the rest. Therefore, in the case of long email messages, email users tend to structure their messages in a way in which the important information appears in the first paragraph.

According to Crystal’s (2006) observation, the structure of a paragraph in an email message tends to be short as it often consists of four lines or less. However, Crystal points out that the length of the email messages is influenced by the context in which these messages occur. He refers to differences in the paragraph length between personalized and institutional messages. The personalized messages use three times as many single-line paragraphs as the institutional ones. The nature of email communication within and between institutions, according to Crystal, may reflect the need for lengthy emails that sustain the endeavour to achieve work-related purposes. At the sentence level, Crystal describes the sentence in an email message as short and simple to increase the clarity of the message. The sentence structure, especially in informal emails, tends to include some syntactic and lexical features that denote the shortened nature of email communication. The omission of the subject, colloquial abbreviations and acronyms can be found in emails that people exchange in informal settings.

Crystal (2006) also discusses the dialogic nature of email messages as another character of the body of email message. He points out that email software supports the conversational aspect of email communication as it allows users to reply to each message they receive and keep a thread of messages on a particular topic. The dialogic nature of email communication can increase the intelligibility of email communication as email users can refer to the previous messages they have already received every time they read or compose a new message. Email users can also use what Crystal calls a framing technique through copying lines from an original message and pasting them in a reply to facilitate its clarity and comprehensibility. Crystal concludes that email language can be identified as a linguistic variety. He argues that “features such as screen structure, message openings and closings, message length, dialogic strategies, and framing are central to the identification of e-mail as a linguistic variety” (p. 127).

Although Crystal (2001, 2006) provides an adequate description of the typical structure of an email message in English, he pays little attention to the role of
contextual and social variables in shaping the language and discourse in email communication. The language and structure of the message in email communication have been claimed to be influenced by the characteristics of the context in which the communication takes place. Murray (2000) argues that the contextual factors including the topic of interaction, the setting, and the relationship between the participants, play a vital role in shaping the language and discourse of the email message. The discourse structure of the email message and the linguistic choices the sender makes in the message are also shaped by the etiquette rules underlying appropriate email communication in a particular situation.

2.4.3.3. Email etiquette in English

Frustration and miscommunication in email interaction may result from the absence of the non-verbal cues and the misuse of email as a form of written communication (Taylor, 2009). Thus, some attempts have recently been made to outline the norms and expectations that underlie appropriate email communication in English (e.g., Crystal, 2001, 2006; Flynn and Khan, 2003; Taylor, 2009; Gupta, 2012). These works provide manuals that include general rules and norms based on principles of written and verbal communication; however, most of them aim at developing email users’ ability to compose effective messages in business communication. The rules and norms included in these manuals have also been called ‘netiquette’ or ‘network etiquette’ which are the “social conventions that facilitate interaction over networks” (Taylor, 2009, p. 13). Gupta (2012) asserts that netiquette consists of rules that are based on the same principles that govern the etiquette of social interaction: courtesy, respect and ethics.

Some netiquette rules have been prescribed to increase email users’ awareness of the appropriate way to start and end their messages in English. Greeting has been identified, according to Gupta (2012), as an important segment that should be coined carefully according to the sender’s assessment of role, status, power and relationship with the recipient. Crystal (2006) indicates that greetings tend to be more informal in email messages between people who know each other than email greetings between people of unequal power or remote social distance. For instance,
in a formal email message, the sender is likely to start his/her message with ‘Dear Mr/Mrs’ or ‘Dear sir/madam’, but he/she would start an email message with ‘hi’, ‘hello’ and/or a first name when the receiver is a friend or a relative. The farewell or closure in an email message should also be formulated according to the status, power and social distance of the recipient (Crystal, 2006). Gupta points out that email writers should close their messages with a right tone that suits their relationship with the recipients. She suggests the use of ‘best regards’ as the most convenient closure in English email interaction.

Due to the fact that the body of the message represents the most important part in email interaction that conveys the objectives for which the message is composed, it has attracted more attention than other parts of the message. Taylor (2009) asserts that recipients may find badly structured email messages difficult to understand or to elicit their purposes. She suggests a Four Point Plan in structuring the body of an email message: opening, details, action and closing. The opening section is where the email sender sets the scene and gives a background for his/her message. Taylor suggests that the sender needs to make this section brief and friendly to create a bond with the recipient. The details section represents an important part where the information and facts are provided. Taylor encourages email users to utilise this section appropriately through giving all relevant details, making it flow logically, and using short paragraphs with a space between each. In the action section, the sender tells the recipient what kind of response or action he/she wants the recipient to take. Taylor indicates that this section should begin with a conclusion of the information provided in the details section and it should clearly state the action required. The closing section should be a one-line sentence that finishes off the message with something relevant and thoughtful.

Flynn and Khan (2003) suggest that email writers need to use well-structured sentences in which they should use accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. They also emphasize the necessity of using the correct capitalization as the use of lowercase letters only or uppercase letters only can impede the understanding and acceptance of the message. Taylor (2009) also outlines some rules that govern good email writing. First, she highlights the necessity of avoiding redundant phrases, especially long-winded jargon. Second, she asserts the importance of keeping the
message to the essentials as readers may not have time to read long messages. Taylor summarizes the second rule in one phrase; “Keep It Short and Simple” (KISS) (p. 81). Third, Taylor calls for the use of modern terminology in email communication instead of old-fashioned jargon. The fourth rule indicates the importance of using the right tone when writing an email. This can be achieved through the careful selection of words and expressions that can convey an appropriate impression in the message. Fifth, Taylor encourages email writers to write as they would speak in similar situations. She claims that the use of conversational style in email communication can facilitate the comprehension of the written messages.

Using Culpeper’s (2008) terminology, all the aforementioned email rules are based on the experiential and social norms that govern appropriate email linguistic behaviour in English. They represent the expectations and presuppositions that English native speakers hold towards appropriate email exchanges in particular situations. The necessity of these rules may stem from their role in guiding email users, especially those of diverse cultural backgrounds, to formulate clear and convenient email messages that can help the correspondents achieve the objectives of their communication and in building social relationships. They can also help the correspondents avoid some issues that may occur in intercultural communication such as negative attitudes and stereotypes. However, these issues are likely to occur when interactants of different cultural and linguistic affiliation use email to perform request speech acts due to the constraints of email technology on one hand, and the nature of request speech acts as face threatening acts on the other.

2.5. Request speech acts

Requests have been defined as the speech acts by which the speaker gets the hearer to do something (Reiter, 2000). According to speech act theory, requests are classified as directive speech acts that have two types of realization: direct and indirect (Searle, 1979). Direct requests occur when the illocutionary force (the addressee’s intended meaning) of the request utterance conforms its locutionary force (the literal meaning of the addressee’s utterance). For instance, when a
requester uses the request form (open the door), he/she performs a direct request as the literal meaning of this utterance corresponds the speaker’s intention. Indirect request, on the other hand, occurs when the illocutionary force of the request utterance differs from its locutionary force. For instance, when someone says the utterance (it is hot in here), his/her intended meaning may not be a statement about the place temperature but it can be a request for a hearer to perform an action, e.g. to open a window or switch on a fan.

The speech act of request has gained a lot of attention in interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics research over the last few decades. Schauer (2009) outlines a number of reasons for the interest in the study of request. First, requests are frequently performed in daily interactions by native and non-native speakers of a language. Second, requests can be made to gain various desired actions or things. Third, they can be made to interlocutors of different social characteristics such as social distance, status and power. Fourth, requests can be realised by a variety of linguistic forms and communicative strategies and the use of these forms and strategies can vary across cultures and languages. Fifth, they are face-threatening acts that can be perceived as rude, offensive and demanding in some situations.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests are Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) that require the requester to redress the imposition of his/her requests on the addressee’s negative face (the individual’s willingness to be free of any imposition and to have freedom of action unimpeded by others). Request speech acts can also threaten what Brown and Levinson call the addressee’s positive face (his/her endeavour to have their self-image approved and appreciated). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) argues that requests can cause damage to the addressee’s positive face because they indicate the addressor’s disregard of the addressee’s feelings. Brown and Levinson argue that people usually use more indirect request strategies to decrease the threatening against the hearer’s face and increase the politeness degree of their requests. Although Brown and Levinson have alleged the universality of their assumptions, especially those related to the linguistic realization of request speech acts and the preferences of indirect strategies, studies conducted in the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics claim that the preference of
linguistic realization of requests is culture-specific (Sifianou, 1992; Fukushima, 2000; Reiter, 2000; Byon, 2006; Barron, 2008).

The classification of requests into direct and indirect was further elaborated and modified in later research on request speech acts in cross-cultural pragmatics. The Cross-cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) investigated the realization of the speech acts of request and apology across a number of languages including some varieties of English. It has provided a taxonomy of indirect and direct request strategies that has been adopted widely in later studies (Pair, 1996; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Achiba, 2003; Schauer, 2004). According to the CCSARP taxonomy, the request act can be performed by using request strategies that vary in their in/directness level from most direct strategies to conventionally indirect strategies and non-conventional indirect strategies. The results of the CCSARP project have shown that English native speakers prefer the conventionally indirect strategies when performing requests in various situations. Although the preference of indirect or direct request strategies may differ from one culture to another, some studies of request speech acts in English support the findings of the CCSARP project that English native speakers generally prefer conventionally indirect request strategies (cf. Sifianou, 1992; Garcia, 1996; Reiter, 2000; Reiter, Rainey and Fulcher, 2005). This preference is ascribed to requesters’ willingness to mitigate the imposition of their requests and to avoid any damage to the addressees’ face (Reiter, 2000). Some studies in interlanguage pragmatics (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Swangboonsatic, 2006; Jalilifar, 2009) assert the tendency of English native speakers to employ indirect strategies when performing requests, but these studies also indicate the deviant performance of English non-native speakers, especially the low proficient ones, from this tendency.

2.5.1. Request modifications

The degree of in/directness of the request strategies employed in a particular situation is not the only means by which the requester can redress the pragmatic force of his/her request. Blum-Kulka (2005) argues that the requester can also use request internal and/or external modifications to mitigate the imposition of his/her
request on the hearer. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the request utterance(s) sequence consists of the request head act and the external modification devices attached to the head act. Blum-Kulka et al. define the request head act as the main request utterance that can convey the request act by itself. For instance, if a speaker uses the request formula (‘can I borrow your lecture notes? I was sick yesterday and I couldn’t attend the lecture’), the main utterance that conveys this request is (‘can I borrow your lecture notes?’). This utterance is enough to convey the requesting act of borrowing the notes without the need for the other utterance that follows the head act. Nevertheless, the speaker includes the second utterance (‘I was sick yesterday and I couldn’t attend the lecture’) as a modifier of the head act to justify the request and mitigate its imposition. Request modifications play a vital role in mitigating or aggravating the request pragmatic force and they can be longer than the actual request utterance (the head act). Reiter (2000) defines request modifications as the elements that can be added to the request head act in order to mitigate or aggravate its imposition force. They are deemed as another means, beside indirect and direct strategies, by which the requester can soften or intensify the pragmatic force of his/her request (Trosborg, 1995).

House and Kasper (1981) distinguish between two main categories of request modifications: ‘downgraders’ and ‘upgraders’ (p. 166). Downgraders consist of the linguistic devices that the requester can employ to soften or mitigate the illocutionary force of his/her request, whereas upgraders include the linguistic devices that can aggravate or intensify the illocutionary force of requests. Later research on request modification (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Sifianou, 1999) elaborates the categorization of the devices used as downgraders or upgraders into internal and external modifiers according to their location within the request utterance. Internal modifiers consist of the syntactic and lexical/phrasal devices that occur within the request head act, while external modifiers include the elements that do not occur within the head act but “within its immediate context” (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984, p. 201). For instance, our previous example (can I borrow your lecture notes? I was sick yesterday and I couldn’t attend the lecture) includes an internal modification, the interrogative (can I), and an external modification, the grounder (I was sick yesterday and I couldn’t attend the lecture).
The utilisation of request modifications in face-to-face requests has been investigated in interlanguage pragmatics research. Most of the studies in this realm have compared English non-native speakers’ use of request modifications with that of native speakers. Beal (1998) investigated the use of request modifications by French non-native speakers of English and Australian English native speakers in a work place. The results showed that Australian subjects used request downgraders more than French non-native speakers. Beal determined three factors that might cause the deviation of the linguistic behaviour of French non-native speakers of English from that of English native speakers: insufficient language proficiency, pragmalinguistic transfer from French, and the different cultural values and norms prevailing in French and Australian cultures.

Woodfield (2008) examined internal modification devices employed by undergraduate student learners of English in a comparison with those found in British English graduate students’ requests. The results indicated that learners employed internal modification devices less frequently than the British students. Learners utilised a restricted rage of internal devices and certain syntactic devices were absent in their data. In another study, Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) examined the internal and external request modifications employed by Greek, Japanese and German learners of English as compared to those used by British English native speakers. The results of Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis’ study indicated that ESL learners underused internal modifiers, but they overused some external modifiers, especially preparator and grounder in their requests. The researchers attribute the underuse of internal modifiers to the lack of learners’ proficiency in English and the lack of confidence in their linguistic abilities. The matter is different with external modifiers, which, according to Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis, are active at an early stage of language acquisition.

The excessive utilisation of external modifiers, especially grounder, has also been reported in Hassall’s (2001) study of request modification preferences of Australian learners of Indonesian. Hassall used interactive role play to collect Australian participants’ requests in everyday situations. The results of his analysis showed that Australian learners underused internal modification devices but used external
modifiers frequently. The frequent use of external modification devices, *grounder* in particular, has created verbose effect in the realisation of the requests as these requests contained excessive information. Similarly, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009) demonstrated an underuse of internal mitigating devices and an excessive use of external mitigating moves in Greek ESL university students’ requests as compared to British English native speakers’ requests. She argued that after long exposure to the British culture, Greek students produced requests that were likely to violate the social appropriateness in the target language.

Most of the above studies report differences between the linguistic behaviour of English non-native speakers and that of native speakers in terms of the frequency of request modifiers and the semantic formulae of these modifiers in some situations. These studies also demonstrate a consensus about the role of the lack of a high proficiency in English, the negative transfer from the first language, and the role of non-native speakers’ natal sociolinguistic norms in shaping their linguistic behaviour in English.

2.5.2. Request speech acts in Arabic cultures

Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory has attracted a lot of criticism for assuming that their definition of what constitutes a face threatening act and how to redress its imposition is applicable to all cultures. They have neglected the cultural values and based their politeness strategies on the weightiness of the face-threatening act which is determined by three main factors: social distance, power and rank of imposition. However, as Bowe and Martin (2006) point out, these factors may not have the same effect across all cultures. For example, the hierarchical nature of some Asian cultures may impose the use of expressions of deference with addressees who are senior in age (Bowe and Martin, 2006). Furthermore, research in cross-cultural pragmatics shows that the three elements of distance, power and imposition are not the only factors that shape linguistic behaviour in different cultures. For instance, Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) and Barron (2003) have documented that factors like right and obligation influence the impact of social variables on the realisation of request speech acts.
In Arabic cultures including Iraqi culture, the evaluation of the imposition of request speech acts and the formulation of the request utterance are shaped by the cultural values pervasive in these cultures. A number of studies (Umar, 2004; Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, 2009; Al-Ali and Alawneh, 2010; Sattar and Farnia, 2014; Al-Shawesh and Hussin, 2015) have investigated the requestive behaviour of Arabic native speakers in comparison with that of English native speakers. Most of these studies report that requests by Arab participants are generally characterised by an increased level of directness and lack of mitigating strategies, especially in situations depicting low social power and remote social distance. Umar (2004) examines the request strategies employed by advanced Arab learners of English as compared to those used by native speakers of English. The results indicate that both groups adopt similar strategies when addressing requests to equals or addressees with higher power. When requests are addressed to people with lower social power, the Arab participants show a tendency to employ direct requests more than their English native speaking counterparts. They also use less semantic and syntactic modifiers than the native speakers group. Similarly, Al-Shawesh and Hussin (2015) report that direct requests are the most preferred request strategies employed by EFL Arab international students in Malaysia. The results of their study also reveal the students’ tendency to mitigate the directness level of their requests using reasons and positive politeness expressions as external modification devices.

In their investigation of the use of request modifications by Jordanian learners of English in a comparison with American English native speakers, Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) demonstrate that internal modifications are less frequent in Jordanian learners’ requests than in Americans’ requests. The matter is different with external modifications that are pervasive in Jordanians’ requests. The two groups also differ in their selection of the linguistic formulae of some modifiers and the situations in which these modifiers are more frequent. Al-Ali and Alawneh (2010) list three main reasons that may explain the requestive behaviour of Jordanian learners of English: their insufficient proficiency in English, the negative interference of their first language pragmatic knowledge, and the influence of sociocultural norms of their culture. Al-Ali and Alawneh argue that the cultural
values and norms, especially the Islamic identity of Jordanian society, influence Jordanian learners’ realization of request modifications.

Similarly, Sattar et al. (2009) examine request realization by ten Iraqi non-native speakers of English. They find out that both external and internal modifications are frequent in the subjects’ requests but the subjects use different semantic formulae of some modifiers in some situations compared to those used by native speakers. The subjects also use external modifiers that are not common in native speakers’ requests such as apology and gratitude. Sattar et al. argue that Iraqi non-native speakers’ choices of semantic formulae for formulating and modifying their requests are influenced by the socio-cultural norms of their own culture. Iraqi subjects may lack an awareness of the social and situational rules that govern request realization in English speaking communities. In another study, Sattar and Farnia (2014) investigate the use of request external modification strategies in Iraqi Arabic and Bahasa Malay in situations with different contextual and social variables. The results of their study show that both groups have utilised external mitigating devices, especially the grunder, however they differ in their perception of the situational factors. The researchers ascribe the difference between the two groups to the different cultural values on which they base their assessment of the situations and the appropriate requestive behaviour in each situation. While Iraqi culture is dominated by the Islamic values and concepts such as hospitality, sharing, involvement, obligations and closeness, Malays might still dominated by the Anglo cultural values.

Arabic cultures have been classified as collectivistic cultures in which hierarchical structure dominates social relationships (cf. Buda and Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998). Social hierarchy, priority of group welfare and interdependence are the basic characteristics of a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 1980; DeCapua and Wintergerst, 2004). In a collectivistic culture, individuals are expected to place the group needs above the personal needs (Triandis, 1995; Kim & Markus, 1999). Thus, members of a collectivistic culture have a sense of a moral obligation to help each other and they expect compliance with their requests (Bohns et al., 2011). This assumption may explain the tendency of Arabic culture members to use direct request strategies with little mitigation especially in situations where the addressee
has an equal social power and/or a close social distance. For instance, Sattar and Farnia (2014) point out that rights and obligations in Iraqi culture are determined by the nature of Iraqi friendship and the feeling that a friend should offer help and comply with his/her friend’s request.

In situations where the addressee is of a higher social position than the speaker in the social hierarchy, the speaker is expected to show deference (cf. Bowe and Martin, 2006; Sattar and Farnia, 2014). That may include the use of honorific terms and mitigating strategies when making requests in these situations, as these requests, according to Sattar et al. (2009), impose heavier psychological burdens than those addressed to someone of a lower social power. Sattar and Farnia (2014) report the tendency of Iraqi participants in their study to use external mitigating strategies (e.g., grounder, thanking, expressions of favour and apology) and formal address terms in situations where the addressee has a high social power and position. They suggest that the cultural values pervasive in Iraqi culture influence Iraqis’ linguistic behaviour in the realisation of request speech acts in everyday situations.

2.5.3. Request emails

People use email to send requests of various topics to different recipients, e.g., to their friends, relatives, co-workers, work superiors and university lecturers (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006). The cross-cultural exchange of speech acts including requests via email has also increased rapidly nowadays as people of different cultural backgrounds use email to perform different speech acts (cf. Crystal, 2006; Taylor, 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The growth of the use of request emails in intercultural communication has triggered scholars’ interest in identifying the realization of requests in email communication. Also, email communication represents an authentic source of data that helps the researchers overcome the limitations of data elicit methods such as DCT and role play. Recent works on request emails have focused on two main areas related to the realization of request emails, especially by non-native and native speakers of English. The first area is based on the traditional approach to politeness, as it is more concerned with
the study of request utterances in email messages in terms of the use of in/direct request strategies and request modifications (e.g. Swangboonsatic, 2006; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Pan, 2012; Soler, 2013b; Chen, 2015). In the second area of research, researchers examine the discursive structure of the email messages in which the requests occur as well as the linguistic realization of these requests (e.g. Chang and Hsu, 1998; Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth, 2002; Duthler, 2006; Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Merrison et al., 2012; Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013).

In terms of the level of in/directness of request strategies and the use of request modifications, studies demonstrated divergence between native and non-native speakers of English in their email communication. Swangboonsatic (2006) explored the differences in communicative styles in terms of in/directness between Thai non-native speakers of English and Australian English native speakers when making request emails, and the influence of their cultural values on their communicative styles. The results of her study showed that the requesting style of her Thai subjects was less direct than that of Australian subjects. Thai subjects also used different request modifications. Swangboonsatic attributed these findings to the different cultural values related to face and politeness in Thai and Australian cultures. She also indicated that email as a medium of communication may constrain the use of request strategies, especially the most indirect ones.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) examined the differences and similarities between English native and non-native speaking students in their use of in/directness strategies, the syntactic and lexical mitigating devices, as well as request perspective in their request emails. Her results demonstrated that both NSs and NNSs resorted largely to direct strategies for lower imposition requests but used more conventionally indirect requests for higher imposition requests. In terms of internal modification, both NSs and NNSs used syntactic devices in at least half of their requests. With regard to request perspective, NNSs used the addressee perspective (e.g. can you...) more than NSs in all request types. NSs also used impersonal forms (e.g. if it is possible...) which was not found in NNSs’ requests. Biesenbach-Lucas ascribed the linguistic behaviour of NSs and NNSs in their request emails to their awareness of the situational factors that underlie the context.
of communication and the influence of email as a medium of communication that allows its users to plan, compose, revise and edit their messages. However, NSs were able to demonstrate a developing awareness of politeness in institutional emails, whereas NNSs might run the risk of not being perceived as polite.

Other studies that investigated request realization in email also examined the discursive features of the email messages that convey requests. They held the view that request speech acts should be considered within the email discourse to explore non-native speakers’ ability to observe politeness norms and conventions of the target community in email communication. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2002) conducted a study to examine the rhetorical and linguistic characteristics of computer-mediated negotiation initiated by English native and non-native speakers in an American academic setting. The process of data analysis aimed at identifying the purpose of the messages, the rhetorical moves within each message (context, proposal, justification, options, request for information, request for response, and request for other), and the linguistic realization of each move. In terms of the request move, the results of this study indicated that NSs and NNSs had different linguistic realization of requests in their email messages. NSs used hedges, modals and provided options in their proposals, while NNSs did not include such markers of tentativeness or options in their negotiation messages. NNSs also utilised an inappropriate cultural model showing themselves as needy, problem-plagued, and not very advanced students. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth argued that NSs were more adept in using email technology to initiate a negotiation with their professor. NSs might have realized that the remoteness in time and space of email requires the students to build the negotiation independently by collapsing multiple moves into their messages. NNSs’ email messages, on the other hand, demonstrated a lack of appropriate pragmatic competence and appropriate social language use in the institutional context of the study. They seemed to follow a cultural model compatible within their cultural experiences, but not appropriate within the American graduate studies culture.

Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) studied the generic structure of request emails written by Jordanian non-native English speakers (JNNESs) in a comparison with that of American English native speakers (AENSs). The email messages collected in this
study were analysed according to their component moves. The results indicated differences between JNNESs and AENSs in terms of the sequential order, type, frequency of moves, and the lexico-grammatical features of these moves. The main difference between the two groups was that JNNESs tended to avoid immediate request through putting their requests after other moves, whereas AENSs tended to mention their requests directly before other moves. Furthermore, JNNESs employed some devices that were rare in the AENSs’ requests, such as ‘invoking compassion’, which was used to motivate the requestee’s cooperation. Al-Ali and Sahawneh claimed that the lack of pragmatic competence of Jordanian subjects and the pragmatic transfer from their first language and culture are the motives behind their deviant structure of request emails in English.

As indicated in the results obtained in most of the above studies, English non-native speakers have shown pragmatic failure in their performance of requests in intercultural email communication. Low proficiency in English and pragmatic transfer from the first culture and language have been diagnosed as the main factors that lead to pragmatic failure in request emails. Unlike the case in intracultural communication where individuals share the same expectations and norms of linguistic politeness, email correspondents in intercultural communication may demonstrate different linguistic behaviours that may lead to miscommunication (Baumer and Rensburg, 2011). In addition to cross-cultural miscommunication, pragmatic failure in email interaction, as illustrated by Biesenbach-lucas (2007) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), can lead to negative attitudes that may have some negative impact on interpersonal relationships in intercultural communication. However, there is a lack of research on the consequences of breaching the interactional norms and conventions of the host community in email communication. Few studies (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) have examined email recipients’ perceptions of the senders and their linguistic behaviour when receiving request emails from non-native speakers.
2.5.4. Perceptions of non-native speakers’ request emails

One of the early studies that have investigated English native speakers’ perceptions of request emails composed by English non-native speakers was conducted by Chang and Hsu (1998). This study also compared the structure of request emails composed by Chinese learners of English with that of American English native speakers in power-unequal (from students to professor) and power-equal (between students) situations in an academic setting. In order to get authentic data, the researchers collected 44 request emails (22 by Chinese subjects and 19 by American subjects). Six native English speakers were asked to evaluate the collected emails on a 7-point scale in terms of politeness, directness and clarity. The results showed that Chinese subjects’ emails were evaluated by American NSs as impolite or unclear. This result was ascribed to the divergence between the Chinese NNSs and American NSs styles, request politeness strategies and the sequence of information within the email messages. The direct strategies, especially want statement, imperative and performative, were mainly used by Chinese subjects, whereas the indirect strategies, especially the query preparatory, were pervasive in American NSs’ data. In terms of the sequence of information, the American NSs made their messages direct (address-reason-request or address-request-explanation), whereas the Chinese learners made their messages indirect (salutation-preambles (facework)-reasons-requests). The researchers explained these results in terms of pragmatic transfer from the Chinese first language and culture.

Hendriks (2010) argues that non-native speakers can also be evaluated negatively in terms of their personality attributes on the basis of their linguistic behaviour in request emails. She conducted two studies to investigate the effect of variations in the amount of request modification in email messages written by Dutch non-native speakers of English on native speakers’ perceptions. English native speakers were asked to complete a questionnaire in which they were asked to rate the personality attributes of the senders, the reasonableness of their requests, and the comprehensibility of their emails on a 7-point Likert scale. The first study examined the influence of variations in the amount of request modification for one type of syntactic modification, the past tense modal could, in combination with a conventionally indirect strategy. The results indicated that the syntactic
modification had insignificant effect on the participants' judgement of the sender's personality, and the reasonableness and comprehensibility of the request email. In the second study, the researcher increased the types of modification added to the request emails. The results showed that these modifications had a significant effect on the participants' evaluation of the agreeableness of the senders of the request emails, but it did not have such effect on the comprehensibility of the emails. The researcher summed up the results of the two studies by asserting that the underuse of elaborate modification may negatively influence the recipient's perception of the agreeableness of the sender.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) argues that non-native speakers’ lack of awareness of politeness norms in email communication is likely to result in native speakers’ negative perception of their email messages. In her study of English request emails composed by Greek Cypriot students, Economidou-Kogetsidis examined students' request emails to faculty and the perception of British university lecturers on these requests. Two hundred email messages were collected from 200 students studying at a major English medium university in Cyprus. The analysis aimed at identifying the degree of directness, the amount and type of external and lexical/phrasal modification, and the forms of address used in students’ request emails. To explore the perception of the NNS students' request emails, questionnaires were sent to 24 English native speaker lecturers from 12 universities in the UK. The results showed that NNSs’ requests were generally characterized by a significant directness, an underuse of lexical/phrasal mitigations, an absence of greetings and closings, and the use of inappropriate terms of address. All these characteristics triggered the British NS lecturers’ perception of these emails as impolite and abrupt. Economidou-Kogetsidis claims that NNSs failed to observe the principles of politeness of a Western society as they failed to use sufficient mitigation and conventional indirectness that are deemed as the norms for performing requests in a Western culture.

In another study, Economidou-kogestsidis (2016) investigated the perceptions of British native speaker lecturers and Greek Cypriot EFL university students towards direct and unmodified request emails. For data collection, she used a perception questionnaire in which the participants had to evaluate six authentic emails with a
high level of directness and a limited internal and external modification on a number of attributes. The results showed that the two groups evaluated the same emails differently. The EFL students rated the email messages positively on the evaluation dimensions, while the native speaker lecturers rated the same emails negatively on these dimensions. Economidou-Kogetsidis explained this divergence between the two groups’ perceptions in terms of the difference between the EFL students’ pragmatic competence and the native speakers’ pragmatic knowledge. The students were found to be unaware of the negative consequences of the pragmatic failure of the examined emails.

The above studies provide important insights into the potential negative attitudes that English native speakers may develop towards non-native speakers based on their linguistic behaviour in request emails. However, most of the email messages used in these studies were sent by students to academics; therefore, they represent email communication in power-unequal situations. The perceived power relationship between the sender and recipient seems to be the main factor that shapes the evaluators’ assessment of the email messages and their senders in these studies. In addition to the academic emails, evaluating email messages from other settings can highlight the impact of other social and contextual variables such as age, gender, social distance, role and status on the evaluators’ perceptions. Furthermore, some of the above studies seem to be based on the traditional approach to politeness as they deal with politeness as inherent in request utterances without considering the structure of the email discourse in which these utterances occur.

2.6. Conclusion

Negative language attitudes can occur in intercultural communication between English native and non-native speakers due to linguistic and pragmatic deficiencies. Non-native speakers may unintentionally violate native speakers’ expectations if they fail to observe the politeness principles, cultural values, norms and conventions underlying appropriate linguistic behaviour in a particular context. Sending requests in intercultural email communication may add another layer of challenge for non-native speakers. In addition to the challenge of performing a face-
threatening act in a second or a foreign language, non-native speakers may face the challenge of conveying their requests in appropriately structured email messages. At the request utterance level, non-native speakers may experience pragmatic failure in formulating request acts with an appropriate level of in/directness and an adequate modification. At the email message level, they may fail to observe native speakers’ sociopragmatic norms that govern the appropriate structure of the message and the position of the request act within its rhetorical sequence. As claimed in previous research (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011), pragmatic failure at the request act level and/or the email message level can trigger native speaker recipients’ negative perceptions of non-native speakers and their linguistic behaviour.

The constraints of email technology, especially the absence of contextual and non-verbal cues, can increase the possibility of pragmatic failure in email communication and the possibility of negative perceptions (Byron and Baldridge, 2007). Hancock and Dunham (2001) point out that unlike the situation in face-to-face interaction (where interlocutors can use contextual and non-verbal resources to clarify their intentions and gain the desired attitudes), the remoteness in time and place in email communication and the lack of non-verbal cues may compel non-native speakers to depend solely on the message text for conveying their intentions and prompting the recipients’ positive attitudes. However, previous research (e.g., Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) shows that the effective use of language in request email messages can be a challenge for non-native speakers, especially those with lower proficiency levels, and that may increase the likelihood of the occurrence of negative language attitudes in some situations.
Chapter three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The research design of this study is inspired by theoretical approaches to the study of linguistic phenomena in social interaction. It is also inspired by the analytical schemes utilised in previous research on request emails and recipient perceptions in email communication. The first section of this chapter outlines the theoretical approach that underpins the conceptual framework of this study. It presents the theoretical basis for the research design and practice conducted in this study. The second section describes the methods and procedures used for collecting the email corpus, including the participants from whom the corpus was collected, and the methods used for collecting the email messages and the contextual information about these messages. It also describes the email evaluation process through presenting the evaluation survey and its structure, and providing an account of the Australian evaluators and the recruitment procedures.

The third section of this chapter outlines the frameworks and procedures employed to analyse the data. It starts with an account of the approaches used for analysing request emails in previous research. That includes the CCSARP, the genre analysis approach and the study of both email discourse and request utterance. Then it presents the frameworks utilised in this study for analysing the discourse of the email messages, the request acts in these messages, and the evaluation data collected from the Australian participants. It also provides a description of the process of matching the results obtained from the email evaluation analysis with those obtained from the discourse and linguistic analyses. This chapter ends with a concluding section that summarizes its content and provides a link to the next chapter.

3.2. Theoretical approach

The postmodern/discursive approach to politeness represents the theoretical approach taken to conceptualising central notions in the research questions and
framing the research methods employed to investigate these questions. As the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between the linguistic behaviour in email communication and the recipients’ attitudes, it is essential to take a broad theoretical understanding of the aspects that shape this issue. The discursive approach provides an account of the main factors that have to be taken into account in the study of linguistic behaviour and its evaluation in social interaction: discourse, context and interactants’ judgement.

Postmodern/discursive theorists claim that linguistic behaviour should be studied and evaluated at the discourse level. They argue that (im)politeness does not reside in isolated utterances or speech acts and researchers need to examine the discourse of these utterances and speech acts in order to reach solid and reliable conclusions (Mills, 2011). Thus, it is essential to consider the co-text of utterances and speech acts as an influential factor that shapes the interpretation and perception of these utterances and speech acts. Context, according to discursive theorists, plays an important role in shaping both the production and evaluation of linguistic behaviour in social interaction. The proponents of the discursive approach (e.g., Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003) emphasize the need to evaluate linguistic behaviour as a situated behaviour; therefore, no prediction can be made about the impact of a particular linguistic behaviour until one knows the context in which that behaviour occurred. Situational and social characteristics of context, such as relationships, roles, age, gender and social status, influence the linguistic choices that interlocutors make in a particular situation. Terkourafi (2005b, p. 102) claims that these “extra-linguistic variables” can influence the construction of meanings and perceptions in social interaction. Postmodern/discursive theorists also call for adopting politeness 1 approach: evaluating linguistic behaviour according to the sociocultural group members’ understanding of what constitutes (im)politeness in a specific communication context. They emphasize that politeness 1 can be used as an evaluative tool of (im)politeness data as it includes hearers’ judgements of other people’s linguistic behaviour on the basis of the hearers’ conceptualisation and experiences of (im)politeness in context. Watts (2003) and Locher (2006) believe that the addressee is a legitimate insider who has the ability to define a polite (or impolite) behaviour in specific contexts on the basis of his/her social and situational experiences.
The notions of discourse, context and interactants’ judgement have been adopted as concepts that frame the research design and practice of this study (see Figure 1). They have been considered in deciding the type of data to be collected for the purpose of this study and in choosing the methods and frameworks that should be employed for collecting and analysing the data. As illustrated in Figure 1, this study aims at collecting three sets of data: INNESs’ email messages, contextual information about the situations of the email messages and AENSs’ evaluations of the messages. It also aims at identifying the discoursal and linguistic characteristics of INNESs’ request emails and matching these with the Australian participants’ evaluations of these emails.

Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the study
In order to gain an adequate understanding of the structure of INNESs’ linguistic behaviour in email communication and its impact on recipients’ attitudes, authentic request emails and information about the situations in which they occurred are collected from the study participants. The target of data collection is not only the request acts but also the whole email discourse in which these acts occur. Then, contextual information about the situations in which the emails were sent is collected from Iraqi participants. This information provides a description of the circumstances of the situation of each email to be assessed by AENSs in the evaluation survey. It facilitates the evaluators’ interpretation and assessment of the linguistic behaviour in each email. The contextual information also provides a solid basis that the researcher can draw on in the discussion of the characteristics and evaluations of the email messages.

On the basis of adequate descriptions of the circumstances of the situations in which INNESs’ emails occurred, the email messages are evaluated by Australian participants through statements in an evaluation survey. To reach reliable judgements about the linguistic behaviour of the INNESs in the communication events of their emails, it is essential to evaluate these emails from Australian community members’ point of view. The Australian participants have the social and experiential knowledge that qualifies them to evaluate the linguistic behaviour in email communication events occurred in the Australian culture. Iraqi email messages were sent originally to Australian recipients; therefore, evaluating these messages by a sample of Australian participants with relevant backgrounds can manifest the attitudinal reactions that these messages are likely to receive in email communication with recipients from the Australian host society.

After collecting email corpus from Iraqi participants and evaluation data from Australian participants, the data collected from both groups are analysed. The analytical work conducted in this study starts with analysing the data obtained from the Australian evaluators. Statistical methods are employed to analyse the data collected in the evaluation surveys. Then, the structure of Iraqi participants’ request emails are analysed at the discourse level and the request utterance level. To understand the relationship between the sender’s linguistic behaviour in request emails and the recipient’s perceptions of the sender and his/her linguistic behaviour,
it is not sufficient to examine the request utterance without considering the email discourse in which it occurs. The view of the request speech act as an isolated utterance examined out of its discourse may deprive the researcher from gaining insights into the discoursal elements that influence the recipient’s perceptions of the sender and the request message. The postmodern/discursive theorists emphasize that adequate judgements about others’ linguistic behaviour cannot be achieved by examining utterances out of their original discourse. It is not possible to gain an adequate understanding of the senders’ linguistic behaviour and its impact on the evaluators’ perceptions through examining only the level of in/directness and the type of modification of the request utterance. It is necessary to consider the co-text around the request utterance. It also seems inadequate to examine the characteristics of the email discourse without considering the formula of the request utterance used in that discourse. Previous research on request speech acts (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Reiter, 2000) shows that the linguistic choices that requesters make, especially the level of in/directness and modification strategies, can influence the addressee’s perception of the request and his/her willingness to comply.

In order to examine the motives behind the Australian participants’ negative or positive evaluation of INNESs’ emails, the results of the evaluation data analysis are matched with the results of the discourse and linguistic analyses. As shown in Figure 1, the matching process represents the last stage of the research design of this study. It can illustrate the characteristics of the discourse structure and the request act realization in emails evaluated positively or negatively by AENSs. It can provide justification for the evaluation that an email message has received in the evaluation survey. The results of discourse and linguistic analyses offer a solid basis for the discussion of the AENSs’ perceptions of INNESs’ emails. They can show whether the email messages have been structured according to the evaluators’ expectations of the norms and conventions underlying appropriate request emails in the Australian host society. The approaches and frameworks adopted for collecting and analysing the email corpus and the evaluation data are described in the remaining sections of this chapter.
3.3. Data collection

Three sets of data have been collected for the purpose of this study. The first consists of the email messages collected from INNESs. The second includes the contextual information about the situations in which INNESs’ emails occurred. The third represents AENSs’ evaluations of the structure of the email messages, the requests in these messages, the personality attributes of the senders and willingness to engage in future communication with the senders. In order to make sure that the methods and procedures employed for collecting data in this research comply with ethics protocols, the research design of this study was submitted for the approval of the ethics committee at Deakin University. All the methods were described in the ethics application. The procedures used for collecting the data including finding and contacting the subjects were also described. The subjects participating in this research were defined and the concerns about their privacy and anonymity were addressed. Samples of the evaluation survey and the interview questions were attached to the application. All documents used in the process of data collection including plain language statements, consent forms, flyers and calls for participation were also attached for the review of the ethics committee (see Appendix 1). The application was considered by the committee and the approval was given to the researcher to conduct this project (see Appendix 2).

3.3.1. Email corpus

The corpus collected in this study consists of 228 authentic email messages written by Iraqi non-native English speakers. An average of 6 emails was collected from each participant. All email messages involve request speech acts addressed to Australian recipients. To examine the issue of language attitudes in intercultural communication from a broad social perspective, the corpus includes email messages sent by the participants in academic, workplace and service encounter settings. The academic emails were sent by the participants to lecturers, faculty staff members and academic advisors in Deakin, Monash and RMIT universities in Melbourne, Australia. Requests made in these emails included organizing meetings, asking for feedback or requesting various study and administrative information. The workplace setting emails were composed by participants employed in different
work places in Australia and sent to their colleagues or superiors at work requesting changes of work shifts, information, sick leave, payment, documents, etc. The service encounter setting emails were sent to offices and services in Australia such as a real-estate agency, a police licensing office, a city council or a communication company. In this group of emails the participants were requesting services or information about services provided by recipients.

Collecting emails from multiple settings is inspired by the researcher’s endeavour to capture a full understanding of the Iraqi participants’ linguistic behaviour in email communication with others in the Australian host community and the attitudinal reactions that such behaviour can trigger. The aim is to collect a representative sample of Iraqis’ linguistic behaviour in intercultural email communication with the Australian host society. The academic, workplace and service encounter settings represent the most important contextual situations of everyday communication. They can provide representative samples of intercultural email communication between the participants and the Australian society. Emails from one setting only may not reflect the general characteristics of the participants’ behaviour and the potential reactions of Australian English speaker recipients towards this behaviour as they are constrained with the norms and communication rules dominant in that setting. Each setting may represent a CofP that has its own norms and rules underlying language use in email communication. At the same time, these norms and rules reflect the wider social norms and cultural values that govern email communication in the Australian society. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2007) argue that there is no radical distinction between CofP norms and the wider actual societal norms. Mills (2009) claim that the construction and evaluation of CofP norms and practices are influenced by those of the wider society. Using emails from three different settings in this study can reflect the influence of the experiential norms, which the individuals develop through their experience in a particular CofP, and social norms on the structure and evaluation of the examined emails. Thus, emails in each setting have to be evaluated by members of the Australian culture familiar with the communication norms of that setting.

It is envisaged that authentic email messages should increase the validity of the research as they reflect the natural linguistic behaviour of the participants in email
communication. Furthermore, collecting whole email discourse stretches instead of isolated request utterances enables the examination of the co-text of each request email and the sender’s adherence to or violation of the discursive and interactional norms and conventions for not only performing an appropriate request but also for composing an appropriate email in the Australian culture. It can also help the Australian participants to make adequate judgments about Iraqi participants’ email messages on the basis of the discourse structure and the realization of the request acts in these messages. Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), Locher (2006) and Mills (2003, 2011) argue that stretches of discourse should be collected and analysed in order for researchers to adequately examine and evaluate linguistic behaviour in social interaction.

Email messages were collected from 40 Iraqi participants aged 25 to 45 years. All email authors are Australian residents who have lived in Australia for at least seven years. All are males as it was difficult to collect emails from Iraqi females due to cultural constraints regarding the possibility of establishing a direct contact with females in Iraqi culture. As a member of Iraqi community in the State of Victoria, the researcher assumes a certain characterization of Iraqi participants. They are Iraqi community members who tend to maintain their Iraqi Muslim cultural identity through enforcing their social relationships with other members of the community with whom they practice their cultural traditions and rituals on a regular basis. They also maintain social interaction with members of the Australian community to fulfill their daily life requirements, their career commitments and/or their academic progress. This interaction aims at providing the daily needs of the Iraqi individuals and their families such as seeking medical treatment, purchasing goods and services or requesting government services. In some Australian workplaces and educational institutions, Iraqi employees and students have a high level of verbal and written communication with Australian native speakers throughout the activities of their jobs or courses. Iraqi participants’ communication with the members of Australian host community is carried out through either verbal interaction in face-to-face encounters, telephone conversations, or written communication in emails and letters.
Proficiency in English language and familiarity with email communication represented the criteria on which the Iraqi participants were selected. It was assumed that all Iraqi participants had an advanced level of proficiency in English which had been developed during their academic study and career involvement in Australian society. Most of the Iraqi participants had completed undergraduate courses majoring in English language teaching in Iraqi universities where English was used as the main language of instruction and assessment. After migrating to Australia, some of them undertook employment in Australian institutions and businesses, others enrolled into postgraduate university courses, and yet others were still looking for jobs. All Iraqi participants were familiar with email technology due to the constant use of email as a means of communication in their private, professional and academic lives.

The researcher contacted the leadership committee of Iraqi Australian Solidarity Association asking for assistance with the recruitment of study participants. The committee agreed and forwarded a call for participation to their Iraqi members. The call for participation announcement included a description of the study and its aims and an explanation of the participation criteria. Those who met the participant selection criteria and were interested in taking part in the study contacted the researcher who asked them to contribute samples of the request email messages that they had already sent to Australian recipients. The researcher asked the participants to replace any names in the email messages with the codes ‘First name’ and ‘Last name’ and to delete email addresses and other identifiers. He also asked them not to include emails with private or confidential content.

3.3.2. Contextual data

The situational characteristics of the interaction context play an important role in shaping the structure of utterances and the realization of speech acts as well as the addressee’s perception of the addressee’s linguistic behaviour. Information about the social and contextual features of the situation in which an interaction has occurred including participants’ age, gender and status, their social roles, their relationship, and time and place of interaction, is essential to make adequate
analysis of utterances and to reach reliable judgements about the participants’ linguistic behaviour. Thomas (1995) argues that situational and social factors influencing the production of utterances and speech acts have to be taken into account in order to have a reliable judgement about these utterances and speech acts.

In this study, two specific purposes motivated the collection of the social and situational information about the email situations. First, the social and situational information provided data for analysing and discussing the discourse of the email corpus through clarifying the meaning and function of utterances and segments within each email message. Mills (2011) points out that contextual elements can clarify meaning and influence judgements of (im)politeness about the linguistic behaviour in communication. Second, the situational and social information about the situations in which Iraqi emails occurred was necessary for providing a comprehensive description of these emails in the evaluation surveys sent to Australian participants who were asked to evaluate these messages in the situations described in the surveys. That could help the Australian participants to gain a full understanding of each email and to make reliable judgements about its structure and content.

A face-to-face structured interview was used to collect the social and situational data in the study. A structured interview is an interview technique in which the researcher uses pre-set questions and the participants are prompted to keep their responses within the range of these questions (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2010). O'Leary and Dowds (2003) point out that the structured interview is ideal for collecting large quantities of reliable data from a large sample of participants whose responses to the standard form of questioning are likely to be away from the researcher's bias. Each Iraqi participant was interviewed regarding the email messages that he contributed in the study; therefore, a total of 40 structured interviews were conducted in this study. The interview questions used in this study (see Appendix 3) focused on exploring information that facilitates the understanding of the social and situational circumstances underlying each email message. They aimed at collecting demographic data about the sender and the recipient including age, gender, role, status and the relationship between the two;
as well as providing a description of the circumstances that necessitated sending each request email including purpose, the degree of imposition of the request, sender’s expectation, his right to send the request, his understanding of the recipient’s obligation, and if available, the kind of reply he received and his satisfaction with the reply. The researcher used note-taking techniques to record Iraqi participants’ responses to the interview questions.

3.3.3. Email evaluation

In this study, the politeness 1 perspective (Eelen, 2001) has been adopted for evaluating the linguistic behaviour in INNESs’ email messages. This perspective has been applied in previous studies (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Ly, 2016) that examined the judgements of the original or hypothetical recipients regarding the participants’ linguistic behaviour in email communication. These studies investigated the influence of different aspects of email communication such as capitalization, emoticons, request modification and style, on the evaluators’ perceptions of the email messages and the personality attributes of the senders. Some of these studies focused on the influence of some features of the email message discourse on the evaluators’ perceptions without considering the influence of the realization of request speech acts on such evaluation (e.g., Byron and Baldridge, 2007). Other studies (e.g., Hendriks, 2010) considered the influence of the linguistic realization of the request act on the evaluation of the request emails without considering the influence of the email discourse where the request act occurred.

In this study INNESs’ request emails were evaluated and analysed at both the discourse level and the request utterance level in order to gain a thorough insight into the relationship between the linguistic behaviour in these emails and the recipients’ perceptions. Because they were originally sent to Australian recipients, the evaluation of these messages by participants from the Australian community could provide insights into the potential attitudinal reactions that they could trigger. On the basis of the politeness 1 perspective, it was assumed that Australian participants were the legitimate insiders who had the social and experiential
knowledge to evaluate the linguistic behaviour in email messages sent to Australian recipients. The Australian evaluators were asked to respond to an evaluation survey in which they had to evaluate the structure of the email messages, the requests made in these messages, the personality attributes of the senders, and their willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders.

3.3.3.1. The evaluation survey

The evaluation survey has been designed to explore Australian participants’ perceptions about the collected email messages and their senders. It is based on a Likert scaling that is deemed, according to Cooper (2003), the most common method used for measuring perceptions and attitudes. The respondents’ opinions collected in a Likert scale questionnaire indicate their attitudes about a particular phenomenon tested in the questionnaire. Albaum (1997) claims that opinions are the means by which we measure attitudes because they are the verbal expressions of attitudes. The Likert scale questionnaire used in this study consists of a number of evaluation statements to which Australian participants are to mark a degree of disagreement or agreement using one of the following options: strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, strongly agree. The use of these options in the Likert scale questionnaire, according to Albaum (1997, p. 332), enables the researcher to “measure direction (by 'agree/disagree') and intensity (by 'strongly' or not) of attitude [emphasis in original]”. The response options indicate not only respondents’ disagreement or agreement with the statement but also the extent to which they disagree or agree by choosing the ‘strongly disagree/agree’ options.

In order to make sure that the structure of the survey is efficient, the survey has been tested in a pilot experiment. In the pilot study, the draft of the survey was sent to 15 Australian participants who were asked to complete it and comment on the clarity and appropriateness of its instruction and structure. The participants provided perceptive comments regarding word choice, the clarity and appropriateness of the evaluation statements and the general structure of the survey. These comments have been used in the reconstruction of the survey. The final version of the survey starts with an introduction that clarifies the purpose and the
structure of the survey and includes guidelines to facilitate the evaluators’ task explaining what they have to do, e.g., to read the situation described before each message and to provide spontaneous responses to each evaluation item (see Figure 2). Then, the evaluators are asked to answer questions in the demographic section (About you). This section consists of eight multiple choice questions regarding the evaluator’s cultural identity, first language, age range, and email usage, as shown in Figure 2.

About this survey:

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of email senders when performing requests in email communication and the attitudinal reactions that recipients are likely to develop towards the senders and their linguistic behaviour. The email messages used in this survey are authentic messages collected from participants whose age ranges between 30 and 40 years.

In this survey, you will be asked to give your opinion about the senders, content and structure of the following email messages. For every email message, you will find a description of the situation in which the email was sent. You are asked to give your opinion about the email message using the 13 evaluative statements that follow each message. Please tick the box that represents your opinion about the statement. For instance if you strongly disagree with the statement, please tick box 1, if you strongly agree with the statement, tick box 5.

Because we are interested in your spontaneous reactions and feelings towards each message and its sender, you do not need to think too long about your responses. Your personal opinion is valuable for us, so your responses can never be wrong.

[ ] = Identifiers such as names of people and places of work or study have been deleted from emails for privacy reasons and replaced with codes in square brackets.

About you:

(Please tick the box which represents your choice or fill in the blank if applicable)

- Do you identify yourself as Australian? ☐Yes ☐No ☐Not sure
- How long have you lived in Australia? ☐From birth OR ............years ............months
- Is English your main language for every day communication? ☐Yes ☐No
- Your age range: ☐20-29 ☐30-39 ☐40-50 ☐over 50
- Gender: ☐Male ☐Female
- How many emails do you send per day: ☐No emails ☐1-4 ☐5-10 ☐11-20 ☐more than 20
- How many emails do you receive per day: ☐No emails ☐1-4 ☐5-10 ☐11-20 ☐more than 20
- Your purpose of email usage (you can tick more than one): ☐to contact friends and relatives ☐for work ☐for education ☐other

Figure 2: The introduction and the demographic section of the survey

The evaluation section of the survey consists of three main parts (see Figure 3). In the first part, a description of the situation in which an email message occurred is provided, including information about the sender and the recipient, their roles, their
relationship, the communication setting, relevant background information, and the purpose of communication. In the second part, the email message that the evaluators have to rate is introduced. In the third part, the evaluators are asked to rate the email message on thirteen evaluation statements using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation statements</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- The content of this email is clear.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- The style of this email is formal.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- This email is well written.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- This email is appropriate in this context.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5- The request made in this email is direct.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- The request made in this email is reasonable.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7- The request made in this email is polite.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8- I don’t mind receiving similar request emails.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9- The sender of this email is friendly.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10- The sender of this email is a respectable person.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11- The sender of this email is tactful.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12- The sender of this email is considerate of the recipient.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13- I would not mind this sender to email me in future.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: The evaluation section of the survey
All Iraqi emails (a total of 228 emails) have been evaluated by Australian participants. In each survey, the evaluators had to rate seven email messages on thirteen statements. In order to ensure the validity of the perception data collected in the survey, each Iraqi email was evaluated by three Australian participants. In addition, in order to link the data collected in each survey with other data collected in the rest of the surveys, a number of Australian participants were asked to evaluate the first and last email across all surveys. In this way, the data from all surveys were linked in order to be recognized as one unified set that could be loaded in one file into the analysing software. The evaluation statements included in the survey prompted the evaluators to give judgements about the structure of the email message, the request made in the message, the sender personality, and the evaluators' willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders.

The evaluation statements 1-4 measure the participants’ assessment of the email message discourse. It is expected that the evaluation of the discoursal organisation of the studied emails should indicate if their structure complies with the norms and conventions that govern the structure of request emails in the Australian culture. According to email etiquette manuals (Taylor, 2009; Flynn and Khan, 2003), the adherence to the norms and conventions in email communication represents the criterion on which the linguistic behaviour of the email sender is perceived in a particular community. In the first four statements of the survey, the evaluators are asked to evaluate the clarity, formality, structure and appropriateness of the email messages. The selection of these four attributes is based on previous works on etiquette and politeness in email communication (Want, 2000; Flynn and Khan, 2003; Murphy and Levy, 2006; Taylor, 2009) which suggest that these characteristics can influence recipients’ attitudes in email communication. Want (2000) emphasizes the appropriateness of email structure as an important email etiquette. In their study of politeness in intercultural email communication, Murphy and Levy (2006) indicate that Australian participants express and perceive politeness through the level of formality of the email message. Taylor (2009) urges email users to compose clear and well-structured messages to avoid communication problems that stem from the absence of non-verbal cues.

Survey statements 5-7 evaluate the request acts of the email messages focusing on three main attributes of these requests. The first is directness, which is related to the
request strategy utilised in the email message. For some scholars (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), the degree of directness or indirectness of a request speech act influences the perception of the request as polite or impolite. The second attribute is reasonableness as related to the rights and obligations of the interactants when performing requests in the context of interaction (cf. Hendriks, 2010). Hendriks (2002, 2010) argues that rights and obligations of interactants, which depend on their social role and status, play an important role in determining the perception of politeness in communication. The third attribute is politeness, which is concerned with the recipients’ perception of the requests produced by email senders as polite or impolite (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Terkourafi (2005a) points out that a speech act, such as request, is regarded as polite if the addressee does not challenge it in its context.

The Australian evaluators’ perception of the senders’ personality is measured according to their rating of four personality attributes: friendliness, respectability, tactfulness and considerateness (statements 9-12). These attributes have been used in previous studies (Jones, Moore, Stanaland and Wyatt, 1998; Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Hendriks, 2010) to measure the influence of email communication on recipients’ perception of the sender’s personality. According to previous research (Beal, 1990; Purnell et al., 1999; Jørgensen and Quist, 2001; Garcia, 2009; Garret, 2010; Lippi-Green, 2012), the unusual linguistic behaviour of non-native speakers in intercultural communication contexts can cause native speakers’ negative perception of their personality attributes. Participants in email communication are more vulnerable to receive intense perceptions than those in face-to-face encounters due to the absence of the non-verbal and social-context cues (Hancock and Dunham, 2001).

The evaluators are also asked to rate their willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders in two evaluation items reflected in statements 8 and 13. Statement 8 is about the evaluators’ willingness to receive similar requests in future email communication, while statement 13 is about their willingness to receive future emails from the same senders. Their assessment of these two statements might indicate the extent to which the violation of interaction norms and conventions in email communication can lead to serious consequences including social isolation.
The above evaluation attributes are overlapping and therefore it is difficult to define the borders between them. For example, a formal email can be assessed as polite, appropriate in context, well written, reasonable and direct. Similarly, a friendly email sender can be assessed as respectable, tactful and considerate of the recipient. The aim of this study is not to strictly identify what constitutes a formal, polite, appropriate or reasonable request emails, or to establish how a particular personal attribute is evaluated in isolation from other attributes. The focus of this study is to gain insight into the general impressions that the evaluators develop towards the senders and their linguistic behaviour in a particular context. It is assumed that these impressions are based on the common sense judgements of the evaluators and their social and experiential knowledge of what qualifies a person or a message to have a particular attribute. Using pre-defined evaluation criteria is likely to confuse the evaluators and produce unauthentic perceptions of the emails and their senders.

3.3.3.2. Evaluators

To recruit Australian participants, the researcher posted an announcement in public places asking people who could evaluate samples of email correspondence and wanted to participate in this study to contact him. The announcement explained the nature of the study, its aims, methods and the role of evaluators. When potential evaluators made contact with the researcher, they were asked if they were using email and what was the purpose of most of their email communication (e.g., social, academic, professional, general, etc.), so that the researcher could decide which types of emails they were able to evaluate based on the setting they were familiar with. After the initial contact was made, the researcher sent the Plain Language Statement and the evaluation survey to the potential evaluators and asked them to complete the survey. The evaluators were requested to return the survey via email or post.

Two main criteria were adopted for selecting the evaluator participants to ensure that they had the ability to evaluate the request emails collected in this study. First, they had to be native speakers of Australian English, familiar with the conventions of English language use in the Australian culture. Second, they should have an
adequate level of familiarity with email communication in the setting of the emails they were asked to evaluate. In the demographic part of the survey, the potential evaluators were asked to answer a few questions regarding their first language, cultural identity, age range, and the purpose and frequency of their email usage. This information was used by the researcher to exclude the data of any potential evaluator who did not meet the selection criteria. Only those who identified themselves as Australians who were using English as their first language and participating in email communication on a daily basis were considered for participation. Familiarity with email was an important indicator of the participant’s ability to evaluate others' linguistic behaviour in email communication. It was also necessary to ensure that the participants had background knowledge of the socio-cultural rules, norms and conventions underlying appropriate email communication in Australian culture.

One hundred and five Australian participants (49 males and 56 females) were selected to evaluate the Iraqi email messages. Recruiting both males and females enabled the control, to some extent, of the influence of gender on the evaluators' perceptions of the email messages. The age of the evaluators ranged between 25 and 50 years old. They were of various educational and professional backgrounds: students and staff members in Australian universities, and employees in institutions and businesses. In order to gain a reliable and valid evaluations, the studied emails were distributed on three types of surveys: academic surveys, workplace surveys and service encounter surveys. The academic surveys were evaluated by participants who were academics, staff members and postgraduate students in some Australian universities. The workplace surveys were evaluated by participants who were employees in some workplaces in Australia. The service encounter surveys were evaluated by participants who were familiar with email usage in the Australian culture. The distribution of the surveys was made in this way to ensure that every single evaluator had a relevant background knowledge and experience that qualified him/her to assess the email messages in their original settings.
3.4. Data analysis

The process of data analysis was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the data collected from the evaluation survey were analysed utilising quantitative and qualitative methods. The frequencies of the evaluators’ responses were calculated using statistical methods. The evaluators’ comments on the email messages were qualitatively analysed through plausible interpretations of these comments on the basis of evidence from the discourse and linguistic analyses of the email corpus. In the second stage, INNESs’ email messages were analysed at the discourse level and request utterance level. The analysis in this stage aimed at identifying the types and frequencies of rhetorical moves, request strategies and modification devices in INNESs’ emails. In the third stage of data analysis, the results obtained from the evaluation data analysis in the first stage were matched with the results of the discourse and linguistic analyses carried out in the second stage. The process of matching results aimed at providing evidence to explain the negative or positive evaluation of the email messages. The frameworks used for data analysis in this study are explained in the following subsections.

3.4.1. Research approaches to the analysis of request emails

Previous research on request email discourse has adopted a variety of analytical approaches based on different views towards performing request speech acts in email communication and the appropriate methods to study them. Some researchers (e.g., Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Pan, 2012; Soler, 2013a, b) employed the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) to examine request speech acts in the participants’ email messages in terms of request strategies, and internal/external modification devices. They were inspired by the traditional approach to the study of politeness, which assumes that politeness is an inherent property of utterances and speech acts. Another group of researchers (e.g., Barron, 2006; Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Cheung, 2009; Ho, 2009; Hayati, Shokouhi and Hadadi, 2011; Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013) followed the genre analysis approach. They examined the rhetorical structure of the request email discourse through examining the moves and steps that constituted each email message. A third group (e.g., Chang
and Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2006, 2015; Merrison et al., 2012) examined both the structure of the request email discourse and the linguistic realization of the request utterance in the email message. They expanded the domain of the traditional taxonomies, such as CCSARP, which focus on identifying the request strategies and modifications, to examining the characteristics of the email discourse in which the request strategies and modifications were used.

3.4.1.1. The CCSARP framework

The CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) has been widely adopted for analysing request data in both interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics research. It provides a taxonomy of request strategies and modification devices on the basis of data collected from eight languages and dialects including Australian English. According to CCSARP, the unit of analysis for the study of request speech acts is the request utterance or the ‘head act’, which is the main utterance in the request sequence that conveys the requesting act by itself without any peripheral utterances. The head act can be embedded in a sequence of utterances that may include address terms or ‘alerters’ such as David, hey, you, and supportive moves that may soften or intensify the imposition of the request. For the realization of the request head act, the CCSARP framework identifies nine strategies according to the level of directness: most direct (imperative, explicit performative, hedged performative, obligation statement and want statement), conventionally indirect (suggestory formula and query preparatory) and non-conventional indirect (strong hint and mild hint).

In addition to in/direct request strategies, the CCSARP provides a list of internal and external devices that modify the imposition of the head act. These devices can act as downgraders to soften the imposition of the request or upgraders to intensify the imposition of the request. The internal modifiers consist of two sets of devices: syntactic devices such as past tense, conditional clauses, negation and aspect, and lexical/phrasal devices such as please, downtoners (e.g., possibly, perhaps), understaters (e.g., just, a little) and hedges (e.g., any, kind of, some). The external modifiers include elements located within the co-text of the request head act to
modify its illocutionary force such as checking availability, getting a precommitment, grounder, sweetener, disarmer and imposition minimizer. The CCSARP taxonomy has been modified in later studies (e.g., Trosborg, 1995; Schauer, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsisidis, 2008; Al-Ali and Alawneh, 2010) by adding new categories of request strategies, internal modification devices and external modification elements.

The CCSARP framework has been adopted for the analysis of request emails in intercultural settings (see Lee, 2004; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsisidis, 2011; Pan, 2012; Soler, 2013b). Some studies (Lee, 2004; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007) focused on examining the request head act only without considering its external modifiers. The process of data analysis focused mainly on identifying the request head acts, coding the request strategies into the level of in/directness, and identifying the syntactic and lexical/phrasal modifiers. In another group of studies (Economidou-Kogetsisidis, 2011; Soler, 2013a), the external modifiers found in the email message have been classified according to the CCSARP in addition to request strategies and internal modification devices. In both groups of studies, the original CCSARP framework has been modified by adding or removing categories and/or sub-categories to meet the requirements of analysing request acts in email communication. The CCSARP framework, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) argues, was developed originally for analysing request speech acts in face to face interaction; therefore, it may not entirely fit the request email data. It is based on the analysis of requests collected from artificial situations of DCTs which do not necessarily represent real life events (Ohashi, 2013).

3.4.1.2. The genre analysis approach

Another trend of research employed the genre analysis approach for analysing the request email discourse to avoid the limitations of the traditional CCSARP framework. As the communicative function of request emails is to request either information or action, these emails are deemed as a genre that has a communicative purpose and therefore can be analysed by the genre analysis approach (Ho, 2009). Swales (1990) uses the term ‘genre’ to describe any set of communicative events
that share a common communicative purpose. He contends that each genre consists of certain units called ‘moves’. A move is “a discoursal and rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (Swales, 2004, p. 228). Each move is realized through steps which are linguistic elements, lexico-grammatical features and strategies at the micro-level of the text.

The genre analysis approach has been adopted in some studies (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Ho, 2009; Hayati et al., 2011; Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013) as an analytical framework to examine the structure of email discourse conveying a request speech act. The aim of these studies is to examine the rhetorical move structure of the whole email message on the basis of the functions of the discoursal segments within the email discourse. This trend of research aligns with the postmodern/discursive approach to politeness which emphasizes the importance of studying the target linguistic phenomenon within the discourse in which it occurs. The genre analysis approach does not constrain the researcher to the limitation of the request utterance(s) and allows the examination of the characteristics of the structural moves involved in the email message.

The aim of the data analysis in the studies that employed the genre approach was to identify the rhetorical move structure of the emails in which the request acts occurred. These studies produced coding schemes with different categories (moves) and subcategories (steps) as dictated by the structure of the exclusive email corpus examined. Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008), for example, identified nine component moves in the request emails collected from American English native speakers and Jordanian non-native speakers of English. Hayati et al. (2011) used an analytical model consisted of six moves in their study of the generic structure of reprint request emails written by EFL and physics professionals. Mehrpour and Mehrzad (2013) employed a four-move scheme for examining the generic structure of business emails. All these studies have described the rhetorical move structure of their email data at the macro level, however, there is another trend of request email research that emphasizes the need to explore the email discourse at both the email discourse level and the request phrase level to gain a better understanding of senders’ linguistic behaviour when performing requests in email communication.
3.4.1.3. Email discourse and request utterance

A third trend of research tried to integrate the analysis of request emails at the discourse level and the analysis of request strategies and internal/external modifications of the request head act at the micro text level. Merrison et al. (2012) argued that in order to establish what constitutes polite or impolite request emails, it is important to examine the design of requests as speech acts in situated emails as speech events. A number of studies (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2006, 2015; Merrison et al., 2012) have adopted this trend and examined both the request utterance and its email discourse. Chang and Hsu (1998) examined the discourse structure and request strategies in request emails written by Chinese non-native speakers of English and American native speakers. In their study of a small corpus of student request emails to academic staff in a British and an Australian university, Merrison et al. (2012) examined the structure of the email messages at the discourse level and the structure of the request sequence in terms of types of internal and external modifications. Similarly, Chen (2015) examined the structure of request emails written by Chinese ESL learners by segmenting the discourse of each email message into the framing moves (subject, opening, self-identification and closing) and the content moves (request strategies and request support).

Although the above studies employed different schemes for coding the discoursal structure of the email corpus, they shared the aim of examining the request emails not only at the discourse level but also at the request utterance level. The structure of the request utterances was examined in terms of the level of in/directness and the type of internal and external modification. These aspects were important to explore as they played a role in shaping the perception of the request emails. It was reported in previous studies on requests (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Reiter, 2000) that the choice of request strategies and the type of modification were the fundamental characteristics of the request speech act. These studies pointed out that the level of request in/directness and the type of internal and external modification played a vital role in shaping the addressee’s perception of the request act and his/her tendency or reluctance to comply. Thus, it is beneficial to examine both the realization of the request act and the structure of the email discourse to understand the influence of request emails on recipients’ perceptions.
3.4.2. Email corpus analysis in this study

It is expected that identifying the discoursal structure of INNESs’ email messages and the linguistic choices that the senders made to convey their requests should provide insights into the relationship between Australian participants’ perceptions and the linguistic behaviour of the senders. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the structure of the request emails and its impact on the evaluators’ perceptions, this study adopts both genre analysis framework and a modified version of the CCSARP categorization (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) for the analysis of the discourse structure of the examined emails and the linguistic realization of the request acts in these emails. It integrates the analysis of the email corpus at the macro-level (the rhetorical structure of the message) to the analysis of the request utterances at the micro-level (the linguistic forms utilised for the realization of the requests, and the internal and external modification of these requests).

The analysis of the email corpus in this study was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, the email discourse was segmented and analysed into rhetorical moves according to the in-text function of each segment. The rhetorical moves included in the emails were identified through examining the communicative purposes of the different textual segments. According to Swales (1990), a move should have a function in the text that serves the overall communicative purpose of a genre. The overall communicative purpose of the email corpus collected in this study was to perform requests in academic, workplace or general service encounter settings. It was assumed that each move included in the email text should complement other moves to achieve this purpose.

The researcher adopted an analytical framework which was appropriate for the analysis of the discourse structure of the emails in this study. This framework included categories dictated by the move structure found in the examined emails. It consisted of categories adapted from previous works on request emails (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Ho, 2009; Hayati et al., 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013), as well as new categories invented for analysing discourse segments that did not fit in the previous works’ schemes. As can be seen in Table 1, the categories adapted from others’ works included *subject line* (Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013), *opening* (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Hayati et
al., 2011), introducing self (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008), establishing the background (Ho, 2009; Hayati et al., 2011), external modification (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Schauer, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Soler, 2013a, b), indicating intentions (Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013), promoting further contact (Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013), thanking/appreciating the recipient (Hayati et al., 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011), and closing (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Hayati et al., 2011). The framework was further enhanced by adding new move categories (expressing courtesy, giving options, promoting compliance, adding information and referring to attachment) to the scheme to meet the discursive functions of the segments that did not fit into categories utilised in previous works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Examples from the examined emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>Course start date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Dear [Recipient first name], Hi professor, Hello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>I hope you are very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>I’m a new PhD student in the faculty of Arts and Education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>I have accepted the offer, but I made the start date on the 25th of February. After a consultation with my supervisor, I found out that there is a conference that I need to attend on the 15th of February.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>I am wondering if I can change the start date to the 25th of January.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>Alerter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grounder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disarmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>I will send it to you chapter by chapter, because I haven’t done the introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intentions</td>
<td>I am going to call you tomorrow hopefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>Looking forward to hearing from you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>My documents attached with this email.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>Thank you so much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Regards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The analytical framework used for analysing INNESs’ email discourse
In the second stage of the corpus analysis, the request head acts were analysed. They were coded in terms of the degree of in/directness (direct requests, conventionally indirect requests and non-conventional indirect requests), internal modification (syntactic and lexical/phrasal devices), and external modification (mitigating supportive moves and aggravating moves). A modified version of request strategies originally proposed in the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) and revised in previous studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Soler, 2013a, b) to fit request email data was used for the analysis of the request head acts according to their in/directness level (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directness level</th>
<th>Request strategies</th>
<th>Examples from the examined emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>Please, have a look when you have time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performatie</td>
<td>I am asking you to be the supervisor of my research about motivation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>Is it good if I come on Friday?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>I would like to ask for an extension for my assessment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>I really need to see you in a meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>I hope you get the transfer form stamped before the settlement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>Please I’ll appreciate it if you can pass it to [Name].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>Can you please attach these documents to my application?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>[Name] suggested to delete it but she asked me to take your opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>Please find attached the Literature Review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Modified version of CCSARP coding categories of request strategies

For the categorization of internal modification devices found in the request emails, two lexical/phrasal devices (softener and intensifier) previously utilised by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) and Soler (2013a) were added to the original CCSARP framework. A new syntactic category (adverbial clause) was also added to the analytical framework as required for the analysis of a device that did not fit in any categories from previous works (see Table 3). External modification devices were identified and categorized as part of the rhetorical move structure of the email discourse (see Table 1) because these devices are located within the co-text of the request head act as peripheral elements added to modify its imposition.
### Internal modifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devices</th>
<th>Example from examined emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Syntactic modifiers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>I am wondering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If clause</td>
<td>I am wondering if you can…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense modal</td>
<td>I’m wondering if you could…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial clause</td>
<td>Please call me whenever you can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexical/phrasal modifiers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>please can you resend the roster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>Some, any, somehow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downsetter</td>
<td>Possibly, maybe, perhaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>Just, a little, a minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjectivizer</td>
<td>I was wondering, I think, I feel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softener</td>
<td>Can you kindly send my police check?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>I would like to meet you for a very important issue, as soon as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Modified version of CCSARP coding categories of internal modification devices

### 3.4.3. Evaluation data analysis

The Rasch analysis model was used in this study to produce a detailed analysis of the rating of every email message on each evaluative statement. Bond and Fox (2007) argue that the Rasch model is an adequate analytical method for analyzing attitude data collected in Likert scale surveys. They regard the standard methods as “counterintuitive and mathematically inappropriate” to analyze Likert scale data (p. 101). Kersten and Kayes (2011) assert that Rasch analysis, unlike the traditional methods that provide only a statistical description of the data, is a probabilistic model that indicates the probability of an item rated by participants with a particular level of ability. Bond and Fox ascribe the superiority of the Rasch model to the basic principles that underpin it. It can produce useful and meaningful descriptions of a phenomenon as it focuses on one attribute or dimension of that phenomenon at a time (unidimensionality). It supports the fit statistics aspect to ensure the construct validity of items analyzed. It also provides item reliability index that is the replication of the same results if the same tested items are given to another identical sample of participants.

The Microsoft Office Excel software was used for creating data sets files for the Rasch analysis and calculating the overall frequencies of the evaluators’ responses. Three types of data files were created: academic emails, workplace emails and service encounter emails. They included the Likert data for the evaluators’ rating.
of each email on the 5-point scale (strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree and strongly agree). The ConQuest software (Adams, Wu and Wilson, 2015) was used to run the Rasch analysis. The Rasch model provided a real scale of the evaluators’ attitudes towards the examined email messages, the senders and their requests. For each of the thirteen evaluation statements included in the evaluation survey, it provided a detailed statistical analysis regarding the frequency, percentage, P-value and Mean ability of the evaluators’ responses. It also produced a map that showed the distribution of the Australian evaluators (labeled with the letter X) and the rating of each email message on each evaluative attribute (labeled with letters and numbers, e.g., SE15.5 indicates the rating of the fifteenth service encounter email on the fifth evaluative attribute (directness of the request email)) (see Appendix 4). The Excel software was utilised to calculate the overall frequencies of the evaluators’ positive (strongly agree and agree), neutral (not sure) and negative (disagree and strongly disagree) responses for each evaluative statement. It was also used to calculate the number and percentage of email messages evaluated positively, neutrally or negatively on each evaluative statement.

3.4.4. Matching results from both analyses

After completing the evaluation data analysis and the email corpus analysis, the results obtained from both analyses were matched to provide an explanation of the Australian participants’ negative or positive perceptions of the examined emails and their senders. This matching should show the characteristics of Iraqi email messages that were likely to cause the Australian evaluators’ negative or positive attitudes. It should also highlight the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of Iraqi participants in their email messages and the attitudinal reactions of the Australian evaluators. The features of the email discourse and the linguistic realization of the request acts found in the studied messages were matched with the evaluation of these messages on each evaluative statement: negative or positive. For each evaluative statement (e.g., appropriateness, friendliness, and so on), a matching table was created. Each matching table included the list of rhetorical moves, request strategies or request modifiers. For emails evaluated as having the target attribute, the frequencies of moves, request strategies or modification devices
were entered in the table. The same was done with emails evaluated as not having the target attribute.

3.5. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter presented the research methods designed and employed to conduct this research project. The nature and purpose of the project necessitated the use of various methods and frameworks for collecting and analysing data. Authentic request emails were collected from Iraqi participants. Information about the situations in which these emails occurred was also collected in semi-structured interviews. Australian participants were recruited to evaluate thirteen attributes of the request emails on a 5-point Likert scale. The evaluation data and the email corpus were analysed by quantitative and qualitative analytical methods. The genre analysis approach was adopted to identify the rhetorical move structure of INNESs’ email discourse. A modified version of the CCSARP framework was used to analyse the linguistic realization of the request acts found in the email messages. The Rasch analysis model and Microsoft Excel software were employed for the analysis of the evaluation data. The results of evaluation data analysis were matched with the results of the discourse and linguistic analyses to achieve the purpose of the study and provide answers to the research questions.
Chapter four: Data analysis and results

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the process of data analysis and the results obtained in this study. It starts with describing the stages of data analysis, followed by presenting results that the analytical work has produced. The results section of this chapter consists of three subsections. The first includes the evaluators’ perceptions pertaining to the four dimensions of INNESs’ emails: the message discourse, the request act, the sender personality and future communication. In the second subsection, the results of the discourse analysis of INNESs’ emails and the linguistic analysis of the requests made in these emails are presented. The third subsection presents the outcomes of matching the results of the evaluation data analysis with the results of the discourse and linguistic analyses.

4.2. Data analysis

The process of data analysis was carried out in three main stages. In the first stage, the Likert scale data collected from the Australian evaluators were analysed. The evaluators’ responses were entered into an Excel file using the numbers from 1 to 5: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = not sure; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree. The lower number indicated a higher degree of disagreement with the evaluation statement, while the higher number indicated a higher degree of agreement with the statement. If an evaluator did not make a response to any of the evaluation statements, the researcher used number 9 coded as ‘missing data’ in the analysis software. The evaluation statements that follow each email message in the survey were coded by letters and numbers on the basis of the type of the email setting where the email message occurred (academic, service encounter or workplace), the identification number of the email message, and the identification number of the evaluation statement. For example, AC1.1 stands for the first evaluation statement about academic email number 1, while SE20.13 stands for the thirteenth evaluation statement about service encounter email number 20 (see Appendix 5).
The codes of the evaluation statements were entered into the top row of the excel file, while the participants’ code numbers were entered into the first column of the file. The intersections between the top row and the first column were filled with the response codes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 9. In addition to the evaluation data, the excel file also included the codes of the Australian participants’ demographic data that they had provided in the evaluation survey. Numbers were assigned to the responses that the participants made in the demographic section of the survey (see Appendix 5).

The researcher used ConQuest software (Adams et al., 2015) to analyse the evaluation Likert data. The Excel data file was broken into smaller files as required by the analysis software. The evaluators’ responses to each evaluative statement were cut from the original file and pasted into a new excel file. Thus, there were thirteen data files and each one included the evaluators’ responses to one evaluative statement of the survey. After running the data files, the analysis software produced the result sheets which included detailed statistical information about the rating of each evaluative statement for each email message. The statistical results included information about the types of responses that the evaluators made for each evaluative statement, the rating of each evaluative statement for each email on the Rasch scale thresholds, and other statistical information.

In the second stage of data analysis, the email messages were analysed with regard to their discoursal structure and the linguistic realization of the request speech act sequence including internal and external modifications. The text of each email message was segmented into rhetorical moves on the basis of the textual function of each segment (see Table 1, Ch. 3). The request move was analysed in terms of the request strategy and the internal modification devices. The request strategies were coded according to their level of in/directness (see Table 2, Ch. 3). Internal modification devices were categorized into syntactic and lexical/phrasal modifiers (see Table 3, Ch. 3). External modification devices were analysed as rhetorical moves as these devices are not located within the request head act utterance but within the email discourse.

The third stage of data analysis involved matching the results of email evaluation obtained in the first stage with the discoursal and linguistic characteristics of emails identified in the second stage. Evaluators’ perceptions of the emails and their
authors regarding having or not having the attributes introduced in the evaluative statements were matched with the linguistic and discoursal characteristics of the emails. The matching process included finding the frequencies and types of the rhetorical moves, request strategies, and internal and external modification devices in emails evaluated as having or not having the evaluation attributes.

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Evaluators’ perceptions

The evaluation of each email was decided on the basis of the number of responses it received in each evaluation category. For each evaluation statement, the emails which received more responses in the ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ categories than in the other categories are treated as having the attribute demonstrated in the evaluation statement and the opposite applies for ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ categories. However, if an email was rated equally across the evaluation categories or it had more responses in the ‘not sure’ category than in other categories, then it is treated as neutrally evaluated and is not considered as possessing or not possessing the relevant attribute. Thus, we have three overall categories for the results of email evaluation: positive (agree and strongly agree), neutral (not sure) and negative (disagree and strongly disagree). The following subsections provide a description of the results of the analysis of evaluators’ responses and the evaluation of emails in terms of the thirteen attributes of the discourse of the email messages, the requests made in these messages, the senders, and prospects of future communication.

4.3.1.1. The evaluation of email discourse

The analysis of the evaluators’ assessment of the attributes of INNESs’ email messages shows that the majority of these messages have been evaluated as having a clear content, informal style and contextual appropriateness but are not well written (see Table 4). The evaluators’ responses to the clarity attribute statement (the content of this email is clear) show that the evaluators have rated 75% of INNESs’ emails as having a clear content and 21% as not being clear. They are not
sure about the clarity of 4% of the emails. Regarding the attribute of the style formality of the email messages (\textit{the style of this email is formal}), the evaluators have rated 57% of emails as not having a formal style and 36.8% as having a formal style, with uncertainty expressed about 6.1% of emails. The evaluation of the structure of the email messages (\textit{this email is well written}) shows 65% of emails rated as not well written and only 28% rated as well written. The evaluators are not sure about the structure of 6.1% of emails. In terms of the appropriateness of the email messages (\textit{this email is appropriate in this context}), the evaluation results show that 57.8% of emails have been evaluated as appropriate in their contexts, whereas 32.4% of emails have been evaluated as inappropriate. The evaluators are uncertain about the appropriateness of 9.6% of emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Formality</th>
<th>Quality of writing</th>
<th>Appropriateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Numbers of emails evaluated on the message attributes

4.3.1.2. The evaluation of request acts

Most of the requests made in INNESSs’ emails have been evaluated as direct, reasonable and polite. As can be seen in Table 5, the evaluators’ responses to the directness evaluative statement (\textit{the request made in this email is direct}) indicate that the requests made in 84.6% of INNESSs’ emails have been seen as direct, while those made in 13.6% have been evaluated as indirect. The evaluators are not sure about the directness of the requests made in 1.7% of emails. In terms of the evaluation of the reasonableness of the requests (\textit{the request made in this email is reasonable}), most emails (81.5%) have been evaluated as carrying reasonable requests, whereas the requests made in 13.6% of emails have been evaluated as unreasonable. The evaluators express uncertainty about the reasonableness of requests made in 4.8% of emails. The analysis of the rating of the requests on the politeness attribute (\textit{the request made in this email is polite}) shows that the requests
made in 70.1% of INNESs’ emails have been evaluated as polite, whereas those made in 24.1% have been evaluated as not polite. The evaluators are not sure about the politeness of the requests made in 5.7% of emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Directness</th>
<th>Reasonableness</th>
<th>Politeness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Numbers of emails evaluated on the request act attributes

4.3.1.3. The evaluation of sender personality

The evaluation of the sender personality attributes indicates that the senders of most emails have been perceived as being friendly, respectable and considerate of the recipient, while the number of emails evaluated as being sent by tactful senders is almost equal to the number of emails evaluated as being sent by untactful senders (see Table 6). Regarding the evaluation of the sender friendliness attribute (the sender of this email is friendly), the senders of most of emails (69.2%) have been assessed as friendly, whereas the senders of 18.9% of emails have been evaluated as unfriendly. The evaluators are not sure about the friendliness of the senders of 12% of emails. The rating on sender respectableness (the sender of this email is a respectable person) shows that the senders of 54.8% of emails have been evaluated as respectable, whereas the senders of 14.4% have been evaluated as unrespectable persons. The evaluators are uncertain about the respectableness of the senders of 30.7% of emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Friendliness</th>
<th>Respectableness</th>
<th>Tactfulness</th>
<th>Considerateness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Numbers of emails evaluated on sender personality attributes
For the evaluation of the sender tactfulness (the sender of this email is tactful), the data analysis shows insignificant difference between the number of emails evaluated as being sent by tactful senders and the number of those evaluated as sent by untactful senders. The senders of 44.3% of emails have been evaluated as untactful, while the senders of 43% of emails have been seen as tactful. The evaluators express uncertainty about the tactfulness of the senders of 12.7% of emails. The evaluators’ assessment of the sender considerateness (the sender of this email is considerate of the recipient) shows that the senders of 53% of emails have been evaluated as considerate of the recipient, whereas the senders of 36.8% of emails are seen as inconsiderate of the recipient. The evaluators are uncertain about the considerateness of the senders of 10% of emails.

4.3.1.4. The evaluation of willingness of future communication

The evaluators’ responses to prospective email communication statements indicate that they do not mind receiving future requests similar to those used in most of INNESs’ emails. They also indicate that the evaluators do not mind receiving future emails from the senders of most of the emails (see Table 7). Regarding the willingness to receive similar requests (I don’t mind receiving similar request emails), the evaluators’ responses show that they do not mind receiving requests similar to those made in 62.2% of the emails, but they would not like to receive requests similar to those in 33.3% of the emails. The evaluators are uncertain about receiving requests similar to those used in 4.3% of the emails. A similar situation is found with the measurement of the percentage of emails evaluated on willingness to engage in future communication with their senders. The evaluators’ responses to the statement, I would not mind this sender to email me in future, show that they do not mind receiving future emails from the senders of 58.3% of the emails but not from those of 36.8%. The evaluators express uncertainty about future email communication with the senders of 4.8% of the emails.
105

Table 7: Numbers of emails evaluated on willingness of future communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Receiving similar requests</th>
<th>Receiving emails from the senders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2. INNESs’ email discourse

This section presents the results of the analysis of the discourse structure of the studied emails and the linguistic realization of the request acts in these emails. It starts with presenting the results of the email discourse analysis focused on the rhetorical moves and their sequence. Then, the linguistic realization of the request acts found in the emails is described, including request strategies, internal modification devices and external modification devices.

4.3.2.1. Message discourse structure

Fourteen moves have been identified in the analysis of the rhetorical structure of the email corpus. These moves are: subject line, opening, expressing courtesy, introducing self, establishing the background, request, request 2, external modification, adding information, indicating intention, promoting further contact, referring to attachment, thanking/appreciating the recipient and closing. Table 8 below shows the frequency of the rhetorical moves in the examined emails. Almost all INNESs’ emails start with a subject line which introduces the content of the message. Some of the subject lines name the action requested in the body of the email message (e.g., ‘checking thesis’, ‘fixing the grill’, ‘renewing a security license’, ‘thesis editing’, ‘renewing the contract’, ‘requesting work shifts’, ‘finding an article’). Other subject lines name the entity or issue for which an action and/or information are requested in the email message (e.g., ‘enrolment’, ‘ESL teacher job’, ‘liability insurance’ ‘course start date’, ‘an appointment’, ‘our meeting’, ‘account issue’).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request 2</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving options</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Frequency of rhetorical moves in INNESs’ emails

For example, Text 1 includes a subject line that names the action requested in the body of the message. The message in Text 1 is preceded by a two-word subject line which introduces the most important piece of information in the email in a clear and brief fashion. Thus, the recipient is likely to expect that the content of the message is about editing a thesis.

Text 1

Subject: Thesis editing [Subject line]

Hi Dr [First Name] [Opening]

My name is [Sender’s first name and last name], I am study in [Name of a University] uni [Introducing self]. I am now writing my research and I will submit it soon. One of my friend told me about your experiences [Establishing the background]. Please, I need your help and time to check my research paper [Request]. I am waiting for your answer [Emphasis on urgency].
In the example of Text 2, the subject line names the entity for which an action is requested in the body of the message. The one-word subject line in Text 2 can be described as being relevant to the message and an informative indicator of its content.

Text 2

Subject: Ipad 4  (Subject line)

Hi There, [Opening]
I bought an iPad 4 from your shop last year (see attached Tax Invoice [referring to attachment]) and now is not turning on. I took it to Apple Store here in Melbourne, Australia but they said that I have to return it to the shop that I bought from for the second year warranty [Establishing the background].

Please let me know how I should send the iPad to you [Request] in order to get fixed or replaced [Grounder].

Thanks in advance for your understanding and cooperation [Thanking/Applauding the recipient].

[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

The length of the subject lines found in the corpus ranges between one word (e.g., ‘report’, ‘employment’, ‘participation’, ‘Ipad 4’, ‘questionnaire’) to five or six words (e.g., ‘Next meeting of ethics committee’, ‘the invoice for our booking’, ‘few changes in the article’, ‘a full time/part time job’, ‘first aid course 13/14 may’). The subject lines are formulated in a form of nouns (e.g., ‘report’, ‘documents’, ‘employment’, ‘inquiry’), compound nouns (e.g., ‘thesis format’, ‘liability insurance’, ‘job application’, ‘phone service’), noun phrases (e.g., ‘my PhD application’, ‘residential care job’, ‘a problem with the oven’, ‘a copy of my thesis’), gerund (e.g., ‘meeting’, ‘editing’), or gerund phrases (e.g., ‘supervising a thesis’, ‘changing the bank details’, ‘requesting documents’, ‘providing supervision’).

Similarly, almost all emails include opening moves. The senders use various forms to open their email messages; however, as can be seen in Table 9, some forms are more pervasive than others. We can see that Hi + first name is the most frequent opening formula, followed by Dear + first name. The senders’ choices of the opening formulae seem to be influenced by the characteristics of the situation in which the email is generated, including the relationship between senders and
recipients, their status and roles. In situations where INNESs contact the recipients for the first time or have had a limited previous email communication with them, the opening formulae used are: *Dear + first name*, *Dear + a title*, *Hi there*, and *good morning + first name or recipient’s office name*. For instance, the author of Text 2 uses *Hi there* to open his message because he does not know the recipient and contacts them for the first time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening formulae</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi + first name</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear + first name</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear + title</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi there</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi + title + 1st name</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi + solidarity title (mate, bro, brother)</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear + title + first name</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other forms</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Frequency of the opening formulae

In emails that have been sent to recipients with whom the senders had a close work relationship or regular email communication, the informal greeting *Hi* was used either alone or followed by the first name of the recipient or a solidarity title such as *mate, bro* and *brother*, as can be seen in Text 3. The author of the email in Text 3 used the opening *hi bro* as he had a close work relationship with the email recipient and they had regular face-to-face, phone and email contact. Their close relationship might have dictated the use of informal language, such as the use of informal opening in their email communication with each other.

**Text 3**

Subject: Roster *[Subject line]*

*hi bro* *[Opening] please can you resend the roster* *[Request] because i got no attachment* *[Grounder].*

best regards

* [Sender’s first name], *[Closing]*

The *expressing courtesy* move found in 18% of emails, involves sending good wishes to recipients, e.g., ‘hope you are well and have a happy New Year’, ‘I hope this email finds you well’, ‘hope everything is alright’. It is found in emails sent to recipients who know the senders and have had previous communication with them,
as is the case with the email message in Text 4 which was sent by an employee in a company to his manager. The sender knew the recipient as they were working in the same workplace and had previous face-to-face and email contact.

Text 4

Subject: Payment summary [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name] [Opening]
I hope you are doing well [Expressing courtesy]. I need to submit a tax return form to the taxation office soon. But, I do not know how much tax I have paid when I was working with you in the last financial year [Establishing the background]. I am wondering if you can kindly send me a summary of all wages you have paid to me so far and the taxes that have been deducted from them [Request]. That will help me in completing and lodging that complicated form [Grounder]. Thanks in advance for you help [Thanking/Appreciating the recipient].

Regards
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

In some emails, the expressing courtesy move has also been used even in settings that feature an unequal power relationship and remote social distance between the sender and the recipient, as in Text 5 which was sent by a postgraduate student writing a thesis to the supervisor of his thesis. The student had submitted his thesis for examination but did not receive the result after five months of waiting. He sent this email asking the supervisor to contact the examiners.

Text 5

Subject: my thesis result [Subject line]

Hi Dr. [Recipient’s First Name] [Opening]
Happy new year. I hope you are fine [Expressing courtesy]. Please if you can contact with the examiners of my theses [Request] because it is take it long time [Grounder]. Just one examiner left [Imposition minimizer], so please if you can check and let me know [Request 2].

Thanks [Closing]

The introducing self, of the same frequency as the expressing courtesy move, is found in emails sent to recipients with whom INNESs did not have previous email contact. This move is used to introduce the senders’ names, positions and/or relationship with email recipients, e.g. ‘I’m the tenant of [sender’s address]’, ‘I’m [first name and last name] the new community engagement officer’ and ‘I’m, [first name and last name] master student at [University Name]’. The body of the email message in Text 6 starts with this move. The sender of the message has sent this
email to the admission officer of the university. He must have felt the need to introduce himself at the beginning of his message as he was contacting the recipient for the first time.

Text 6

Subject: Course start date

Dear [Recipient’s first name] [Opening]
I am a new PhD student in the faculty of Arts and Education [Introducing self]. I have accept the offer and returned all forms, but I made the start date on the 25th of February. After a consultation with my supervisor, I found out that there is a conference that I need to attend on the 15th of February [Establishing the background]. Now, I am wondering if I can change the start date to the 25th of January 2013 instead [Request]. That will help me to attend the above occasion and to start using the university facilities [Grounder].

Best regards
[Sender’s first name and last name]
ID [Number] [Closing]

Establishing the background is sequentially the fifth move in the structure of INNESs’ emails but comes third or fourth in the rhetorical structure of emails in which it is not preceded by expressing courtesy and/or introducing self moves. It is employed in more than half of the emails to provide background information about the issue or the topic of the email message, and to explain the situation to support the request that comes after this move in the email discourse sequence. This move tends to be longer than other moves. The participants use extensive wording in order to explain the situation that required the composition of the request email. In Text 6, the sender uses the establishing the background move to explain the circumstances that required the change of the course start date. The sender uses this move to explain the situation with all events that preceded the email contact, such as accepting the study offer, completing the required forms and consulting the supervisor. For a similar purpose, the establishing the background move has been used in the email message in Text 7. The structure of this message supports the intelligibility of the content of the message. The body of the message starts with providing background information about the context of the message. The sender reminds the recipient of the discussion that they had on the phone about the solar system quote and the finance options available for him. He also explains his current
situation and that he cannot afford the cost of the solar system. Accordingly, the recipient is likely to understand the background of the email message and feel his involvement in the context of communication.

Text 7

Subject: Solar quote

Hi [Recipient’s First Name]

It seems that I cannot afford the cost of a solar system at the present time. The finance option you told me about on the phone does not suit me as well. So I think you do not need to come to my place to discuss these. I do not want to waste your time. Thanks for the offer and sorry for any inconvenience.

Regards

[Sender’s First name & Last name]

The request act is the main move which occurs in all INNESs’ emails. It is sequentially the third, fourth or fifth move within the structural sequence of the emails. It comes third in emails in which the body of the message starts with the request act directly after the subject line and opening moves, as is the case in the message in Text 3. In emails in which the request move comes fourth or fifth, it is also preceded by one or more of the following moves: expressing courtesy, introducing self, establishing the background and the external modifier grounder.

The email messages in Texts 5 and 7 show that the request move comes fourth in the email structure sequence. In Text 5, it is preceded by subject line, opening and expressing courtesy, whereas in Text 7, it is preceded by subject line, opening and establishing the background. In the email messages in Texts 1, 4 and 6, the request acts come fifth within the email move sequence as they are preceded by four moves. In Texts 1 and 6, the request act is preceded by subject line, opening, introducing self and establishing the background, whereas in Text 4, it is preceded by subject line, opening, expressing courtesy and establishing the background.

In a number of emails, the senders add a second request (request 2) asking for another service, action or piece of information. In Text 5, for example, the main request act is to ask the supervisor to contact the examiners to follow the progress of examining the sender’s thesis. However, at the end of the message, the sender includes a second request asking the recipient to check and let him know about his
thesis. A similar situation is found in Text 8 in which the main request is to ask the insurance company to provide the sender with a hire car. However, the email also includes a second request in which the sender asks for the recipient’s advice regarding what options are available for him in order to get a hire car.

Text 8

Subject: Claim RJ0012756

Hi there

I have been called today by one of your lovely staff to let me know that my car has been sent to a repairer who estimated that it would probably be ready by the 15th of March. But I need a car to travel to and from my university as I am a full-time student. I am wondering if you can provide a car that I can use until I get my car back. Otherwise, I can hire a car, just a normal car, but I am not sure if you can reimburse the cost of hiring a car to me when I send you the receipt. Could you please let me know what option is available for me?

Best regards

As can be seen in Table 8, in more than half of INNESs’ emails, the request act is modified by external modification devices that either precede or follow it. Most of these devices are used to mitigate the imposition of the request head act. Alerter, compliment/sweetener, getting a pre-commitment, disarmer, promising a reward and promoting compliance are the least utilised external modifiers found in INNESs’ requests. Grounder is the most frequent external modifier found in INNESs’ emails (in 44.3% of the emails). It is used to mitigate the request act by providing reasons that prompted the composition of the request email. In Text 8, the sentence ‘but I need a car to travel to and from my university as I am a full-time student’ is used to give the reason that motivated the sender to request a hire car from the insurance company. Similarly, grounder has been used in the email messages in Texts 3, 4, 6 and 7 to support the requests with the reasons that motivated the senders to compose the messages.

Giving options is an infrequently used external mitigating device employed in only 3% of emails. The senders have used this device to provide alternative ways to perform the requested action. In Text 8, the sender has used the sentence ‘otherwise, I can hire a car, just a normal car, but I am not sure if you can reimburse the cost of
hiring a car to me when I send you the receipt’ to give the recipient another option by which the requested action can be performed.

*Imposition minimizer* found in 3.5% of the emails is used to reduce the imposition placed on the recipients by the request acts. For example, in Text 5, the sender uses the utterance ‘just one examiner left’ to minimize the imposition of his request as the recipient has to contact one examiner only. The sender of the email message in Text 9 uses an *imposition minimizer* after he asks to get back a copy of his research paper from the recipient.

Text 9

Subject: a copy of my thesis [Subject line]

Dear [Recipient’s first name] [Opening]

I'm wondering if I can get back a copy of my research paper that have been marked by Dr. [Name] [Request]. I've already received the assessor’s report but I didn't get the marked copy of the research paper. In fact, I've lost the soft copy after having a problem with my computer [Grounder]. It would be appreciated if I even can make a photo copy of the paper. [Imposition minimizer]

Best regards

[Sender’s first name and last name] [Closing]

The only external modification device used to aggravate the imposition of the request act is *emphasis on urgency*. This device is employed in only 2.6% of INNESs’ emails. It urges the recipient to perform the requested action. We saw that in Text 1, the sender employs the *emphasis on urgency* ‘I am waiting for your answer’ to urge the recipient to reply to his request email. Text 10 below is another example of an email in which the *emphasis on urgency* device is used to intensify the sender’s need for a meeting with his research supervisor to discuss the colloquium document. The sender uses the sentence ‘the due date is next month so I may need it as soon as possible, please’ to inform the recipient that he does not have much time and therefore he needs to discuss the document with the recipient as soon as possible.

Text 10

Subject: proof reading my document [Subject Line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name], [Opening]
Could I have an appointment with you to discuss my colloquium document, please [Request]? The due date is next month so I may need it as soon as possible, please [Emphasis on urgency].
Looking forward to hearing from you [Promoting further contact].
Regards
[Sender’s First Name] [Closing]

Apology is employed as an external mitigating device in 5.7% of emails. It is used to apologize for sending the request and/or imposing on the recipient. In Text 7, the sender employs the apology move ‘sorry for any inconvenience’ to apologize to the recipient for asking him to cancel the appointment to discuss the solar system offer. Another example of this move is illustrated in Text 11 in which the sender apologizes for asking the recipient to follow up the issue of the late swipe card for him.

Text 11
Subject: An office space [Subject Line]

Dear [Recipient’s first name] [Opening]
Thanks for allocating an office space for me [Thanking/appreciating the recipient]. I just want to inform you that I have not been contacted regarding collecting the swipe card for the office [Establishing the background]. Could you please find out whether the card is ready now or I need to wait for it [Request]? Sorry if I am asking this [Apology], but I need to start using the allocated office as soon as possible [Emphasis on urgency].
Best regards
[Sender’s first name and last name]
PhD student
Faculty of Arts and Education [Closing]

In 10% of the emails, the senders include the adding information move by which they provide additional clarification and explanation of their requests. For example, in the workplace email in Text 12, the sender uses this move to add information that clarifies the details of his request for a work shift.

Text 12
Subject: vacant shifts [Subject Line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name], [Opening]
I am one of the carer staff at [An address] [Introducing self]. I have five days off during my line at [The same address] and I am looking for any vacant shift at [Another address] [Request], so I will be available and ready to do any shift on Sunday and Monday every first week and Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday in the second week. [Adding information]
Regards
[Sender’s First name and Last name] [Closing]

The *indicating intention* move is employed in 4.3% of emails to inform the recipient about what the sender intends to do next regarding his request. For example, the sender of the email message in Text 13 uses the sentence ‘I'll also give u a call later tomoro [sic] to update you on My availability for the next fortnight’ to alert the recipient that he is going to call him tomorrow to provide more information relevant to his request.

Text 13
Subject: Available shifts at [Suburb] [Subject Line]

Hi bro, [Opening]
I'm available to work this weekend and would be happy to take the two shifts on 12/4 and 13/4 [Grounder]. Pls tell me if they are still available [Request]. I'll also give u a call later tomoro to update you on My availability for the next fortnight [Indicating intention].
Thanks
[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

The *promoting further contact* move is used in 10.5% of INNESs’ emails to prompt the recipient to reply to the sender’s email or to contact the sender for further information or clarification. For instance, the sender of the message in Text 10 uses the utterance ‘looking forward to hearing from you’ to prompt the recipient to reply to his request email. The *referring to attachment* move found in 12.3% of emails aims to attract the recipient’s attention to a file attached to the email message. For example, the utterance ‘see attached Tax Invoice’ has been used in Text 2 to attract the recipient’s attention to the attached tax invoice for the purchased ipad. Another example of this move can be seen in Text 14 in which the sender employs the utterance ‘Please find the attached documents below for me and my wife’ to refer to the documents attached to his email message.

Text 14
Subject: Bank loan [Subject Line]

Good morning
Hi [Recipient’s First Name], [Opening]
I met you 1 hour ago about the personal loan. It is pre approved till get my income statements [Establishing the background]. Please find the attached documents below for me and my wife [Referring to attachment] and add them to my application [Request].
Thank you very much [Thanking/Appreciating the recipient] and have a nice day [Expressing courtesy].

Best Regards, [Closing]

The thanking/appreciating the recipient move is found in almost a quarter of INNESs’ emails. In these emails, the senders thank the recipients for cooperation or appreciate their compliance. Thanking and appreciating utterances constitute one or two words (e.g., ‘thanks’, ‘thank you’) or longer utterances including intensifiers and the reasons for thanking and/or appreciating the recipient. There are multiple examples of this move in Texts 2, 4, 7 and 14 where the senders end their messages with the thanking expression as an indicator of expected cooperation and compliance with the request act.

The sequentially last move is the closing move which is utilized in almost all emails (98.7%). INNESs use formulae of various structure for closing their emails. The most frequent closing formulae are good wishes (e.g., regards, best regards, my regards) followed by the sender’s first name and last name (as in Texts 1, 4, 7, and 8), expression of thanks (e.g., ‘thanks’) followed by either the sender’s first name only or his first name and last name, as in Text 13, and good wishes followed by the first name only, as in Texts 3 and 10. Other formulae of the closing move used in INNESs’ emails range between the use of an expression of thanks, good wishes or the first name only, as in Texts 2 and 5 to the use of long closings which include more details about the sender of the message, e.g., the sender’s full name, his position, his company or faculty and contact information, as is the case in Texts 6 and 11. The long closings are mainly used in the request emails sent to recipients with whom the senders did not have a previous contact.

4.3.2.2. The request head act

The request move, which is the main utterance that conveys the requesting act, was further analysed in terms of request strategies on the basis of in/direct realization and the internal modification devices. The analysis of 267 request moves (including 39 second requests) identified in 228 emails showed that the rates of employment of direct request strategies and conventionally indirect request strategy, query preparatory, were similar. Direct strategies were used in 125 requests, whereas
query preparatory was found in 130 requests. The non-conventional indirect strategies were the least employed strategies found in only 12 requests (see Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of directness</th>
<th>Request strategies</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performative</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Frequency of request strategies

*Imperative* is the most frequent direct strategy found in the corpus (e.g., ‘please let me know how I should send the iPad to you in order to get fixed or replaced’). *Want statement* is the second most frequent direct strategy (e.g., ‘I would like to meet you…’). Other much less common direct strategies include *performatives* (e.g., ‘I’m kindly asking you to be the supervisor of my research’); *direct questions* (e.g., ‘Is it good if I come on Friday’); *need statements* (e.g., ‘I need to book the hall for two days’); *expectation statements* (e.g., ‘I hope you get the transfer form stamped before the settlement’); and *like/appreciate statement* (e.g., ‘I would be very grateful if you could sign your section.’). For instance, two types of direct request strategies are employed in the email message in Text 15 which was sent by a purchaser of a house to his conveyancing solicitor. The first request asks the recipient to change the settlement date of the purchased house. This request is formulated in a *want statement* form: ‘I would like to bring it forward for the following 15/11/2014’. In the second request, the sender asks the recipient to finalize the transfer form before the settlement. The second request is formulated in the direct request strategy *expectation statement*: ‘hope you get the transfer form stamped before the settlement’.
Text 15

Subject: The introduction [Subject Line]

Hello [Recipient’s First Name] [Opening]

Hope you are well and have a happy New Year [Expressing courtesy]. Regarding settlement, I would like to bring it forward for the following 15/11/2014 [Request 1] as I need 28 days to give a notice for my current accommodation [Grounder]. I hope you get the transfer form stamped before the settlement [Request 2] as I have no money left to pay for the stamp duty [Grounder].

Thanks

[Sender’s First name] [Closing]

In most of the requests in which the *query preparatory* is used, the senders formulate their request utterances in the form of an inquiry about the recipients’ ability to complete the request, as is the case in the following request acts from the email messages in Texts 3, 4, 8 and 11.

‘please can you resend the roster’ (Text 3)

‘I am wondering if you can kindly send me a summary of all wages you have paid to me so far and the taxes that have been deducted from them’ (Text 4)

‘I am wondering if you can provide a car that I can use until I get my car back’ (Text 8)

‘Could you please let me know what option is available for me?’ (Text 8)

‘Could you please find out whether the card is ready now or I need to wait for it’ (Text 11)

The structure of the request utterances in the above examples also includes examples of internal modification devices. Both syntactic and lexical/phrasal internal modifiers have been found in the studied requests. As can be seen in Table 11, the most frequent syntactic modifier found in INNESs’ requests is *if clause*. *Past tense modal* is the second most frequent syntactic device utilised in a quarter of the requests, while *aspect* is employed in 13.5% of the requests. *Adverbial clause* is the least employed syntactic device found in only two requests. For example, the *if clause* ‘if you can’ and the *aspect* form ‘wondering’ are utilised in the request acts in Texts 4 and 8, and the *past tense modal* ‘could’ is employed in the request act in Text 11.
Table 1 also shows that the politeness marker, ‘please’, is the most frequent lexical/phrasal device found in INNESs’ requests, as in the requests of Texts 8 and 11. Subjectivizer is the second most frequent lexical/phrasal device, e.g., ‘I’m wondering’ in Texts 4 and 8. Other lexical/phrasal devices found in the email corpus include hedge, e.g., ‘any’ and ‘some’; downtoner, e.g., ‘if possible’, ‘probably’, understater, e.g., ‘just’, ‘short’; and softener, e.g., ‘kindly’. An example of a request act modified with lexical/phrasal devices is the one in Text 16. Three lexical/phrasal devices are employed to mitigate the imposition of the request act of the email message in this Text: the subjectivizer ‘wondering’, the hedge ‘some’ and the understater ‘short’.

**Text 16**

Subject: Meeting [Subject line]

Dear [Recipient’s first name] [Opening]
I hope you have enjoyed your stay in South Africa [Expressing courtesy]. I am wondering if you have some time this week to have a short meeting with me [Request].
Thanks.
[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

Intensifier which is a lexical/phrasal device used to aggravate the imposition of the request through intensifying its urgency or necessity, is only found in 3.3% of
emails, e.g., ‘as soon as possible’, ‘really’, and ‘soon’. For example the imposition of the request act in the email message in Text 17 has been aggravated with the intensifier ‘as soon as possible’, which indicates the pressing nature of the request act through asking the recipient to comply within an urgent timeframe.

Text 17

Subject: The ducted heating [Subject Line]

Hi, [Opening]
I am a tenant with you in the address [the property address] [Introducing self]. There is a problem in the ducted heating and it is cold instead!!! [Establishing the background]
Please I have kids and a baby and difficult without heating [Grounder] please send one to fix it as soon as possible [Request]. Thanks for the help [Thanking/appreciating the recipient].

[Sender’s First name] [Closing]

4.3.3. Matching results

The evaluator perceptions of INNESs’ emails in terms of the thirteen attributes used in the evaluation survey have been matched with the discoursal characteristics and request realization features identified in the second stage of data analysis. In particular, the evaluations of the request act attributes of directness, politeness, reasonableness and receiving similar requests have been matched with the linguistic characteristics of these acts in terms of in/directness of request strategies and the internal and external modification employed in the requests. For the results of the evaluations of the message structure, sender personality and future communication with the senders, these have been matched with the discourse characteristics of the email messages. The matched results for the thirteen attributes of the message structure, request act, sender personality and future communication are presented sequentially in the following sub-sections.
4.3.3.1. Attributes and discoursal move structure

4.3.3.1.1. Clarity

When we compare the discoursal characteristics of emails evaluated as having a clear content with those evaluated as having unclear content, we see that the unclear content emails include fewer moves than those with a clear content. As can be seen in Table 12, the rhetorical organization of the majority of emails evaluated as having a clear content feature five canonical moves: *subject line, opening, establishing the background, request* and *closing*, while the majority of emails evaluated as having an unclear content include only four canonical moves: *subject line, opening, request* and *closing*. Although the *establishing the background* move is less frequent than the other four canonical moves in emails with clear content, its frequency in these emails is almost double that in emails with unclear content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intentions</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>98.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on clarity of content

Other moves found in the two sets of emails are less frequent. *External modifiers* are utilised in more than half of both sets of emails; however, they are slightly more frequent in emails evaluated as having a clear content than in those evaluated as unclear. *Introducing self* is employed slightly more frequently in clear content emails than in unclear content ones. *Adding information* and *indicating intention* are relatively rare in both sets of emails, however, they appear significantly less frequent in emails with unclear content than in those with clear content. *Promoting*
*Further contact* is six times less frequent in emails with unclear content compared to its use in emails with clear content. *Thanking/appreciating the recipient* has been utilised in more than a quarter of emails with a clear content; however, in unclear-content emails, it appears twice less frequently. Two moves have scored higher frequency in emails with unclear content than in emails with clear content: *expressing courtesy* and *referring to attachment*.

Text 18 is an example of an email evaluated as clear by all evaluators.

Text 18:

Subject: outcome of my application [Subject line]

Hi [Opening]

My name is [Sender’s first name and last name] [Introducing self]. I applied for Master of International Relations. I did not get any outcome for my application yet [Establishing the background]. Could you please let me know when I could get the outcome of my application [Request] thank you [Thanking/appreciating the recipient].

Kind regards

[Sender’s first name and last name] [Closing]

The email message in Text 18 was sent by an applicant for a postgraduate course to the admission office in a university. We can see that it consists of 7 rhetorical moves. The first move is the *subject line* which introduces the message content. The second is the informal *opening* ‘hi’. The body of the message starts with the third move *introducing self* in which the sender introduces his full name to the recipient. The fourth move *establishing the background* provides setting for the situation of the request. The request act comes fifth within the move sequence and it is formulated in a *query preparatory* strategy. The request is mitigated by two internal devices: the past tense modal ‘could’ and the lexical device ‘please’. The *thanking/appreciating the recipient* move is the sixth move. The email is closed with the seventh move, the *closing* formula ‘kind regards’ and the sender’s first name and last name.

Text 19 is an example of an email evaluated as having unclear content by all evaluators.

Text 19:

Subject:

Hi [Recipient’s First name] [Opening]
Would you please amend the 31 of jan shift in [Address] to be finished at 9am instead of 8 am [Request] Regards [Sender’s First name and last name] [Closing]

Text 19 is a workplace email sent by an employee to his supervisor asking for a shift extension. It does not have a subject line and opens with an informal greeting ‘hi’ followed by the recipient’s first name. The body of the message starts with the request without providing any background information about the reasons for the extension of the shift. The request is formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy, *query preparatory*, and mitigated with the past tense modal ‘would’ and the lexical modifier ‘please’. The message ends with the closing ‘regards’ followed by the first name and last name of the sender. In addition, the message text is missing punctuation marks.

4.3.3.1.2. Formality

The discourse analysis of emails evaluated as having a formal style shows that most of these emails include five canonical moves: *subject line*, formal *opening* such as *Dear* followed by a title or first name, *establishing the background*, *request* and formal *closing* such as *regards* followed by the sender’s name. Although the *establishing the background* move is present in the majority of these emails, it is less frequently used compared to the other four moves. On the other hand, the discoursal structure of most of the emails evaluated as having an informal style consists of four canonical moves: *subject line*, *opening* (especially *Hi* with or without recipient’s first name), *request* and *closing*. The *establishing the background* move has been used in less than half of these emails. The *external modification* move is employed in more than half of both formal and informal emails; however, it is slightly more frequent in emails evaluated as formal (see Table 13).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>96.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on formality of style

Most of the non-canonical moves are more frequent in formal emails than in informal ones. *Introducing self* is more pervasive in emails with a formal style than in those with an informal style. The *thanking/appreciating the recipient* move has been used twice as frequently in emails evaluated as having a formal style than in those evaluated as having an informal style. *Adding information* occurs slightly more often in emails with a formal style than in those with an informal style. *Expressing courtesy* and *promoting further contact* have almost the same frequency of occurrence in both sets of emails. The only move that occurs slightly more frequently in emails with an informal style than in emails with a formal style is *referring to attachment*.

Text 20 is an example of an email evaluated as having a formal style by all evaluators.

Text 20

Subject: Contract termination *(Subject line)*

Dear [Recipient’s First name] *(Opening)*

This is [First name & Last name] *(Introducing self)*. I have contacted my bank regarding my finance and they said that my finance is not going through. The due date of the loan is 12/06/2013 *(Establishing the background)*. Would you please terminate the agreement? *(Request 1)* please confirm *(Request 2)*.

Yours
[Sender’s first name and last name] *(Closing)*
The message in Text 20 was sent by a prospective house purchaser to a real estate agent. It has a subject line indicating the topic of the message and opens with a formal greeting, ‘dear’ followed by the first name of the recipient. The sender starts the body of his message with introducing himself to the recipient. Then he includes the *establishing the background* move to explain the circumstances relating to this email. This move is followed by two request acts. In the first request, the sender asks the recipient to terminate the purchase agreement. This request is formulated in a *query preparatory strategy* and includes internal mitigating devices: the *past tense modal* ‘would’ and the politeness marker ‘please’. The second request asks the recipient to confirm the termination of the agreement. It is formulated in the direct form *imperative* and mitigated with the politeness marker ‘please’. The message closes with the formal closing ‘yours’ and the sender’s first and last names.

Text 21 is an example of an email evaluated as having an informal style.

Text 21

Subject: Appointment [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s first name], [Opening]

As you are free now and have sometime to meet me [Grounder], can you pls set a time and a date for our meeting! [Request]

Thank you

[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

The email in Text 21 was sent by a PhD student to his supervisor. The greeting used for opening the message is ‘hi’ followed by the recipient’s first name, which is an informal form of greeting. The message starts with the reason that made the sender compose this request; however, the reason does not mitigate the imposition of the request. In fact, it imposes on the recipient that she has to meet the sender because she has time to do so. The sender’s language indicates that he has a close relationship with his supervisor as he knows about her time. To close the message, the sender uses ‘thank you’ followed by his first name, which is another sign of the informality of style. Other signs
of the informality of this email include the use of the abbreviated form ‘pls’ and the exclamation mark.

4.3.3.1.3. Message structure

The discourse analysis of emails evaluated as well written shows that most of these emails exhibit the move sequence: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request, external modification and closing. Establishing the background and external modification moves are less frequent compared to the other four moves as they have been used in 58.4% of well written emails for the former and 58% of these emails for the latter. On the other hand, the discourse analysis of emails evaluated as not well written shows that most of these emails include the moves: subject line, opening, request and closing with external modification used in slightly more than half of these emails and establishing the background used in less than half (Table 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on message structure

Other moves are also present in the evaluated emails; however, most of these moves are more frequent in emails evaluated as well written than in those evaluated as not well written. As can be seen in Table 14, the frequency of occurrence of the thanking/apppreciating the recipient move in emails evaluated as well written exceeds its frequency in emails evaluated as not well written. Also, promoting
Further contact and indicating intention are more pervasive in well-written emails than in those evaluated as not well written. Expressing courtesy, introducing self and adding information are found at almost the same rate of occurrence in both sets of emails. Referring to attachment has been found slightly more frequently in emails evaluated as not well written than in emails evaluated as well written.

Text 22 is an example of an email evaluated as well written by all evaluators:

Text 22

Subject: payslip [Subject line]

Good Morning [The organization’s name] payroll [Opening]
Hope you are all well [Expressing courtesy]. I am one of the CDP staff members [Introducing self]. I have not got my payslip for three consecutive fortnights [Grounder]. My house team leader, [name], has sent an email to [name] who is responsible for timesheet and payslips but we have not got any action from her [Establishing the background]. Could please find out the reason why I have not got my payslip for the above mentioned pay [Request].

Kind Regards
[First name & Last name]
[Position] [Closing]

Text 22 was sent by an employee to the payroll office. It has a subject line introducing its content and the message opens with a formal greeting ‘good morning’ followed by the name of the office in the organization. The sender starts the body of the message with expressing courtesy towards the recipient ‘hope you are all well’ and introduces himself to the recipient. Next, he explains the reason for making the request and provides background information about the context of his request explaining the issue and the communication he made to solve it. After establishing the background, the sender makes the request which is in a query preparatory form with ‘please’ and the past tense modal ‘could’ as internal mitigation devices. Finally, the message is closed with the formal farewell, ‘kind regards’, followed by the full name of the sender and his position in the organization.

The discourse structure of a number of emails and the occurrence of language errors in these emails have triggered the evaluators’ negative perception of their structure, as is the case with the email in Text 23 which has been evaluated as not well written by all evaluators.
Text 23

Subject: letter of support [Subject line]

Hi [Sender’s First name] [Opening] hope everything alright [Expressing courtesy]

Following to our conversation about the letter of support I would like explain what I want because you told me, you required some time to do it [Grounder]. please can you write about the following points [Request]:

1- Explain how I am good character … if you think so
2- I have no problem with English as second language etc…. written and spoken
3- How long I been support the refugee and migrants ect…. Including the experiences in different matters etc….
4- The current needs for the migration agent and only we have 2 or 3 agents in the area
5- Any others points can support the above points ….. [Adding information]

Kind regards
[Sender’s First name Last name] [Closing]

Text 23 was sent by an employee working in an organization to his manager. It has a subject line indicating the content of the message and opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the recipient’s first name. The expressing courtesy move is attached to the opening of the message. The body of the message starts with the external modifier grounder which provides a justification for making the request. The request move is formulated in the query preparatory form but it is determining what the recipient has to do by asking him to write a report about the points included in the next move, adding information. The email closes with the formal farewell ‘kind regards’ and the first and last names of the sender. At the language level, the email message shows grammatical errors which make its structure look messy, such as ‘following to our conversation’, ‘I would like explain’, ‘how long I been support’ and ‘any others points can support’.

In addition to grammatical errors, misspellings, punctuation mistakes and capitalization errors play an important role in shaping the evaluators’ negative perceptions of the structure of the email messages, as is the case with the email messages in Texts 24 and 25.

Text 24

Subject: checking Literature Review [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name] [Opening]
Please find attached the Literature Review [Request] and if you want me to added more I'm ready to do that [Giving options] and this is just draft I will add more references [Adding information].

Regards

[Sender’s First name] [Closing]

The email message in Text 24 was sent by a master degree student to his supervisor asking her to check the literature review chapter of his thesis. The structure of the message shows a number of grammar, capitalization and punctuation mistakes. In terms of grammar, there are a few mistakes in the structure of clauses and sentences such as ‘attached the Literature Review’, ‘to added’, and the problematic use of ‘and’ to join the three clauses in the first sentence. In terms of capitalization, the message includes unnecessary capitalization in a few words such as ‘checking Literature Review’ and ‘the Literature Review’. The message has punctuation errors, including missing commas and full stops between clauses and at the end of sentences. All these errors are likely to have prompted the evaluators’ negative assessment of the message structure. A similar situation can be seen in the structure of the email message in Text 25 below.

Text 25:

Subject: ESL teacher position [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s first name], [Opening]

I believe I’d got the appropriate qualifications [Request] as I got Master in TESOL from [University name] and Bachelor from overseas as well as Certifict IV in training and assessment. Moreover, I have good experiences in TESOL as I taught more than 10 years overseas and more than tow years volunteer work in TAIF and AMES in Australia [Establishing the background]. Finally please find attach my resume which describes in details my qualifications [Referring to attachment].

kind regards

[Sender’s first name and last name]
[phone number] [Closing]

The email message in Text 25 was sent by a job seeker to the recruitment officer of a language teaching centre to apply for a job advertised by the centre. The structure of the message shows many errors in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The structure of the sentences in the message is confusing with the use of inappropriate tense, the switch between inconsistent types of tense, and missing function words such as ‘and’, ‘of’ and ‘as’ which are necessary to express
grammatical relationships between words and clauses. The message shows some misspellings such as ‘Certifict’ and ‘tow’. It also has a lot of punctuation mistakes, especially with the lack of punctuation marks and incorrect spacing between words. The lack of appropriate capitalization is also evident in the closing of this email: ‘kind regards’. All these problems make the structure of the message look messy and poorly written.

4.3.3.1.4. Appropriateness

Most of INNESs’ emails which have been evaluated as appropriate in their contexts include five canonical moves: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request and closing. The establishing the background move occurs less frequently than the other four moves and has been used in 61.3% of emails evaluated as appropriate. The email discourse analysis also shows that most of the emails evaluated as inappropriate in their contexts consist of four canonical moves: subject line, opening, request and closing. The establishing the background move has been found in less than half of these emails (see Table 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on contextual appropriateness
As can be seen in Table 15, non-canonical moves have been employed more often in emails evaluated as appropriate than in those evaluated as inappropriate. *External modification* is found in both sets of emails but it is more frequent in appropriate emails than in inappropriate ones. The *thanking/appreciating the recipient* move is utilised almost twice as frequently in emails evaluated as appropriate than in those evaluated as inappropriate. *Promoting further contact* has been used three times as frequently in appropriate emails than in inappropriate ones. *Expressing courtesy* and *introducing self* are more pervasive in appropriate emails than in inappropriate ones. More examples of *indicating intention* have been found in appropriate emails than in inappropriate ones. In contrast, *adding information* and *referring to attachment* have been used more frequently in emails evaluated as inappropriate than in those evaluated as appropriate.

Text 26 is an example of an email message evaluated as appropriate in its context by all evaluators:

Text 26

Subject: Loan offers [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First Name] [Opening]
Thanks a lot for you kind help and support [Thanking/appreciating the recipient]. I have asked my employer to provide me with a (Letter stating position and minimum hours worked per fortnight) [Establishing the background]. Also, I will forward to you the access pay letter that explains my salary packaging [Indicating intention]. Meanwhile, can you please send me the copies of what offers and rates you got from the banks [Request] as I need to have a look on them before meeting you [Grounder]?

Kind regards
[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

The email in Text 26 was sent by a home loan applicant to a finance broker. It has a subject line indicating its content and opens with ‘hi’ followed by the first name of the recipient. The sender starts the body of the message with thanking the recipient for his help and support. Then, he provides some background information about his progress in collecting the required documents for his loan application. After that, the sender indicates his intention to send the access pay letter to the recipient. The request is made at the end of the message and formulated in a *query preparatory* strategy. It is mitigated with the internal modifier, ‘please, and the external modifier, *grounder*: ‘as I need to have a look on them before meeting you’.
The email is closed with the good wishes ‘kind regards’ followed by the first name of the sender.

Text 27 is an example of an email message evaluated as inappropriate in its context:

Text 27

Subject: My payslip

Hi there, plz, send me my payslip from the period of 4/11 to 17/11 as I have not got and I need it urgently today. Thanks

The email in Text 27 was sent by an employee in a company to the payroll officer. It has a subject line indicating its content and opens with the informal greeting ‘hi there’. The body of the message starts with the request move which is formulated in the most direct strategy imperative and mitigated with the internal lexical/phrasal device ‘plz’ (please). The request is also mitigated with the external modifier grounder that comes after the request move and provides a justification for it. The email is closed with the informal thanking expression ‘thanks’ followed by the first and last names of the sender. The language used in this email features grammatical errors which impede its comprehension. The style of the email tends to be informal, especially with the use of ‘hi’, ‘thanks’ and the abbreviated form ‘plz’.

4.3.3.2. The attributes of requests and their linguistic realization

4.3.3.2.1. Directness

Regarding the directness of the request acts made in INNESs’ emails, the analysis has yielded some unexpected results. As can be seen in Table 16, the majority of emails evaluated as containing direct requests use the conventionally indirect strategy query preparatory, while most of those evaluated as containing indirect requests use the direct request strategies. The query preparatory strategy has been utilised in more than half of the requests evaluated as direct, whereas the direct request strategies have been used in 45% of these requests with imperative and want statement as the most frequent direct strategies. On the other hand, the analysis of the requests evaluated as indirect shows that the direct request strategies, especially want statement and imperative, are the most frequent strategies in these requests.
Other direct request strategies (*performative, direct question, need statement, expectation statement, like/appreciate statement*) have been used in both groups of requests; however, they are more frequent in requests evaluated as indirect than in those evaluated as direct. A very few examples of the non-conventional strategies have been found in both groups of requests but they are slightly more frequent in requests evaluated as indirect than in those evaluated as direct (see Table 16).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as direct</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performative</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Request strategies in emails evaluated on request directness

Internal modification devices have been found in requests evaluated as direct as well as in those evaluated as indirect; however, these devices are more frequent in direct requests than in indirect ones (see Table 17). *If clause* and *past tense modal* are the most frequent syntactic devices found in both groups, but they are more frequent in requests evaluated as direct than in those evaluated as indirect. The durative *aspect (-ing)* is employed at almost the same rate of frequency in both groups of requests. *Please* is the most frequent lexical/phrasal device used in both groups of requests but it is more frequent in requests evaluated as direct than in those evaluated as indirect. *Subjectivizer* is used slightly more often in requests evaluated as indirect than in those evaluated as direct. *Hedge, downtoner* and *understater* are more frequently used in direct requests than in indirect ones. *Softener* and *intensifier* have been used in direct requests only.
Table 17: Internal modification devices in emails evaluated on request directness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as direct</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic modification</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If clause</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past tense modal</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbial clause</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/phausal</td>
<td>Please</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modification</td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjectivizer</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softener</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

External modification devices are used in emails evaluated as containing direct requests as well as in those evaluated as containing indirect requests; however, they are more frequent in indirect request emails than in direct request ones. *Grounder* is the most frequent external device found in both groups of emails. It is employed more often in emails with requests evaluated as indirect than in those with requests evaluated as direct. *Alerter* and *giving options* have also been used more frequently in indirect request emails than in direct request ones. *Compliment/sweetener, disarmer* and *promoting compliance* have been found only in emails with requests evaluated as indirect, while *getting a pre-commitment, promising a reward, imposition minimizer, emphasis on urgency* and *apology* have been found only in emails with requests evaluated as direct (see Table 18).

Table 18: External modification devices in emails evaluated on request directness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as direct</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as indirect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving options</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Text 28 is an example of an email evaluated as conveying a direct request:

Text 28

Subject: Slippery area [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name] [Opening]
Hope you are well [Expressing courtesy]. I just want to inform you that the tile area located between the stairs and the main gate is very angle and it causes slippery especially if the weather is wet and rainy [Establishing the background]. Could you please see what you can do to solve this issue [Request] as it is related to OH&S [Grounder].

King regards
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

The email in Text 28 was sent by an employee to his work supervisor. It has a subject line indicating the topic of the message and it opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ followed by the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with the expressing courtesy move. Then, the sender explains the circumstances of the situation that required sending the email. The last sentence in the body of the message is the request act which is formulated in the query preparatory and modified internally with the lexical mitigator ‘please’ and the past tense modal ‘could’, and externally with the grounder: ‘as it is related to OH&S’.

Text 29 below is an example of an email evaluated as conveying an indirect request:

Text 29

Subject: laptop problem [Subject line]

Hi there [Opening]
Hope you are well [Expressing courtesy]. I know that [Name] is away, therefore, I write to you as we have one of the laptops is not working [Grounder]. I’ve called the IT and told them about the problem that the laptop has. The IT specialist advised me to send the laptop to CBD Head office so that they can fix it [Establishing the background]. I think it needs to organize that [Request].

Thanks
[Sender’s First name & Last name]
[Position] [Closing]

The email in Text 29 was sent in a workplace context. It has a subject line indicating that the email message is about an issue with a laptop. It opens with the generic greeting ‘hi there’ although the sender has sent this email to the manager of the organization where he was working. The body of the message starts with expressing
courtesy and explaining the reason for sending the request. Next, it provides some background information about the communication that the sender made to solve the issue and the advice he received from IT staff. The request act comes as the last move in the message: ‘I think it needs to organize that’. It is mitigated internally with the subjectivizer, ‘I think’. The request utterance is formulated in the need statement which is a direct request strategy. Most of the wording in this email is used to explain the situation and the reasons that required sending the email before making the request at the end of the message.

4.3.3.2.2. Reasonableness

The analysis of the linguistic realization of the requests evaluated on the reasonableness attribute shows that both direct and conventionally indirect request strategies are employed in requests evaluated as reasonable and in those evaluated as unreasonable at a similar rate of occurrence. Direct request strategies are found in less than half of reasonable and unreasonable requests with imperative and want statement as the most frequent direct strategies. Imperative is found in reasonable and unreasonable requests at almost a similar rate of occurrence, while want statement is more frequent in unreasonable requests than in reasonable ones. Other direct request strategies have also been used in both reasonable and unreasonable requests but they are less frequent than imperative and want statement (see Table 19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as reasonable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unreasonable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performative</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: Request strategies in emails evaluated on request reasonableness
As can be seen in Table 19, the conventionally indirect request strategy, query preparatory, is employed in slightly less than half of requests evaluated as reasonable and in half of those evaluated as unreasonable. Regarding the non-conventional indirect strategies, a very few examples of strong hint strategy are used in both reasonable and unreasonable requests; however, they are more frequent in reasonable requests than in unreasonable ones.

In terms of internal modification, more syntactic mitigating devices are utilised in requests evaluated as reasonable than in those evaluated as unreasonable. Aspect and if clause are more frequent in reasonable requests than in unreasonable ones. The adverbial clause is used in reasonable requests only. Only the past tense modal is found more frequently in unreasonable requests than in reasonable ones (see Table 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as reasonable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unreasonable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic modification</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If clause</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past tense modal</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbial clause</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/phrasal modification</td>
<td>Please</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjectivizer</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softener</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: Internal modification devices in emails evaluated on request reasonableness

Table 20 also shows that the lexical/phrasal devices are employed more frequently in requests evaluated as reasonable than in those evaluated as unreasonable, except for the politeness marker please, which is found slightly more frequently in unreasonable requests than in reasonable ones. Some of these devices: hedge, understater and softener, are found only in requests evaluated as reasonable. The lexical/phrasal device intensifier, which is used to aggravate the request imposition, e.g., ‘as soon as possible’, ‘soon’, ‘really’, is used more frequently in requests evaluated as unreasonable than in those evaluated as reasonable.
Regarding external modification devices, these devices are more pervasive in emails evaluated as conveying reasonable requests than in those evaluated as conveying unreasonable requests. *Alerter, grounder* and *imposition minimizer* are the only external mitigating devices used in emails with unreasonable requests. On the other hand, all the external mitigating devices have been utilised in emails with requests evaluated as reasonable, with *grounder* as the most frequent device. Other mitigating devices are also used in reasonable request emails, especially *apology, giving options, imposition minimizer* and *promoting compliance* (see Table 21). Furthermore, the external upgrader *emphasis on urgency*, which is used to intensify the request imposition, occurs more frequently with requests evaluated as unreasonable than with those evaluated as reasonable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as reasonable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unreasonable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving options</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21: External modification devices in emails evaluated on request reasonableness

Text 30 is an example of an email evaluated as containing a reasonable request:

Text 30

Subject: Section 32 for [address]  [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name]  [Opening]

Please can u check the attached section 32 properly  [Request] because I want to sign the contract today for that property  [Grounder]. I am sorry for that because u are busy  [Apology].

Thanks

[Sender’s First name & Last name]  [Closing]

The email in Text 30 was sent by a prospective house purchaser to a solicitor. It has a subject line indicating the content of the message and it opens with ‘hi’ and the
first name of the recipient. The request act comes first in the body of the email message. It is formulated in a *query preparatory* strategy and mitigated by the internal lexical modifier, ‘please’. It is further mitigated by two external modifiers: the *grounder* ‘because I want to sign the contract today for that property’, and the *apology*: ‘I am sorry for that because you are busy’. The first provides the reason that required the composition of the request and the second expresses an apology for imposing on the recipient. The email is closed with an expression of thanks and the full name of the sender.

Text 31 is an example of an email evaluated as containing an unreasonable request:

Text 31

Subject: Meeting [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First Name] [Opening]
I would like to meet you for very important issue, as soon as possible [Request].
kind regards
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

Text 31 was sent by an employee working in an organization to his manager. It has a subject line that introduces the message content and opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message consists of the *request* move only which is formulated in the direct request strategy, *want statement*. The request is not mitigated with any internal or external modifier but it is aggravated with the lexical/phrasal intensifier ‘as soon as possible’ which imposes an urgent compliance on the part of the recipient. The email is closed with the good wish, ‘kind regards’ and the sender’s first and last names.

4.3.3.2.3. Politeness

The analysis of the linguistic realization of requests evaluated on the politeness attribute shows that the direct request strategies are found more often in requests evaluated as impolite than in those evaluated as polite. *Imperative* is the most frequent direct strategy employed in requests evaluated as impolite as well as in those evaluated as polite but its frequency in impolite requests is double that in polite ones (see Table 22). *Want statement* is the second most frequent direct strategy employed in both groups of requests at a similar rate of occurrence. The
conventionally indirect request strategy, *query preparatory*, is used more frequently in requests evaluated as polite than in those evaluated as impolite. The non-conventional indirect strategies are the least utilised request strategies in both groups of requests. The *strong hint* is the only non-conventional indirect strategy found in all requests but it is slightly more frequent in requests evaluated as impolite than in those evaluated as polite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as polite</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as impolite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performative</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22: Request strategies in emails evaluated on request politeness

In terms of internal modification, both syntactic and lexical/phrasal devices are used more often in requests evaluated as polite than in those evaluated as impolite (see Table 23). *If clause* and *past tense modal* are the most frequent syntactic devices found in both groups of requests; however, they are more frequent in requests evaluated as polite than in those evaluated as impolite. *Aspect* has been utilised three times as frequently in polite requests than in impolite ones. A very few examples of *adverbial clause* are employed in both groups of requests; however, they are slightly more frequent in impolite requests than in polite ones.

As can be seen in Table 23, all the lexical/phrasal downgraders, except *please* and *understater*, are found more frequently in requests evaluated as polite than in those evaluated as impolite. *Hedge* and *subjectivizer* are more frequent in polite requests than in impolite ones. *Downtoner* and *softener* are used only in requests evaluated as polite. *Please* is the most frequent lexical/phrasal device in requests from both groups; however, it is slightly more frequent in impolite requests than in polite ones. *Understater* is also more frequent in impolite requests than in polite ones. The lexical/phrasal upgrader *intensifier*, which is used to aggravate the imposition of
requests, is employed more often in requests evaluated as impolite than in those evaluated as polite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as polite</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as impolite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic modification</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If clause</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past tense modal</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbial clause</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/phrasal modification</td>
<td>Please</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjectivizer</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softener</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: Internal modifiers in emails evaluated on request politeness

Regarding external modification, more external mitigating modifiers are utilised in emails evaluated as containing polite requests than in those evaluated as containing impolite requests. *Grounder* is the most frequent external downgrader used in both groups of emails; however, it is more frequent in emails with polite requests than in those with impolite requests (see Table 24).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as polite</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as impolite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving options</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24: External modifiers in emails evaluated on request politeness

As Table 24 shows, *Alerter, compliment/sweetener, getting a pre-commitment, disarmer* and *promising a reward* are found in emails with requests evaluated as polite but not in those with requests evaluated as impolite. *Giving options* and
apology are used more often in emails with polite requests than in those with impolite requests. The only external downgrader that is used more often in impolite request emails than in polite request ones is imposition minimizer. The upgrader emphasis on urgency is employed more often in emails with requests evaluated as impolite than in those with requests evaluated as polite.

Text 32 is an example of an email evaluated as conveying a polite request:

Text 32

Subject: work missing hours [Subject line]

Hi [Sender’s First Name], [Opening]
The attached [Company name] time sheet suggests that there is 6.5 missing hours [Referring to attachment].
It must be a mistake! I believe that its our job to claim it from [Company name] if there are any missing hours, as this can happen sometimes [Grounder]. So, can you talk to [Company name] [Request 1] or you want me to do that [Giving options]?
So, would you be able to sort them out with the coming payment? [Request 2] If you cant please let me know [Request 3].

Regards
[Sender’s First name] [Closing]

The email in Text 32 was sent by an employee to his work supervisor. It has a subject line indicating its content and opens with ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with the referring to attachment move. It includes three request acts preceded by a grounder in which the sender provides a reason for making the requests. The first request ‘So, can you talk to [Company name]?” is formulated in a query preparatory strategy and mitigated by the external modifier giving options, ‘or you want me to do that’. The second request asks the recipient to add the missing hours to the sender’s coming payment. It is also formulated in a query preparatory strategy and mitigated internally by the past tense modal ‘would’. The third request comes at the end of the email message. It is formulated in the direct strategy imperative and mitigated by two internal modification devices: the syntactic device if clause and the lexical device please.

The email is closed with the good wish, ‘regards’ and the first name of the sender.

Text 33 is an example of an email evaluated as conveying an impolite request:

Text 33

Subject: An extension [Subject line]
Dear [Recipient’s First name] [Opening]
I would like to ask for further extension for my assessments [Request] as I am currently writing my research and it seems hard to mix between these two tasks [Grounder].
Actually I highly appreciate your great efforts and patience with us [Thanking/appreciating the recipient]
Looking forward to hear from you [Promoting further contact]
Yours scenically
[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

Text 33 was sent by a student doing a course in an Australian institution to a teacher in the course to request an extension of the due date of his assignment. It has a subject line indicating its content and opens with ‘dear’ and the first name of the recipient. The first move in the body of the message is the request act which is formulated in the direct request strategy, want statement. The request is mitigated externally with the grounder which comes directly after the request move. Then the sender uses the thanking/appreciating the recipient move to express his appreciation of the recipient’s effort and patience. Next, the sender promotes further contact with the recipient. The email is closed with the formal but misspelled closing ‘yours scenically’ [yours sincerely] and the first name of the sender.

4.3.3.3. Sender personality attributes and discoursal move structure
4.3.3.3.1. Friendliness

When we compare the rhetorical structure of emails evaluated as being sent by friendly senders with that of those evaluated as being sent by unfriendly senders, we can see that the typical structure of most emails in both groups consists of subject line, opening, request and closing. The remaining moves have been used more often in emails assessed as being sent by friendly senders than in those evaluated as being sent by unfriendly senders (see Table 25). External modification moves are employed in more than half of friendly senders’ emails and in slightly less than half of unfriendly senders’ ones. The establishing the background move is slightly more frequent in friendly senders’ emails than in those by unfriendly senders. The expressing courtesy move has been employed five times as frequently
in friendly senders’ emails than in unfriendly senders’ ones. Friendly senders’
emails also include four times as many thanking/appreciating the recipient moves
as unfriendly senders’ emails have. Introducing self, promoting further contact and
referring to attachment have been found more frequently in friendly senders’ emails
than in unfriendly senders’ ones. Indicating intention is found only in emails
evaluated as being sent by friendly senders. Adding information is the only move
that has been employed more frequently in unfriendly senders’ emails than in
friendly senders’ ones. Its frequency in unfriendly senders’ emails scores almost
three times that in friendly senders’ ones (Table 25).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on sender friendliness

Text 34 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by a friendly sender.

Text 34

Subject: An evaluation report [Subject line]

Dear [Recipient’s first name] [Opening]

My name is [First name and Last name]. I graduated from the TESOL discipline in
April this year with master degree of TESOL. You taught me in three units and my
grade was HD in the three units [Introducing self]. Now, I am applying for a PhD place
in the school of Education, but the online application form is asking for an
evaluation report of my previous performance filled by two lecturers who have
taught me during my Master course [Establishing the background]. I am wondering if you
can kindly fill the report form attached with this email [Request]. Please feel free to
request anymore information about me or my previous study [Promoting further contact].
Many thanks for your support [Thanking/appreciating the recipient].
The message in Text 34 was sent by a student to his previous lecturer. It has a subject line introducing its content and opens with the formal greeting ‘dear’ and the first name of the recipient. The sender starts his message with introducing his full name and information about his previous course in which the recipient was one of his lecturers. Then, he provides some background information about the situation that required sending this email. The request comes after the establishing the background move and it is formulated in a query preparatory strategy: ‘I’m wondering if…’. It is internally mitigated with the syntactic devices if clause and aspect, and the lexical/phrasal devices: softener (kindly) and subjectiviser (wondering). Next, the sender promotes further contact with the recipient through asking the recipient to contact him if more information is needed. The message ends with thanking the recipient for her support and it is closed with the formal farewell ‘best regards’ and the full name of the sender.

Text 35 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by an unfriendly sender:

Text 35

Subject: Changing bank details [Subject line]

Dear sir/ madam [Opening]
I want to change my bank account details [Request].
Account name: [First name and Last name]
BSB: [Number]
Account: [Number]
[Name of a bank] [Adding information]
Thanks
[First name and Last name] [Closing]

The email in Text 35 was sent by an employee to the finance officer of his organization. It has a subject line indicating that the content of the message is about changing bank details. The sender opens his message with the formal greeting ‘dear’ and the generic title, ‘sir/madam’. The message starts with the request utterance which is formulated in the direct strategy, want statement. Then the sender provides information about his new bank account. The email is closed with an expression of thanks followed by the full name of the sender. It does not include any other moves and the request utterance does not include any internal or external
modification devices to mitigate the imposition of the direct strategy that the sender has used.

4.3.3.3.2. Respectableness

The discourse analysis shows that the majority of emails evaluated as being sent by respectable senders include the canonical moves: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request and closing, while the majority of emails evaluated as being sent by unrespectable senders include the canonical moves: subject line, opening, request and closing. Establishing the background has been found in less than half of unrespectable senders’ emails. Other moves are present more often in emails evaluated as being sent by respectable senders than in those evaluated as being sent by unrespectable senders (see Table 26).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respectable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on sender respectableness

As can be seen in Table 26, external modification moves have been found in more than half of respectable senders’ emails and in less than half of unrespectable senders’ emails. Expressing courtesy is found four times as frequently in respectable senders’ emails than in unrespectable senders’ emails. Respectable senders’ emails also include three times as many thanking/appreciating the recipient moves as unrespectable senders’ emails have. Introducing self, promoting further contact and referring to attachment are also more frequent in emails
evaluated as being sent by respectable senders than in those evaluated as being sent by unrespectable senders. Indicating intention has been used in respectable senders’ emails only. Adding information is the only non-canonical move found more often in unrespectable senders’ emails than in respectable senders’ ones.

Text 36 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by a respectable sender:

Text 36

Subject: looking for a voluntary work [Subject line]

Dear Sir/ madam [Opening]
I’m a student doing certificate 4 in community services [Introducing self]. One of the course requirements is doing a voluntary work for 160 hours [Establishing the background]. So we hope to have the chance through your organisation [Request].
Yours sincerely
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

The email in Text 36 was sent by a student looking for a voluntary work to the human resources office in an organization. It has a subject line introducing its content. The email is opened with a formal greeting ‘dear sir/madam’. After the opening move, the sender introduces himself to the recipient and provides background information about the situation of his request. After establishing the background move, the sender makes the request which is formulated in the direct form expectation statement. Finally, the sender closes his email with the formal farewell ‘yours sincerely’ and his first and last names.

Text 37 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by an unrespectable sender:

Text 37

Subject: the next meeting [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name], [Opening]
I really need to see you and [Name] in a meeting [Request]. As this may be the last meeting, I really need you and [Name] to read the colloquium document thoroughly before I send it to the panel, please [Grounder]. If [Name] cant make it on Friday nor Thursday, then we have to push it for the next week, Monday morning, may be [Imposition minimizer].
Regards
[Sender’s First Name] [Closing]

Text 37 was sent by a PhD student to his supervisor asking for a meeting with his supervision team. The email has a subject line indicating its content and opens with
the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with the request act which is formulated in the direct strategy, need statement, and modified internally by the intensifier ‘really’, which aggravates the imposition of the request act. However, it is mitigated by the external modifier grounder which directly follows the request utterance and provides some reasons that support the request act. The last sentence in the message body is another external modification device, imposition minimizer, that mitigates the imposition of the request through showing some flexibility with the timing of the meeting but at the same time it imposes a specific day on which they can have the meeting. The email is closed with the formal farewell ‘regards’ and the first name of the sender.

4.3.3.3. Tactfulness

In terms of the sender tactfulness, the discourse analysis shows that most of the emails evaluated as being sent by tactful senders consist of six main moves: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request, external modification and closing. Establishing the background and external modification are less frequent than the other four moves in tactful senders’ emails. On the other hand, most of the emails evaluated as being sent by untactful senders include four main moves: subject line, opening, request and closing. The establishing the background and external modification moves are present in less than half of these emails (Table 27).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tactful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on sender tactfulness
Regarding the frequency of other moves, the most pronounced differentiation can be observed in the frequency of expressing courtesy and thanking/appreciating the recipient moves. Both moves are utilised in more than a quarter of tactful senders’ emails, but in only 11% for expressing courtesy and 15% for thanking/appreciating the recipient of untactful senders’ emails. Table 27 also shows that other moves such as promoting further contact, introducing self, adding information, indicating intention and referring to attachment differ in frequency, but to a lesser degree than expressing courtesy and thanking/appreciating the recipient. Promoting further contact is used more often in tactful senders’ emails than in the untactful senders’ ones. Introducing self is found slightly more often in emails composed by tactful senders than in those composed by untactful ones. Adding information, indicating intention and referring to attachment are used slightly more frequently in untactful senders’ emails than in tactful senders’ ones.

Text 38 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by a tactful sender:

Text 38

Subject: This week meetings

Dear [Recipient’s First name] [Opening] I am so sorry that I have missed this week meetings [Apology]. I planned to attend the Thursday one but I had an urgent commitment in the morning [Establishing the background]. Please let me know if there is something I need to know at this stage [Request].

Regards [Sender’s First name and Last name]
[Position] [Closing]

The email in Text 38 was sent by an employee to his work supervisor. It has a subject line indicating that the content of the message is about their work meetings. The email opens with the formal salutation ‘dear’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with the external modifier, apology. The sender apologizes for missing the meetings that he had to attend. Then, he provides some background information about his intention to attend one of the meetings and the circumstances that prevented him from attending. The request act comes at the end of the message and is formulated in the direct strategy, imperative. It is also mitigated by the internal modifiers: the lexical device please and the syntactic device if clause. The email is closed with the formal farewell ‘regards’, the full name of the sender and his position in the company.
Text 39 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by an untactful sender:

Text 39

Subject: Booking for [Name of the hall] [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First Name] [Opening]
I need to book the hall for two days Saturday 30/11/2013 from 7pm to 11 pm Sunday 01/12/2013 from 5 pm to 8 pm [Request 1]. Please if you can confirm to me that [Request 2].
Thanks
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

The above email was sent by a member of the leadership committee of an organization to an officer in a city council. It has a subject line indicating its topic and an informal opening ‘hi’ followed by the recipient’s first name. The body of the message starts with a request act in which the sender asks the recipient to book a hall for him. This request is formulated in the direct strategy, need statement, but it is not mitigated with any internal or external modifiers. The second move in the body of the message is another request which is formed in the direct strategy, imperative, and mitigated with the internal devices: please and if clause. The email is closed with the informal closing, ‘thanks’, and the sender’s first and last names.

4.3.3.3.4. Considerateness

For the last attribute of sender personality: considerateness towards the recipient, the rhetorical structure of the majority of emails composed by senders evaluated as being considerate of the recipients include the moves: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request and closing. The establishing the background move is less frequent than the other four moves as it is used in 59.5% of these emails. On the other hand, the rhetorical structure of the majority of emails sent by senders evaluated as inconsiderate of the recipient include the moves: subject line, opening, request and closing. The establishing the background move has been found in less than half of these emails (see Table 28).

Table 28 also shows that other moves are also used more frequently in emails sent by considerate senders than in those sent by inconsiderate senders. External modification is employed in more than half of considerate senders’ emails but in
less than half of inconsiderate senders’ ones. *Expressing courtesy* and *thank ing/appreciating the recipient* have been found in more than a quarter of emails sent by considerate senders but they are less frequent in emails sent by inconsiderate senders. *Introducing self* and *promoting further contact* are more pervasive in considerate senders’ emails than in inconsiderate senders’ ones. *Indicating intention* and *referring to attachment* are slightly more frequent in considerate senders’ emails than in inconsiderate senders’ ones, whereas *adding information* is slightly more frequent in inconsiderate senders’ emails than in considerate senders’ ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Considerate</th>
<th>Inconsiderate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>96.6%</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intentions</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on sender considerateness

Text 40 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by a considerate sender:

**Text 40**

Subject: The introduction *(Subject line)*

Hi [First name] *(Opening)*

Many thanks for your support and help last time *(Thanking the recipient)*. I have worked on the introduction according to your and my supervisors’ comments. I have restructured the introduction and I hope it is now more concise and informative *(Establishing the background)*. I am wondering if you can kindly have a look on it and provide any suggestions in terms of language and structure *(Request)*. I really appreciate your help *(Appreciating the recipient)*.

Best regards

[First name and Last name]
PhD student  
Faculty of Arts and Education

The email in Text 40 was sent by a PhD student to an academic advisor in an Australian university. It has a subject line introducing the content of the message and it opens with the informal salutation ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The sender starts the body of the message with thanking the recipient for her previous help and support. Then he provides background information regarding the work he has done on the introduction chapter. The request act comes after establishing the background move. It is formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy query preparatory and mitigated internally by the syntactic devices: if clause and aspect and the lexical/phrasal devices: subjectiviser, hedge and softener. The email is closed with the formal farewell ‘best regards’, the sender’s full name, his position and faculty.

Text 41 is an example of an email evaluated as being sent by an inconsiderate sender.

Text 41

Subject: my resume

Hi [Recipient’s First name]

this is my resume if you help me to find any part time job (any job) [Request]

Your team member

[Sender’s First name]

The email in Text 41 was sent by a casual employee to his colleague at work. It has a subject line indicating that the content of the message is about the sender’s resume. The email message opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message is short as it includes the request move only. The request move is formulated in a direct statement and mitigated with two internal modification devices: the if clause (syntactic device) and the hedge device ‘any’ (lexical/phrasal device). The email is closed with the position of the sender and his first name. The language of the email shows lack of punctuation marks and proper capitalization.
4.3.3.4. Willingness of future communication

4.3.3.4.1. Receiving similar requests

Regarding the analysis of the realization of request acts made in emails assessed on the evaluators’ willingness to receive similar requests, the results show that the direct strategies are the most frequent strategies found in requests evaluated as unacceptable for future communication. **Imperative** is the most frequent direct strategy found twice as frequently in unacceptable requests than in acceptable ones. **Want statement** is the second most frequent direct strategy utilised slightly more often in acceptable requests than in unacceptable ones (see Table 29).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as acceptable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performative</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct question</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want statement</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need statement</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectation statement</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like/appreciate statement</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionally indirect</td>
<td>Query preparatory</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional indirect</td>
<td>Strong hint</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mild hint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29: Request strategies in emails evaluated on willingness to receive similar requests

Table 29 also shows that the conventionally indirect strategy, **query preparatory**, is the most frequent strategy in requests evaluated as acceptable for future communication. The **query preparatory** has been used in more than half of requests evaluated as acceptable for future communication and in only 34.9% of requests evaluated as unacceptable for future communication. A few examples of the non-conventional indirect strategies are used in both groups of requests; however, they are more frequent in requests evaluated as unacceptable for future communication than in those evaluated as acceptable.

In terms of internal modification, syntactic downgraders are more frequent in requests evaluated as acceptable for future communication than in requests evaluated as unacceptable for future communication. **If clause** is the most frequent syntactic device followed by **past tense modal** and **aspect**. All the lexical/phrasal
downgraders except *please* and *understater* have been used more often in requests evaluated as acceptable for future communication than in those evaluated as unacceptable including: *subjectivizer, hedge, downtoner* and *softener*. *Please* is the most frequent lexical downgrader found in both groups of requests; however, it is more frequent in unacceptable requests than in acceptable ones. *Understater* is also more frequent in requests evaluated as unacceptable than in requests evaluated as acceptable. Moreover, the lexical/phrasal upgrader *intensifier*, which aggravates the request imposition, has been found more often in requests evaluated as unacceptable for future communication than in those evaluated as acceptable (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as acceptable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntactic modification</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If clause</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Past tense modal</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adverbial clause</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical/phrasal modification</td>
<td>Please</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subjectivizer</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softener</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30: Internal modifiers in emails evaluated on willingness to receive similar requests

Regarding external modification, the overall frequency of external downgraders shows that these devices are utilised more frequently in emails containing requests evaluated as acceptable for future communication than in those containing requests evaluated as unacceptable (see Table 31). *Grounder* is the most frequent external downgrader found in both groups of emails, however, it is more frequent in acceptable request emails than in unacceptable request ones. *Alerter, giving options, imposition minimizer* and *promoting compliance* are also more frequent in emails with requests evaluated as acceptable than in those with requests evaluated as unacceptable. *Getting a pre-commitment, disarmer* and *promising a reward* have been used in acceptable request emails but not in unacceptable request ones. *Apology* has been found in both groups of emails at almost a similar rate of occurrence. The external upgrader *emphasis on urgency*, which is used to aggravate
request imposition, has been utilised more frequently in emails with requests evaluated as unacceptable than in those with requests evaluated as acceptable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as acceptable</th>
<th>Requests evaluated as unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliment/sweetener</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting a pre-commitment</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving options</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising a reward</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on urgency</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting compliance</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: External modifiers in emails evaluated on willingness to receive similar requests

Text 42 is an example of an email conveying a request evaluated as acceptable for future communication:

Text 42

Subject: Home loan bonus [Subject line]

Dear [First Name] [Opening]

I hope this email will find you in a good health and spirits [Expressing courtesy]. When I signed my home loan contract with you, you offered me a bonus of $888 that would be paid to my account after settlement. My settlement date was the 22nd of November 2012, but I did not receive the bonus [Establishing the background]. I have already called the bank, but they told me that I need to talk to you as you are the person who has processed my loan [Grounder]. Could you please double check this issue and let me know [Request]?

Best regards
[Sender’s First name & Last name] [Closing]

The email in Text 42 was sent by a home loan applicant to a loan manager in an Australian bank. The email has a subject line indicating the content of the message and opens with the formal greeting ‘dear’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with expressing good wishes for the recipient. Then, it provides background information about the previous agreement that the sender had with the recipient in order to get the bonus paid after the settlement date. After the establishing the background move, the sender includes the external downgrader
grounder that provides a justification for sending this request. The request act is the last move in the message. It is formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy query preparatory and mitigated internally by the past tense modal ‘could’ and the lexical device please. The email is closed with the formal farewell, ‘best regards’, and the first name and last name of the sender.

Text 43 is an example of an email conveying a request evaluated as unacceptable for future communication:

Text 43

Subject: editing my thesis [Subject line]

Hi [First Name] [Opening]

I have to meet [Name], she is very busy [Establishing the background], can you speak with her [Request 1] as she is at Berwick campus today [Grounder]. If can manage this just let me know to come as soon as possible to sign paper work [Request 2].

Thanks [Closing]

Text 43 was sent by a postgraduate student writing a thesis to the supervisor of his thesis. It has a subject line indicating the content of the message and opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the recipient’s first name. The body of the message starts with the establishing the background move; however, this move does not provide sufficient background information about the situation of the request. It only mentions that the sender has to meet a person and that person is very busy. After the establishing the background move, the sender makes the first request in which he asks the recipient to speak to the person he mentions in the previous move. This request is formulated in a query preparatory strategy but it is not mitigated by any internal modifier. The only modifier used with this request is the grounder ‘as she is at Berwick campus today’; however, it does not adequately mitigate the request imposition as it lacks sufficient justification and logical relationship with the request act. Then a second request is made in the message in which the sender asks the recipient to let him know if she can arrange ‘this’. The reference ‘this’ increases the ambiguity of the request as it is not easily understood what this reference refers to. The second request is internally mitigated with the syntactic device if clause and the lexical/phrasal understater ‘just’. However, the imposition of the request is intensified by the lexical/phrasal upgrader ‘as soon as possible’. The last move in the message is closing which is formulated in the informal thanking expression
‘thanks’ without the sender’s name. The language used in the email message features errors in terms of grammar, punctuation and capitalization.

4.3.3.4.2. Future email communication with the senders

The discourse analysis of emails assessed on the evaluators’ willingness to receive future emails from their senders shows differences in the frequency of moves in these emails. More moves have been used in emails evaluated as being sent by acceptable senders for future communication than in emails evaluated as being sent by unacceptable senders. The majority of emails sent by acceptable senders include the rhetorical moves: *subject line*, *opening*, *establishing the background*, *request* and *closing*, whereas most of emails sent by unacceptable senders include only four of these moves: *subject line*, *opening*, *request* and *closing*. The *establishing the background* move has been found in less than half of emails evaluated as being sent by unacceptable senders for future communication (see Table 32).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moves</th>
<th>Senders evaluated as acceptable</th>
<th>Senders evaluated as unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
<td>95.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing courtesy</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing self</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the background</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External modification</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding information</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicating intention</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting further contact</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to attachment</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanking/appreciating the recipient</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: Frequency of moves in emails evaluated on willingness of future communication

As we can see in Table 32, other moves are also more pervasive in emails evaluated as being sent by acceptable senders for future communication than in those evaluated as being sent by unacceptable senders. The *expressing courtesy* move is
utilised in almost a quarter of acceptable senders’ emails and in only 9.5% of unacceptable senders’ emails. The frequency of thanking/appreciating the recipient move in acceptable senders’ emails is almost double its frequency in unacceptable senders’ emails. External modifiers have been utilised in more than half of both groups of emails but they are slightly more frequent in acceptable senders’ emails than in unacceptable senders’ ones. Similarly, referring to attachment, promoting further contact and indicating intention moves have been used more often in emails evaluated as being sent by acceptable senders than in those evaluated as being sent by unacceptable senders. Only introducing self and adding information have been used slightly more often in emails sent by unacceptable senders than in those sent by acceptable ones.

Text 44 is an example of an email sent by a sender evaluated as acceptable for future email communication.

Text 44

Subject: the thesis timeline [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s First name], [Opening]
Thanks, [Thanking the recipient] and good to hear you are back and looking forward to seeing you on Wednesday [Expressing courtesy]. [Name] asked me to look at the timeline with you. There are two interview stages: April 2015 (when participants start studying) and October 2016 (when they finish). In the time line, I put 4 months as a personal leave as I need to wait for the second stage of interviews [Establishing the background]. [Name], suggested this morning to delete it but she asked me to take your opinion [Request].
Warm regards
[Sender’s first name] [Closing]

The email in Text 44 was sent by a PhD student to his principal supervisor to ask her to revise his research timeline. It has a subject line indicating its content and opens with an informal greeting ‘hi’ and the first name of the recipient. The body of the message starts with thanking the recipient and expressing courtesy towards her. Then, it provides information about the circumstances of the situation of the request. The request act comes at the end of the message and it is formulated in the non-conventional indirect strategy, strong hint. The email message is closed with the formal closing ‘warm regards’ and the sender’s first name.

Text 45 is an example of an email sent by a sender evaluated as unacceptable for future email communication.
Text 45

Subject: the case color [Subject line]

hi [Opening]
would u please send me the case in Black color [Request]
cheers [Sender’s first name] [Closing]

Text 45 was sent by a customer buying a phone case cover from an online store to a seller in that store. It has a subject line indicating that the email message is about the colour of the case cover. The email message opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ only. The body of the message includes the request move only which is formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy, query preparatory, and modified internally with the past tense modal (syntactic device) and please (lexical/phrasal device). The email message is closed with the informal farewell ‘cheers’ and the sender’s first name. The language used in this message features a lack of necessary punctuation marks and capitalization, and the use of abbreviations.

4.4. Conclusion

To sum up, the results show that Australian evaluators assess the structure of most INNESs’ emails as clear, informal and appropriate but not well written. The evaluators perceive most of the requests made in the emails as direct, reasonable and polite. Regarding the sender personality, the evaluators assess the senders of most of the emails as friendly, respectable and considerate of the recipient. Their evaluation of the sender tactfulness shows insignificant difference between the number of emails evaluated as being sent by tactful senders and the number of those evaluated as being sent by untactful senders. The results also show that the evaluators do not mind receiving requests similar to those made in most of the emails and do not mind receiving future emails from the senders of most emails.

The discourse analysis of INNESs’ emails illustrates that most of INNESs’ emails include the following moves: subject line, opening, establishing the background, request, external modification and closing. Other moves, expressing courtesy, introducing self, adding information, indicating intention, promoting further
contact, referring to attachment and thanking/appreciating the recipient are also present but are less frequent. The analysis of the realization of the request acts in INNESs’ emails shows that the conventionally indirect strategy, query preparatory, is used slightly more often than direct strategies. Imperative is the most frequent direct strategy found in the requests. The internal modification devices have been underused in INNESs’ emails with please, if clause and past tense modal as the most frequent internal modification devices. The external modification devices have been utilised in more than half of the studied request emails. Grounder is the most frequent external modifier found in the emails. Other external modifiers have also been found in the request emails but they are less frequent than grounder.

The evaluation of the INNESs’ emails has been matched with the results of email discourse and linguistic analyses. The majority of emails that have been evaluated as having clear content, formal style, well written structure and contextual appropriateness, and sent by senders evaluated as friendly, respectable, tactful and considerate of the recipient include the move sequence: subject line – opening – establishing the background – request – closing. Other moves, especially external modification, expressing courtesy, introducing self and thanking/appreciating the recipient, are found but are less frequent. On the other hand, the majority of emails evaluated as unclear, informal, not well written and contextually inappropriate, and whose senders are evaluated as unfriendly, unrespectable, untactful and inconsiderate of the recipient feature a four-move sequence: subject line – opening – request – closing. Other moves are less frequent in these emails than in emails evaluated as having the message structure and sender personality attributes.

In terms of the request acts, the conventionally indirect request strategy, query preparatory, is the most frequent strategy found in requests evaluated as direct and polite, whereas the direct request strategies are more frequent than other strategies in requests evaluated as indirect and impolite. The query preparatory strategy is employed in requests evaluated as reasonable as well as in those evaluated as unreasonable at a similar rate of occurrence. The internal modification devices are utilised more frequently in requests evaluated as direct, reasonable and polite than in those evaluated as indirect, unreasonable and impolite. However, the lexical/phrasal upgrader, intensifier, is more frequent in requests evaluated as
unreasonable and impolite than in other requests. Furthermore, more external mitigating devices are found in emails containing requests evaluated as indirect, reasonable and polite than in those containing requests evaluated as direct, unreasonable and impolite. The external upgrader, *emphasis on urgency*, is used more often in emails with requests evaluated as direct, unreasonable and impolite than in emails with requests evaluated as indirect, reasonable and polite.

The evaluators suggest that they would not mind receiving future emails from senders whose emails include the move sequence: *subject line – opening – establishing the background – request – closing*, as well as other moves including *expressing courtesy, introducing self, external modification* and *thanking/appreciating the recipient*. However, they indicate that they would not like to receive future emails from senders whose emails include only four moves: *subject line, opening, request and closing* and a limited number of other moves. They also would not mind receiving requests that are formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy, *query preparatory*, and mitigated with internal and external modifiers. However, they would not like to receive requests that are formulated in the direct request strategies with a limited number of internal and external mitigating modifiers.

All the above results suggest that the evaluators’ perceptions of INNESs and their linguistic behaviour in the studied emails are influenced by the discourse structure of the email messages and the linguistic realization of the request acts in these messages. These results and the factors that shape native speaker recipients’ perceptions of non-native speaker senders and their linguistic behaviour in request emails will be the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

The findings reported in the previous chapter show a germane relationship between the rhetorical structure and the realization of requests in the studied emails, and the Australian English native speakers’ judgment of these emails and their senders. In particular, they shed light on the relationship between the structure of INNESs’ emails and the realization of the requests they convey on one hand and the evaluators’ perceptions of these emails, the request acts, the sender personality, and willingness to engage in future email communication on the other. These findings provide answers to the research questions investigated in this study:

1. How are AENSs’ attitudes about INNESs and their emails influenced by INNESs’ linguistic behaviour in request emails?
2. How is AENSs' evaluation of the emails and their senders explained in terms of the discoursal and linguistic structure of these emails?

The results of the evaluation survey provide an answer to the first research question. The findings obtained from the discourse and linguistic analyses and the matching of these findings with the results obtained from the evaluation data analysis provide an answer to the second question. The matching of the results also provide an explanation for the negative or positive evaluation of the senders and their linguistic behaviour in the email corpus. The evaluation results are explained on the basis of the discourse analysis of the structure of INNESs’ emails and the linguistic analysis of the realization of the request acts performed in these emails. The explanation of the findings is also supported with evidence from the findings of previous research and the viewpoints of relevant theories and perspectives.

This chapter starts with discussing the basic email moves (subject line, opening, request and closing) and their possible effect on recipients’ perceptions. Then, it explains the role of brevity or verbosity in email communication and the influence of including optional moves in the email message on the evaluators’ perceptions. Next, it discusses the possible effect of cultural divergence between Australian and Iraqi cultures on the structure of INNESs’ email messages and the realization of
their requests, as well as Australian evaluators’ perceptions. It presents the impact of language errors found in INNESs’ emails on the evaluators’ perceptions. Finally, the chapter discusses the effect of the evaluators’ possible sympathy with INNESs as being non-native speakers, and how this might shape their perceptions.

5.2. Basic email structure

We saw that the structure of most of the email messages examined in this study includes the four rhetorical moves: subject line, opening, request and closing. The high frequency of these moves in the emails, whether they are evaluated positively or negatively on the evaluation attributes, can be explained in terms of their role as basic constituents that characterize the structure of an email message. This finding is supported by the recommendations of email etiquette manuals (e.g., Angell and Heslop, 1994) and the findings of studies that examine email language (e.g., Crystal, 2001, 2006) which suggest that a typical email message includes two basic components: header and body. The header is the upper part of the message which includes the subject line, date, and sender’s and recipient’s email addresses as core elements, while the body of the message consists of greeting, message and farewell. These components of a typical email are equal to the basic moves found in almost all INNESs’ emails: subject line, opening (greeting), request (the message) and closing (farewell).

Each of the four basic moves plays an important role in conveying the sender’s intended meaning, facilitating the comprehensibility of the message content and shaping the recipient’s perceptions of the message and its sender. However, we find that the influence of these moves on the effectiveness of the messages and their evaluation depends on the way they are structured. The exclusion of any of these moves can produce a negative effect on the recipient’s perceptions. This is what has been noticed in the evaluation data of emails that lack one or more of the four basic moves or those in which one or more of these moves are not structured appropriately. This is also supported by email manuals and email structure studies (Angell and Heslop, 1994; Crystal, 2006; Gupta, 2012) which claim that the way in
which these four elements are structured can influence the effectiveness of email communication and the recipient’s impressions.

5.2.1. Subject line

We saw in the previous chapter that most of the studied emails include subject lines that vary in their length and structure. In most cases, the subject line introduces the content of the email message through naming the action requested in the message, the entity or issue for which an action or information is requested. It thus performs the basic function within the email discourse highlighted in Angell and Heslop’s (1994) definition of this move: the *subject line* is the space where the sender provides a short description of the email message. The high frequency of this move in the studied emails points to the authors’ awareness of its role as a basic characteristic of the email communication which does not only introduce the content of the email message but also attracts the recipient’s interest in reading it. The subject line is the first thing that recipients see as the message appears in their inbox, influencing their decision whether to read it and what priority to assign to it.

The evaluators tended to rate emails with relevant and informative subject lines positively on all evaluation attributes and stated that they did not mind receiving similar requests or future correspondence from the senders of these emails. The subject lines used in these emails seem to be one of the factors that have promoted their positive evaluation. For instance, the subject lines in Texts 1 and 4 (Section 4.3.2.1) provide a two-word description of their content and name either the action requested in the body of the message (‘Thesis editing’) or the entity for which an action is requested (‘Payment summary’). These and similar subject lines indicate precisely the content of the message through introducing specifically the most important piece of information in the message in a clear, brief, relevant and concrete description. These characteristics, according to Crystal (2006), are recommended in various email etiquette manuals for writing informative and appropriate subject lines. Email recipients may prefer to receive emails with clear and relevant subject lines as these elements, according to Crystal (2006), help them decide the importance of the email message and its priority for responding. Ayyadurai (2013,
p. 268) uses the sentence “the subject line is your message” to indicate the significant role of this element because it is the most-read part of the message which prompts the recipient to read or delete it. Subject lines help the recipients to understand the content of the email message and therefore they add positive effect to the perception of the structure of the message.

The clarity, brevity and relevance of the subject line seem to be important characteristics that can positively influence the recipients’ perceptions in email communication. These characteristics are favourable not only in email communication but also in any social interaction. They match Grice’s maxims of the Cooperative Principle. Grice (1989) contends that verbal exchanges are cooperative efforts in which the participants recognize the purpose of the exchange and set the expectations about what to say and how to say it. His four maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner represent the rules that govern appropriate linguistic behaviour in social interaction. Grice argues that the adherence to his maxims can produce successful and effective verbal exchanges that trigger interlocutors’ cooperation and mutual acceptance of each other. Accordingly, the subject line can play an important role in a successful email communication if it is composed according to the Gricean maxims.

However, the case is different with emails that do not have subject lines or have ones that do not observe Gricean maxims, as is the case with the subject line in Text 15 (Section 4.3.2.2). The email message in Text 15 has a two-word subject line: ‘The introduction’; however, this subject line lacks clarity and relevance to the content of the message. The content of the email message is about a request to the recipient to bring forward a scheduled settlement date of a purchased house. The subject line does not provide specific, relevant and informative description of this content. The utterance ‘The introduction’ could be misleading as it means different things, such as an introduction of a written work, or an introduction of someone in an event, etc. Using this utterance as a subject line for the above message breaches the Gricean maxims of quality and relevance as it does not indicate the actual content of the message and it lacks thematic relation with the content of the message. It can also reduce the recipient’s interest in reading the message as he/she might think that the email message is about something irrelevant to their interest.
The use of a misleading subject line, according to Crystal (2006), is a breach of netiquette. Thus, it can be argued that the subject line of the email in Text 15 is one of the factors that have prompted the evaluation of the email message as unclear, informal, not well written and inappropriate in its context, and the sender of the message as untactful, inconsiderate of the recipient and unwelcome for future email communication. The evaluators have also reacted negatively to a few email messages which have no subject lines. In addition to the missing advantages of this element in these messages, receiving an email with a blank subject line can trigger the recipient’s negative perceptions. Ayyadurai (2013) claims that emails with no subject lines are likely to be ignored and perceived as annoying and wasting the recipient’s time.

5.2.2. Opening

The *opening* move is used in most of the studied email messages, adopting a variety of linguistic formulae. The pervasiveness of this move may stem from the senders’ understanding of the necessity to open their email messages with a form of greeting or salutation. According to Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) and Angell & Heslop (1994), the significance of this move is ascribed to its basic function in identifying and saluting the target recipient, and making the email message more personal. We can see that the senders’ choices of the linguistic formulae for the *opening* move are influenced by contextual factors based on their assessment of the circumstances in which the messages were composed. These factors include social relationship with the recipient, topic of the message, the role of the sender and the recipient, their age and gender, and time pressure.

INNESs’ email messages were sent in different academic, workplace and service encounter situations with various social and contextual variables. Thus, various forms of salutation and greeting were employed, ranging from the use of the most informal forms such as ‘Hi’ and ‘Hi bro’ to the use of the most formal forms such as ‘Dear + title’ and ‘Dear sir/madam’. The findings show that the use of opening forms consistent with the contextual characteristics of the situation reflected positively on the evaluation of these emails. For instance, the use of the greeting
‘Hi’, the title ‘Dr’ and the recipient’s first name to open the email messages in Texts 1 and 5 seems to be consistent with the social distance between the sender (as a university student) and the recipient (as a university lecturer), and the role, status and power of the recipient. Similarly, ‘Hi there’ is used to open the email message in Text 2 as it has been sent to the general email address of an electronics store and the sender does not know the name of the recipient. ‘Dear’ and the recipient first name is employed to open the message in Text 20 as the sender does not have a pre-existing relationship with the recipient and the social distance between the two is remote. The senders of these example emails have chosen opening formulae based on their observation of the social power, distance and relationships involved in the situations. Thus, these opening formulae contributed positively to the evaluation of the email messages as clear, formal, well written and appropriate in their contexts, and the senders of these messages as tactful, considerate of the recipient and welcome for future email communication. Netiquette manuals (e.g., Angll and Heslop, 1994; Flynn and Khan, 2003; Gupta, 2012) recommend the use of appropriate openings (salutations and/or greetings) on the basis of the contextual features of the email contact situation.

In addition to the influence of the communication context, the choice of linguistic forms for addressing the recipient in a number of INNESs’ emails seems to be shaped by the social norms and conventions of language use in the Australian host community. Clyne (2009, p. 398) argues that the choice of address forms is influenced by the address rules of the language, the address preferences of the network and/or the individual, and contextual factors. In a number of their email messages, INNESs use the first name of the recipient in their openings preceded by either the formal salutation ‘Dear’ or the informal greeting ‘Hi/Hello’, as is the case in Texts 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10 (Section 4.3.2.1). This tendency to use the recipient’s first name can be attributed to the senders’ recognition of the preference of using first names in social interactions in the Australian culture. In her study of introductory greetings in email messages written by participants from high context cultures and low context cultures, Bjørge (2007) reports that participants from low context cultures, including Australian culture, use the recipient’s first name with ‘Dear’ and ‘Hi/Hello’ to open their email messages. She ascribes this finding to how roles are perceived and how rapport management is handled in low power distance cultures.
where informal and egalitarian forms of address are acceptable. Clyne (2009) asserts that the use of first name greeting is familiar in emails sent by Australians to their fellow citizens. The preference of using ‘Dear’ and ‘Hi/Hello’ forms of greeting followed by the recipient’s first name in the Australian culture may explain the pervasive use of these opening forms in INNESs’ emails. It may also explain the positive evaluation of emails including these opening formulae.

The choice between the formal greeting ‘Dear’ and the informal greeting ‘Hi’ has to be based on an accurate assessment of the contextual factors including the relationship with the recipient and his/her role and status. The use of informal greeting and the inclusion of the recipient’s first name in email opening, according to Clyne (2009), may indicate familiarity and decreasing social distance between the sender and the recipient. Thus, in INNESs’ emails which have been sent in situations that involve a remote social distance between the sender and the recipient and portray an unequal social status and power, the use of the informal greeting form can be regarded as one of the factors that caused negative perceptions of the email messages and their senders, as is the case with the email messages in Texts 3 (Section 4.3.2.1) and 17 (Section 4.3.2.2). In Text 3, the use of an informal greeting ‘hi bro’ implies that the sender has an intimate social relationship with the recipient and they also share equal power and status. However, the description of this email situation indicates that the recipient is the sender’s work supervisor and they have regular communication for work purposes only. That means that the recipient does not necessarily have a close social distance with the sender and the two have unequal status and power as dictated by their institutional roles in the workplace. The use of ‘hi bro’ shows an underestimation of the social distance and the institutional status and power by the email author.

Similarly, the email message in Text 17 opens with an informal greeting: ‘Hi’ without the recipient’s name. According to the description of its situation, this email was sent by a tenant to a real estate agent who was managing the tenant’s house. The situation implies a remote social distance between the sender and the recipient and unequal social power as the real estate agent is the one with high power. By using the informal greeting ‘Hi’ without identifying the recipient’s name, the sender does not observe the social distance with the agent as well as her role as a manager.
of the house that he was renting. Thus, the opening move in this email could have been one of the factors causing negative judgement about the structure of the email (as informal, not well written and inappropriate in context) and the sender personality (as untactful, inconsiderate of the recipient, and unwelcome for future email communication). One of the evaluators makes the following comment about this email: “the language between tenant and landlord should be moderately formal”.

Overall, the evaluation of some emails in this study indicates that their senders lack what Clyne (2009) calls, a sense of how and when to decrease the social distance with their communication partners. Informal openings can trigger Australian recipients’ negative judgement of the sender and his/her email message if they are used without considering the contextual characteristics of the situation, especially the relationship with the recipient, and their role, power and status. In their study of Australians’ perception of emails from overseas, Murphy and Levy (2006) find that Australian participants evaluate overseas emails that lack formal greeting and correct use of titles as impolite. Similarly, some comments collected from the evaluators in this study indicate their concerns regarding the level of informality included in the email messages that implies close social distance and equal social status with the recipient. For example, in their evaluation of the email message in Text 44 (Section 4.3.3.4.2) sent by a student to a supervisor of his PhD thesis, the evaluators make the following comments:

Comment 1: “very casual email that assumes familiarity with the recipient”,

Comment 2: “I may not like some an informal email in that situation”,

Comment 3: “I might not want a student being that familiar with me if I was a “high up” Academic”.

The first sign of informality in the email message in Text 44 is the use of the informal greeting ‘Hi’ and the first name of the recipient to open the message. This opening form indicates an increased level of informality and a decreased social distance with the recipient. Thus, the informal opening used in this email can be one of the factors that have led to the evaluation of its structure as informal and not well written, and the evaluation of the sender as untactful. The mismatch between
the choice that the sender has made for his email opening and the realistic social
distance with the recipient, and her role and status in the communication event has
caues the negative assessment of the structure of the email message and the
personality of the sender.

5.2.3. The request move

Because the communicative purpose of the examined emails is requestive, the
request move occurs in all messages. Most of the request acts used in the emails
have been evaluated as direct, reasonable and polite. The evaluators’ perception of
these requests can be explained in terms of the level of in/directness involved in
these requests, and the internal and external modification devices used to mitigate
or aggravate their imposition.

5.2.3.1. Sequential in/directness

The linguistic analysis of the realization of the request acts in the email corpus
shows that the conventionally indirect request strategy, *query preparatory*, was
used in more than half of requests evaluated as direct, whereas the direct request
strategies was used in 64% of requests evaluated as indirect. A reasonable
explanation for this contradiction between the participants’ evaluation and the
researcher’s analysis is that the evaluators used a different definition of what a
direct or indirect request is and a different approach in identifying direct and
indirect request messages. This finding may support the postmodern theorists’
claim that the linguistic behaviour in any interaction event has to be evaluated from
the perception of the participants in that event (cf. Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003, 2011;
Watts, 2005). Postmodern theorists believe that communication participants may
have a different understanding of what is a polite or appropriate linguistic behaviour
based on their experiences in social interaction. Thus, they differentiate between
two approaches to the evaluation of linguistic behaviour in terms of (im)politeness:
politeness 1 and politeness 2 (Eelen, 2001). The first refers to sociocultural group
members’ evaluation of the linguistic behaviour in interaction, whereas the latter
refers to the researchers’ interpretation of the linguistic behaviour and their generalizations about that behaviour (Eelen, 2001). In the present study, the researcher used a modified version of the traditional framework CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) for analysing the level of in/directness in INNESs’ requests. According to this framework, the researcher examined the request utterance (the head act) and decided its level of directness on the basis of matching its linguistic form with the framework categories. However, this analysis might have clashed with the evaluators’ definition of what is a direct or indirect request, especially if we know that they did not follow a particular framework in identifying in/directness and they did not look at the request utterance in isolation from the email co-text around the utterance.

It seems that the evaluators in this study have considered the email discourse as a whole in deciding whether INNESs’ requests are direct or indirect. It is likely that the position of the request act within the move sequence of the message and the information that the sender includes before the request act have influenced the evaluators’ decisions. This assumption seems plausible if we compare the structure of emails evaluated as conveying direct requests with that of emails evaluated as conveying indirect requests. For example, the request head acts in Texts 3, 9 and 10 (Section 4.3.2.1) are formulated in query preparatory strategy and they have been classified as conventionally indirect requests according to the analytical framework used in this study. However, the evaluators assessed these requests as direct. Texts 3, 9 and 10 start with the request act without including any preliminary moves such as giving reasons or providing background information before the request. In contrast, the request acts in Text 12 (Section 4.3.2.1) and Text 29 (Section 4.3.3.2.1) are formulated in direct request strategies, performative and need statement. However, the evaluators assessed these requests as indirect. The request utterances in Texts 12 and 29 are preceded by other moves. Most of the email wording has been employed to provide background information about the email situation including the circumstances and the reasons that motivated the sender to make the request. Thus, the requests in these messages have been evaluated as indirect. For instance, the request move in in Text 29 comes at the end of the body of the message preceded by three moves: expressing courtesy, grounder and establishing the background. The evaluators’ assessment of the in/directness of
the above requests seems to be influenced by the position of the request move within the email discourse sequence. Some requests lack sequential directness within the email discourse although their utterances are formulated in direct forms.

Sequential in/directness is more concerned with the position of the request act within the email sequence. It is quite different from the kind of in/directness identified through examining the request utterance in isolation from its co-text as emphasized in taxonomies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Chang and Hsu (1998) argue that in/directness of request email can be decided on the basis of the sequence of information in the email message. In their study of request emails written by American English native speakers and Chinese non-native speakers of English, Chang and Hsu conclude that American English speakers tend to structure their request email messages in a direct sequence (address-request-explanation), although the linguistic forms they use to realize their requests are indirect. They use this kind of directness in request emails, starting their messages with the request act, to reduce the imposition involved in reading long-winded messages on their recipients. On the other hand, Chinese non-native speakers structure their request email messages in an indirect sequence (salutation-preambles (facework)-reasons-request), but they formulate their request utterances in direct linguistic forms.

The sequential directness, exemplified in the email messages in Texts 3, 9 and 10, seems to be the preferred style of English native speakers in email communication and can positively influence their perception of other attributes of the email message, especially clarity and politeness. This assumption may explain the finding that most of the emails evaluated as having clear content and conveying polite requests have been evaluated as direct. Previous studies on request emails (Chang and Hsu, 1998; Murphy and Levy, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) also report findings that direct sequence style is positively evaluated as recipients tend to assess email messages constructed with a direct style to be clear and polite. Direct language style has been found as a characteristic of English native speakers’ email discourse (Holmes, 1994; Ma, 1996; Gains, 1999; Lan, 2000; Baron, 2001). It refers, according to Ma (1996), to the use of the email message to present the sender’s true intentions. However, non-native speakers may use indirect style in email communication due to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer from
their L1 (cf. Chang and Hsu, 1998; Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2008; Pan, 2012). Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) report that unlike native speakers, non-native speakers tend to make the request move after it has been justified in the email message due to pragmatic transfer from L1 and the insufficient exposure to the pragmalinguistic conventions of the target language. This indirect style in request emails can be perceived negatively by native speaker recipients. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) argues that the preference of sequential directness and brevity characterizes the native speakers’ communication style in request emails due to the belief that speed and directness are valued in email communication. Chang and Hsu (1998) contend that indirectness in the sequence of the request email message “could be considered as unnecessary detours which increase the degree of imposition in that it will take the receiver more time (and “money”) to read the messages on the screen and that there is higher possibility for the sender to confuse the receiver” (p. 136-137).

The analysis of INNESs’ request emails shows that the linguistic realization of request utterance (the request head act) can also influence the positive or negative rating of the request email. The formulation of the request head act with a particular level of in/directness, and internal and/or external modification can influence the evaluation of the politeness and reasonableness of the request made in the email message.

5.2.3.2. The realization of the request head acts

The analysis of the linguistic forms employed for the realization of the request acts in the examined emails shows that their authors use both direct and conventionally indirect request strategies. The direct request strategies, with imperative and want statement as the most frequent direct strategies, are more pervasive than indirect strategies in request emails evaluated as impolite and in those that evaluators would not like to receive in their future email communication. Direct strategies have also been found in half of the requests evaluated as unreasonable. INNESs’ tendency to use direct strategies may stem from their immature pragmatic competence and the lack of awareness of the conventions underlying appropriate request behaviour in the Australian culture. The use of direct strategies has been documented as a characteristic of non-native speakers’ linguistic behaviour in request emails (Chang
and Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2006; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Pan (2012) argues that direct request strategies are acquired earlier and used more often by learners with low proficiency levels. The frequent use of direct request strategies in INNESs’ emails can also be attributed to pragmalinguistic transfer from their L1. Direct strategies, especially imperatives and want statements, are the most frequent request strategies utilised in Arabic. Arabic native speakers, according to Aubed (2012), use imperatives and want statements to make requests in various situations. They use these direct forms in most situations but they mitigate their requests by attaching suprasegmental features (e.g., proper intonation) and lexical/phrasal modifiers (e.g., رجاءً – please) according to the characteristics of the social context (Aubed, 2012).

Direct request strategies can cause communication breakdowns and negative impressions on the part of English native speaking addressees. They can create negative effect in the perception of request emails, especially those sent in situations that involve hierarchical relationships, as is the case with the request email in Text 33 (Section 4.3.3.2.3). There are important features that characterize the situation of the request email in Text 33 (as explained in the situation description in the evaluation survey). As a teacher in the course that the student was taking, the recipient is the one with higher institutional status and power and she has the right to grant or reject the request according to her role as defined and assigned by the institution regulations. Moreover, the student may not have the right to request an extension of the assessment due date unless he presents a good reason for doing so, such as a health condition or other significant circumstances. It seems that the evaluators have considered these aspects of the situation and evaluated the request as unreasonable and impolite. The structure of the email in Text 33 shows that the sender has not adequately addressed the unequal-status and power relationship with the recipient, his right to make the request and the recipient’s obligation to grant the request. The email message starts with the request act which is formulated in the direct request form (want statement): ‘I would like to ask for further extension for my assessments’. The request is not mitigated with any syntactic, lexical or phrasal devices and the message does not include a clear and solid justification for requesting the extension. One of the evaluators of this email provides the following comment regarding the absence of a clear justification for the request, saying: “extension request reason a little unclear”. With the absence of an adequate
justification for the request, the realization of the request act in a direct linguistic form and the lack of proper mitigation, the sender seems to have misunderstood his right to make the request and the recipient’s obligation to comply, as well as their unequal power relationship.

The tendency of INNESs to employ direct request forms (e.g., imperative and want statement) in a number of their emails can be seen as an example of pragmatic failure. The negative impact of the use of direct request strategies in intercultural communication with English native speakers can be identified at social, contextual and pragmatic levels of social interaction. At the social level, request utterances formulated in direct strategies may not show the desirable politeness level, especially in situations where the recipient has a higher power than the sender and a remote social distance, and the request act implies a high level of imposition. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the degree of politeness required for formulating request speech acts is primarily determined by social power, social distance between the requester and the requestee and the imposition of the requesting act. The importance of these variables stems from the fact that they shape the way in which interlocutors structure and evaluate request acts in social context. In her discussion of appropriate and effective realization of face-threatening acts, Hendriks (2010) argues that non-native speakers need to learn how to vary the level of politeness according to the social characterization of the communication context, as well as the available linguistic forms for formulating FTAs in the target language.

Previous research has reported an increasing level of politeness with an increase of social power and social distance of the addressee (cf. Trosborg, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 1997). However, in email communication, as a text-only medium, senders may have uncertainty about how to encode their intentions adequately, especially in situations that include hierarchical relationships and impositions on the recipients (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). In our example email in Text 33, the sender may have failed to write a status-congruent request to his teacher due to the level of directness involved in his message and the lack of mitigation for the imposition of his request. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2016) argues that L2 learners may face a real challenge in composing status-congruent emails due to their limited linguistic ability and unfamiliarity with the norms and values of the target culture. The use of direct
strategies in request emails, especially in institutional settings where the recipient has higher social status and social power, is inappropriate as the power in these request emails is not assigned to the recipient (Bloch, 2002).

At the contextual level, the direct strategies may indicate the requester’s misunderstanding of his/her right to make the request and the addressee’s obligation to comply. The contextual variables that influence the realization and perception of requests, according to Blum-Kulka and House (1989) and Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), include the right of the sender to issue the request and the obligation of the recipient to comply. Blum-Kulka and House demonstrate that even in situations where the variables of power and social distance are relatively clear, the participants in the communication event may have a different assessment of specific contextual features, especially the right of the requester to make the request and the obligation of the requestee to comply. The requester’s right and the recipient’s obligation seem to be important factors on which the reasonableness of INNES’ requests has been judged. According to Hendriks (2010), the reasonableness of requests can be determined on the basis of the assessment of rights and obligations of the interactants, and the recipients’ likelihood of compliance. The requester’s right and the requestee’s obligation are measured on the basis of the contextual characteristics of the situation, such as the relationship between the requester and the requestee, their role, status and age. In a number of emails examined in this study, especially in those sent in unequal-power relationship situations, the right of the sender and the obligation of the recipient seem to be addressed inadequately; therefore, these requests have attracted negative evaluation, as is the case with the emails in Texts 17 (Section 4.3.2.2), 24, 25 (Section 4.3.3.1.3), 31 (Section 4.3.3.2.2) and 37 (Section 4.3.3.3.2).

The use of direct request strategies is one of the features that shows the sender’s overestimation of his right to make the request and the recipient’s obligation to comply. The direct request forms such as imperative and want statement make the request look like an order coming from someone with a higher status and power. For instance, the formulation of the request utterances in direct request forms in Texts 31 and 37 and the lack of proper mitigation of the request force may indicate the senders’ lack of awareness of the institutional rules that govern the sender’s right to make the request and the recipient’s obligation to comply. Both emails were
sent to recipients with higher institutional positions than the senders. The use of
direct request acts and the lack of mitigation in both emails increase the sender’s
right to make the request and recipient’s obligation to comply. They also render the
email messages inappropriate in situations with unequal-power relationships. Thus,
this linguistic behaviour has caused the Australian evaluators’ negative perceptions
of the reasonableness and politeness of the two request emails as they may have a
different assessment of the contextual features of the situations and the expected
structure for request emails in these situations. Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996,
p. 58) contend that “…the use of unmitigated, speaker dominant ‘I want' and 'I need'
forms by lower status requesters seems to elevate both the right of the requesters
and the obligation of the requestee”.

At the pragmatic level, direct request forms can increase the level of request
imposition and decrease the level of its politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987)
believe that any increase in the directness level of requests can decrease the
politeness level of these requests as direct request can damage the negative face of
the addressee. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) asserts that requests, especially
direct ones, can cause damage to the addressee’s positive face as well because they
indicate the requester’s disregard of the requestee’s feeling. Non-native speakers
lacking adequate pragmatic competence diverge in their assessment of the social
and contextual variables underlying the communication context and in formulating
appropriate requests that meet these variables. That may result in pragmatic failure
which can trigger negative perceptions in intercultural communication settings.
When non-native speakers deviate in the realization of request speech acts, this can
lead to negative perception of the politeness level of their requests (cf. Economidou-
Kogetsidis, 2011).

On the other hand, the conventionally indirect strategy, query preparatory, was
used slightly more often than direct strategies in requests evaluated as reasonable
and polite, and in those that the evaluators would not mind receiving in future email
communication. The use of the query preparatory strategy in these requests seemed
to reflect positively on the evaluators’ perceptions of these requests. For instance,
the requests in Texts 16 (Section 4.3.2.2), 22 (Section 4.3.3.1.3) and 26 (Section
4.3.3.1.4), which are formulated in the query preparatory strategy, were evaluated
as polite, reasonable and acceptable for future email communication. This positive influence may be related to the dominance of the conventionally indirect strategy *query preparatory* as a request strategy in English. Previous research has documented that English native speakers prefer the indirect request strategies, especially the *query preparatory*, when making requests in different situations to different addressees. The results of the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), which examined cross-cultural, situational and individual variability in the realization of requests across languages and varieties including Australian, American and British English, indicate that native speakers of English are the least direct. Speakers of Australian English have been found to prefer high levels of indirectness in most situations with most addressees. Blum-Kulka (1987) argues that the native speakers’ preference of *query preparatory* formula in requests stems from the fact that this formula enables the requester to avoid pragmatic ambiguity and coerciveness. She defines politeness as the balance between the need for pragmatic clarity and the need to avoid coerciveness which can be achieved in the case of *query preparatory*.

However, the use of *query preparatory* in a number of INNESs’ request emails has not prevented the negative evaluation of these requests. Although the *query preparatory* strategy is the acceptable linguistic routine for making requests in the Australian culture (cf. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Merrison et al., 2012), the use of this strategy without adequate mitigation seems to be insufficient to reduce the imposition of the request. For instance, the email message in Text 21 (Section 4.3.3.1.2) has been evaluated as being poorly written, inappropriate in its context and conveying an impolite request although the request utterance in this message is formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy, *query preparatory*. The analysis of this email shows that the body of the message consists of two moves: the external modifier *grounder* and the request act. The request move features the absence of internal mitigating devices and the lack of adequate external mitigation. Although the message starts with the *grounder*: ‘as you are free now and have some time to meet me’, this move does not adequately justify the request made in the message or mitigate its imposition. In fact, it provides inappropriate justification for the request and increases the degree of coerciveness by insisting that the recipient has to meet the sender because she has time to do so. The absence of adequate mitigating
strategies and the use of inappropriate justification for the request act render the request message coercive and incongruent with the power relationship and the social distance involved in its situation.

It seems that the level of in/directness of the request utterances in INNESs’ emails is not the only basis on which the evaluators have assessed their requests. The evaluators may have considered the social and contextual characteristics of the situation of each email and the amount and type of modification that the senders have included to redress or aggravate the imposition of their requests. Besides the social variables of power, distance and the rank of imposition, contextual variables of the situations of INNESs’ request emails may not be appropriately addressed, especially in emails that lack sufficient mitigation. That might have led the evaluators to form negative perception of the reasonableness and politeness of the requests in these emails. Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) and Hendriks (2010) argue that the negative perceptions of request emails and their senders are likely to occur if the requests in these emails lack adequate levels of mitigation using appropriate modification devices.

5.2.3.3. The role of request modification

In addition to the use of request strategies that fail to redress the request imposition using an appropriate level of in/directness, the lack of sufficient and elaborate mitigation in a number of the request emails seems to cause the evaluators’ negative perceptions. As the studied emails convey requests that imply imposition on the recipients, the use of internal and external mitigation devices is necessary to redress their imposition and to protect the face of the recipients. The degree of imposition alone, according to Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), does not determine the positive or negative evaluation of requests, but it is the manner in which the requests are formulated. The internal and external mitigating devices found in INNESSs’ requests are less frequent in requests evaluated as unreasonable, impolite and unacceptable for future email communication than in those evaluated positively on these attributes. Some of the negatively evaluated requests are formulated in the conventionally indirect strategy; however, they lack sufficient and varied mitigating devices and that may explain the negative perceptions of these requests. The
evaluators’ comments on a number of INNESs’ emails indicate their concerns about the increased level of the imposition in these emails (on the basis of the social and contextual variables involved in the context of communication and the rank of request imposition) and the lack of mitigation used to redress this imposition. For example, the message in Text 23 (Section 4.3.3.1.3), sent by an employee to his manager, attracted the following comment from one of its evaluators: “I think it [the request] could be more polite with additional mitigating strategies, such as ‘would you be able to address’ instead of ‘please write’”. The evaluator has noticed the high degree of imposition the request conveys as it requires the manager to praise the sender on pre-determined points, e.g., ‘explain how I am a good character...’, or ‘I have no problem with English...’. The evaluator would also have noticed the low level of mitigation effort that the sender employs to redress the imposition of his request, which is demanding in terms of effort and time. He suggests restructuring the request utterance in a mitigated query preparatory formula about the recipient’s ability to comply.

Another evaluator makes similar remarks on the request in Text 34 (Section 4.3.3.3.1). The structure of this email indicates the sender’s effort to mitigate his request through explaining the reasons for making the request and formulating the request utterance in the query preparatory form mitigated with internal modification devices, e.g., ‘wondering’, ‘if you’, ‘kindly’. However, one of the evaluators is not satisfied with the amount and type of mitigation used in the above request and suggests the following:

Comment 4: “The writer makes a request, but could express this in a more polite fashion such as “I wonder if I could ask a favour of you” or “I was wondering if you would be able to fill out this form on my behalf etc” Perhaps it is the lack of modal verbs”.

The above comment indicates that the request in Text 34 needs more mitigation to increase its politeness level. The evaluator suggests the use of the external mitigating device, getting a pre-commitment: “I wonder if I could ask a favour of you” or the formulation of the request in a query preparatory form, “I was wondering if you would be able to fill out this form on my behalf”, which includes
The negative impact of the underuse of mitigating devices in INNESs’ request emails on the evaluators’ perceptions is also noticed in the evaluators’ comments on other emails, such as: “there is no ‘please’ within the request”, “doesn’t say please” and “‘don’t forget to organise’ is a direct order, barely mitigated with ‘please’ at the end”. The underuse of elaborate and varied mitigating strategies in INNESs’ request emails mirrors findings from previous studies which demonstrate the lack of request modification devices in non-native speakers’ requests. These studies have concluded that non-native speakers use fewer and less elaborate politeness strategies in the form of speech act modification than native speakers (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Maier 1992; Trosborg 1995; Gass and Neu 1996; Hendriks 2002). The underuse of modification devices in non-native speakers’ requests has been attributed to the lack of linguistic competence and pragmatic infelicities (cf. Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, 2016). Bjørge (2007, p. 63) claims that FTAs need to be formulated in a socially appropriate manner through the use of mitigating devices and that seems difficult in email exchanges written by English non-native speakers "whose English proficiency may not encompass the subtle nuances embedding the cultural identity of native speakers". Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) explain non-native speakers’ underuse of internal mitigating devices, especially the syntactic devices, in terms of their lack of proficiency in English compared to native speakers who acquire these devices naturally as part of their grammatical competence.

As indicated in the above comments from the evaluators, the use of elaborate mitigation strategies can add positive effect to the request message and increase its perceived politeness. Native speakers of English may not like to receive requests with an increased level of coerciveness and imposition due to the lack of adequate mitigation. The utilisation of mitigating devices such as the syntactic devices: modals and conditional constructions, according to Reiter (1997), increases the negative politeness as they indicate tentativeness and indirectness in requests. Tentativeness and indirectness have been found, according to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Beal (1990, 1998), as the main characteristics of the preferred requestive
behaviour in Australian culture. In their analysis of requests produced by Australian participants, Blum-Kulka et al. report that Australians show a high preference of indirectness and tentativeness through the use of indirect request strategies and request mitigating devices. The Australians’ preference for tentativeness and indirectness may have clashed with the underuse of mitigating devices, especially the syntactic devices, in the request emails examined in this study. And that may explain their negative perceptions of INNESs’ requests that lack adequate levels of mitigation.

The lack of sufficient and elaborate mitigation in request emails can not only negatively influence the perception of the request act but also the perception of the message structure and the sender personality. The data analysis shows that a number of INNESs’ request emails that lack sufficient and elaborate mitigation have been evaluated negatively in terms of the structure of the message, the request performed in the message, the sender personality and the evaluators’ willingness to receive future emails from the sender. For example, the request email in Text 43 (Section 4.3.3.4.1), sent by a research student to his supervisor, has attracted negative assessment across these four dimensions of email evaluation. Although the request in this email has been evaluated as reasonable, this email has attracted negative evaluation in terms of the structure of the message (unclear, informal, not well written and inappropriate in context); the request (impolite and unacceptable for future email communication); and the sender personality (unfriendly, untactful, inconsiderate of the recipient and unwelcome in future email communication). One of the evaluators makes the following comment about this email:

Comment 5: Sure, it is reasonable; however, there should be a reason given for why the supervisor has to talk to the academic (the same reason that we were given, for example: ‘I have spoken to her, but she asked for you to approach her with the request; so, could you please ask her’.

The evaluator indicates that the request email in Text 43 lacks proper justification for its imposition and suggests that the sender could use the external modifier grounder that provides reasons which justify and explain the circumstances that required sending the request email. Faerch and Kasper (1989) argue that with the use of grounder, the requester can let the addressee know about the purpose of
his/her request and reduce the threat to the addressee’s face. They contend that "giving reasons, justifications and explanations for an action opens up an emphatic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor’s underlying motive(s)" (p. 239). Previous research has demonstrated that the underuse of mitigating devices in request emails can cause negative evaluation of the request message and the sender personality. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2016) claims that unmodified request emails can result in native speaker recipients’ negative judgements not only about the email message but about the email sender as well. In her study of the English native speakers’ perceptions of request emails by Dutch non-native speakers, Hendriks (2010) demonstrates that the underuse of elaborate request modification can negatively affect the sender’s likability as native speakers evaluate the senders of request emails with less modification as less agreeable. Similarly, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) claims that English native speakers often evaluate non-native speakers’ request emails as quite abrupt due to the lack of sufficient mitigation.

Furthermore, the linguistic analysis of this study shows that most request emails which use an upgrading modifier (such as the internal upgrader *intensifier* and the external upgrader *emphasis on urgency*) have been perceived negatively by the evaluators. The upgrader is used to intensify the request imposition through emphasizing the need for immediate compliance and the urgency of the act or information requested. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) claims that the inclusion of an upgrader in request emails can give a negative impression of the email and the sender because the upgrader intensifies the email force and makes the request coercive. For example, the message in Text 31 (Section 4.3.3.2.2), which was sent by an employee working in a community service program to the manager of the program, has been evaluated negatively on most of the evaluation statements. The purpose of this message is to request a meeting with the manager to discuss a work-related issue. It is structured in a way that intensifies the request force due to the increased level of directness, the lack of mitigation and the use of the upgrader ‘as soon as possible’. The body of the message has only one rhetorical move, which is the request act formulated in one of the most direct request forms, *want statement:* ‘I would like to meet you…’. The message does not provide information that clarifies the issue, the reasons that justify the request or any external modifiers that
redress the imposition. It does not include any syntactic or lexical/phrasal modifiers that mitigate the request imposition; on the contrary, it includes the lexical/phrasal intensifier, ‘as soon as possible’, which is defined, according to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), as a time intensifier that stresses the urgency of the request. Thus, this message has been evaluated as unclear, informal, not well written and inappropriate in context. The request in this message has been evaluated as direct, unreasonable and impolite. The sender of the message has been evaluated as unfriendly, unrespectable and inconsiderate of the recipient. Moreover, the evaluators suggest that they would not like to receive a similar request or to be emailed by the same sender.

The use of the intensifiers, ‘as soon as possible’, ‘soon’, etc., in request emails written in English can be regarded as a sign of lack of consideration of the recipients and their time commitment. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) demonstrates that the use of the upgrader, ‘as soon as possible’, in the request email messages examined in her study has induced the evaluators’ negative evaluation of these messages as being rude and inconsiderate of the recipients’ time. In their study of English native and non-native speakers’ linguistic behaviour in email communication and its impact on recipients’ perceptions, Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) find that request emails that impose time-frames on the recipient are evaluated negatively, whereas request emails that do not mention time or leave time considerations to the recipient are evaluated positively. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig argue that the use of unreasonable time-frames in request emails can cause pragmatic infelicity and increase the imposition and the cost of the request.

5.2.4. Closing

All but two INNESs’ emails include a closing move. The pervasiveness of closings in the studied emails shows the authors’ awareness of the functions of this move and its role as a rhetorical move that distinguishes email interaction from other forms of CMC communication. The use of contextually appropriate closings in a number of the examined emails has added a positive effect to the evaluators’ perceptions of these emails. The positive role of the closing move in influencing
the evaluators’ perceptions can be explained on the basis of the important functions that this move performs within the email discourse. Email closing, according to Crystal (2006), has two basic functions. It indicates the end of the email message and provides an extended identification of the sender, e.g., his/her name, qualification, position or workplace. The positive role of email closings has been highlighted in a number of netiquette manuals (e.g., Angell and Heslop, 1994; Taylor, 2009; Gupta, 2012) which emphasize the necessity of ending an email message with an appropriate form of closing.

The closing moves examined in this study feature a variety of formulae utilised by the email authors. They range from the informal forms such as ‘thanks + the first name’ or first name only to formal forms such as ‘yours + first name and last name’ or ‘best regards + first name and last name’. Another feature that characterizes the closing move is the length of the closing formulae ranging from very short (e.g., first name only or ‘thanks’ only) to extensive closings that include details about the sender, e.g., their full name, qualifications, position, faculty or workplace. Previous research reveals similar findings about the variety of closing configurations. Crystal (2006) reports a remarkable amount of variation in closing formulae that he examined in his 500-email sample. This variation, according to Crystal, can be explained in terms of the variety of the purposes for which the closings are used (e.g., affection, gratitude, expectation and communicative intent), the variety of the contextual features of the interaction situation (e.g., power relationship between the sender and the recipient, their social distance, role, age and gender), and the influence of the sender’s cultural background and personality type.

The impact of the closing move on the evaluation of the email message and its sender depends on the way in which this move is structured and the contextual characteristics of the situation in which it is used. The analysis of the closing move in emails evaluated positively across the four evaluation dimensions (the email discourse, the request act, the sender personality, and future communication) shows that the closings of most of these emails are used to achieve one of two main purposes: affection or gratitude. Most of these closings include good wishes expressions (e.g., ‘regards’, ‘my regards’, and ‘best regards’) or thanking expressions (e.g., ‘thanks’ and ‘thank you’). Good wishes, especially ‘regards’ and ‘best regards’, followed by first name or first name and last name have been used
more frequently than other closing formulae. The use of good wishes followed by the identification of the sender seems to align with email users’ preference of this formula in English email interactions. According to Crystal (2006), senders usually include two elements of closing formulae in emails written in English: the best wishes pre-closing and the identification of the sender.

The inclusion of good wishes in closing moves is highly recommended as an appropriate closing in email communication. Gupta (2012) recommends ‘best regards’ as the most convenient email closing form in English. In a number of positively evaluated emails, INNESs have employed the good wishes formula followed by the sender’s name, especially in situations where the recipients know the senders and have a previous email contact with them, as is the case with the email message in Text 26 (Section 4.3.3.1.4) which closes with the formula, ‘kind regards + the sender’s first name’. This message was sent to a finance broker with whom the sender had previous face-to-face, phone and email contact. The previous contact between the two may explain the use of the sender’s first name only in the closing move as the sender might have assumed that the recipient knew him. Nevertheless, the previous contact does not necessarily imply a close social distance between the sender and the recipient and that may explain the use of the formal farewell ‘kind regards’ in the closing of the email message. These contextual considerations underlying the structure of the closing move of the email message in Text 26 seems to play a role in the positive evaluation of this email message. The structure of the message, its request act, the personality of its sender and its rating on prospective future communication have been perceived positively across all the evaluation attributes.

In other email messages, INNESs employed other identification details in addition to their full names in the closing move, especially in situations where they did not have previous contact with the recipient. For instance, the closing move employed in Text 6 (Section 4.3.2.1) consists of the good wishes ‘best regards’ followed by the student’s full name and his identification number. In addition to its basic function as an indicator of the end of the message, this closing is used as an identifier that helps the recipient to identify the sender. The email in Text 6 was sent by a student to an admissions officer in an Australian university. The student did not know the recipient and this email was his first contact with her. The closing
move in the student’s email has redressed the imposition of spending time and effort by the recipient in looking for his identification details or sending him an email asking for more information. The structure of the closing move in the student’s email seems to be based on a logical consideration of the contextual characteristics of the situation. It is one of the factors that may have motivated the positive evaluation of the structure of the message, the request made in the message and the personality attributes of its sender.

One of the factors that may have caused negative evaluation of some INNESs’ email messages is the inappropriate use or inadequate structure of the closing move. In a number of the emails, the formulae used to close these emails indicate that the sender does not observe the contextual characteristics of the situation, especially the power relationship with the recipient, their role and the social distance involved. Email closing, according to Crystal (2006), needs to be formulated appropriately according to the status, power and distance of the recipient. For example, the closing formula employed in the email message in Text 46 indicates that the sender has either underestimated the actual power relationship and social distance with the recipient or structured his email according to different understanding of rights and obligations in a Western academy.

Text 46

Subject: Providing supervision

Hi [Recipient’s first name] [Opening], I hope you have a nice holiday [Expressing courtesy]. I would like to tell you I’m doing Minor thesis next semester [Establishing the background]. I will be happy if you supervise my research process [Request]. I have attached my proposal, if you have time to read it [Referring to attachment], I will be grateful [Thanking/appreciating the recipient].

thanks. [Sender’s first name and last name] [Closing]

The closing move in the message in Text 46 might have been one of the factors that render the message status-incongruent and which has prompted the negative perception of the message and its sender. The situation in which this email has occurred implies an unequal-power relationship between the sender (a student) and the recipient (a university lecturer). The lecturer is the one with more power as dictated by her role and status in the university. The student and the lecturer also have a study relationship which does not usually imply a close social distance.
Accordingly, the email message is expected to be an example of a formal interaction between the student and the lecturer (cf. Murphy and Levy, 2006). However, the structure of the message shows informality, starting from the informal greeting, ‘Hi + first name’, and ‘I hope you have a nice holiday’ to the use of the informal closing, ‘thanks + first name and last name’. One of the evaluators is upset with the structure of this email as shown in the following comment:

Comment 6: “A disaster of a request. It is too clumsy, poorly written and considered and too short. More formality was needed and the student needed to identify themselves and their purpose directly after they have said sorry for the intrusion. They needed to describe their project in the body of the email and then say the proposal was attached if the lecturer would like to consider it”.

The evaluator suggests that the above email has to be structured in a way that increases the clarity of its content and the formality of its style. Formality, according to Murphy and Levy (2006), is an indicator of politeness in email communication from Australian native speakers’ perspective. The closing move in this email message is one of the factors that may have led to the negative evaluation of the message. The use of the informal expression ‘thanks’ in the closing formula increases the informality level of the message. Similarly, in their study of Australian academics’ perceptions of email messages that they receive from overseas, Murphy and Levy found that Australian academics perceive emails with formal greetings and closings as polite because these two elements are clear indicators of the formality level of the email message. Murphy and Levy also demonstrate that lack of formality is one of the reasons that Australian academics provide for justifying their perception of overseas email messages as impolite. Furthermore, as Callahan (2011) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) argue, the use of a thanking expression as a closing move in email messages sent by someone with a lower social power and status can reflect negatively on the message and its sender as it indicates an assumption that the request will be granted.

So far, I have discussed the role of the four basic moves: subject line, opening, request and closing in the structure of the request email and their influence on the evaluators’ perceptions. With the use of these four moves, the request email can achieve its purpose (conveying a request for an action or information), but the
perception of the message and its sender depends on the linguistic choices used for formulating these moves and the contextual characteristics of the situation in which the email interaction occurs, as we have seen in the previous sections. However, there are other moves which perform various functions within the email discourse. These moves can be called optional as the sender has the choice to use all or some of them, or to leave them all out. It has been observed in this study that the optional moves play an important role in adding positive effect to the evaluation of INNESs’ email messages and their senders, and this what I will discuss in the next section.

5.3. Brevity vs verbosity

Previous studies report brevity as a preferable characteristic of the message in email communication. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) reports an overall preference for directness and brevity both in English non-native speakers’ and in native speakers’ emails. Similarly, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) argues that English non-native and native speakers maintain brevity and clarity in their request emails through employing indirect request strategies with few mitigation devices. The preference of brevity in email communication may also stem from the view of email as an impersonal text-based communication medium that is used for task-based communication (cf. Sproul and Kiesler, 1986; Walther et al., 1994). Email users are expected to be direct, avoid long-winded jargon and focus on the transaction that they want to achieve (Taylor, 2009). Some netiquette manuals (e.g., Taylor, 2009; Gupta, 2012) advise participants in business email communication, especially in transactional communication, to consider their recipients to be busy people and keep their messages direct, clear and brief. However, in this study, not many evaluators assess brevity positively. A special concern is expressed about brevity causing lack of clarity due to insufficient information provided in the co-text of the request act.

Comments collected from the evaluators indicate a general preference for the inclusion of information and details that clarify the context and purpose of the email message. For example, the brief structure of the email message in Text 45 (Section 4.3.3.4.2) sent by a customer buying a case cover for his phone to an online seller
was assessed negatively by most of the evaluators. Although some evaluators assessed the request made in this email as direct and polite, and its sender as friendly, other evaluators indicated their dissatisfaction with the brief structure of the message and rated the structure of the email as unclear, informal, not well written and inappropriate in context as seen in comments 7 and 8.

Comment 7: “Not enough information eg [sic] is there already an order? If so reference number? Where to send the case to? Which case as the supplier might have multiple modals?”

Comment 8: “It's clear what he wants, but there isn't enough information”.

The evaluators also rated the request made in Text 45 as unreasonable and unacceptable for future email communication. Their comments on the request also raised concerns regarding the lack of information necessary to clarify what the sender wanted, as suggested in comments 9 and 10.

Comment 9: “Typically he [the sender] should’ve used the order form to make requests about his order”.

Comment 10: “Not enough information from the sender”.

For the evaluation of the sender personality, the evaluators rated the sender of the email in Text 45 as untactful, inconsiderate of the recipient and unwelcome in future email communication. They provided the following reasons for such an evaluation:

Comment 11: “It’s not considerate to provide few details”.

Comment 12: “I don’t like receiving emails from people who don’t provide enough information”.

As indicated in the above comments, brevity and the lack of information in the email message in Text 45 have caused negative assessment of the structure of the message, the request it conveys and the sender personality. The structure of this message shows directness and brevity as it includes four moves only. It has a subject line indicating that the content of the message is about the case cover colour. It opens with the informal greeting ‘hi’ and the body of the message includes one move – the request act formulated in a query preparatory strategy. In closing, the
The inclusion of only the request act in the body of the message may increase the recipient’s uncertainty about what is being asked in the message and how it can be done. It can also, according to Vignovic and Thompson (2010) and Gabbard (2016), make the recipient form a negative assessment of the sender’s personality. Gabbard argues that brevity in email communication can have negative consequences because the recipient may perceive the sender as curt or rude. Vignovic and Thompson claim that emails that convey only necessary information are prone to be negatively perceived by recipients. They expect that unusually short emails can lead to negative perceptions of the agreeableness of the sender and cause problems for interpersonal relationships.

In contrast, the evaluation of other INNESs’ emails indicates an overall positive assessment of emails that include not only the request act but also other moves that clarify the request and/or mitigate its pragmatic force. The evaluators’ comments on these emails report an overall preference of email messages that provide sufficient information and details that they regard necessary in the communication context. The discourse analysis of the studied emails shows that most of the emails evaluated positively are those that include other moves in addition to the four basic ones. The additional moves have been identified in literature (cf. Crystal, 2006; Hayati et al., 2011) as optional moves within the email structure. It can be assumed that the inclusion of these moves in the email discourse can positively influence the evaluators’ judgements about the message structure, the request act, the sender personality and willingness to engage in future email communication with the sender.

The positive role of optional moves in request emails may also stem from the need to compensate for the lack of contextual cues and paralinguistic features. Participants in face-to-face interactions depend on the direct and indirect information available in the context to make an accurate assessment of the situation of their interaction and to form impressions about their interlocutors. They also draw on the paralinguistic cues to help them to cultivate and convey their feelings, impressions and intentions. Hancock and Dunham (2001) argue that interlocutors in face-to-face encounters use autonomous cues such as the physical appearance of
the interlocutors and social markers available in the context such as age, gender and position of interlocutors, as well as paralinguistic and non-verbal cues such as intonation, tone and face expressions in conveying and gathering information necessary for impression formation. However, when communicating through a text-based CMC medium like email, these resources are very limited due to the decontextualized nature of the text-based medium. Email recipients tend to base their impressions about the senders and their understanding of the content of the email messages on the textual cues available in these messages. The absence of non-verbal and social context cues in email communication can make the recipients form inaccurate impressions about the senders.

Participants in social interactions, according to Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger and Calabrese, 1975; Berger and Bradac, 1982), tend to form impressions about each other to reduce their uncertainty so that they can make better predictions about the attitudes and behaviours of others. Byron and Baldridge (2007) claim that in email communication, recipients interpret whatever cues they find in the email message to understand the attitudes, intentions and behaviours of the senders. They argue that the lack of non-verbal cues motivates the recipients to base their impressions about the senders and the interpretation of their linguistic behaviour on the textual cues they find in the email message. Similarly, Walther (1992) rejects the assumption that the non-verbal cues are the only means by which interaction participants can form impressions about each other. He points out that CMC participants can form impressions about the attitudes and behaviours of others on the basis of textual cues available in the message. Accordingly, the optional moves employed in INNESs’ emails can be seen as textual cues that help the recipients understand the content of the message and form positive impressions about the senders and their linguistic behaviour if these moves are structured appropriately according to the contextual characteristics of the email situation. The most frequent optional moves identified in this study can be categorized into two main categories according to their functions within the email message discourse: discourse orientation moves and affect moves.
5.3.1. Discourse orientation moves

*Introducing self* and *establishing the background* act as orientation moves within the email message discourse (see Table 1). According to Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010, p. 92), the orientation moves are the “opening discourse moves which serve an orientation function but do not necessarily mitigate or aggravate the request in any way”. The *introducing self* move is used as an introductory unit in which the senders introduce their names, positions and provide other identification information. *Establishing the background* is found to be the most pervasive optional move in INNESs’ emails, especially in those evaluated positively on the evaluation attributes. It provides information about the context of the email communication, the circumstances that required sending the request email and information necessary for the accomplishment of the request act.

These discourse orientation moves are found more often in emails evaluated as clear, formal, well written and appropriate in context than in those evaluated as not possessing these attributes. They have also been found more frequently in emails sent by senders evaluated as friendly, respectable, tactful, considerate of the recipient and welcomed in future email communication than in those sent by senders evaluated as not having these attributes. The positive effect of the *introducing self* and *establishing the background* moves on the evaluation of INNESs’ emails can be ascribed to their role in increasing the intelligibility of the content of the email message. It can also be ascribed to their role in decreasing the imposition of an ambiguous email that may require spending time and effort to understand its content. For instance, both moves are used in the email message in Text 6 (Section 4.3.2.1) which was sent by a student to the faculty admission officer. Before making the request, the message starts with introducing the sender as a new PhD student in the faculty. Then it provides background information about his situation and the circumstances that motivated him to send the request. The inclusion of both moves in this email can reflect positively on the intelligibility of the email content. The recipient is likely to identify the sender and understand the reasons that underlie his need to make the request. Thus, having all this information about the sender and his situation, the recipient may find it easier to make a decision whether to grant the request or not. The information provided in the *establishing
The background move may also diminish the recipient’s need to spend time and effort trying to understand the content of the message or to reply to the sender asking for clarification. Thus, the email in Text 6 has been evaluated as having a clear content, well written structure and appropriateness in context. The request made in this email has been evaluated as reasonable, polite and acceptable in future email communication, and the sender as friendly, tactful and considerate of the recipient. The evaluators also suggest that they would not mind receiving future emails from this sender.

In their comparative study of native and non-native students’ request emails, Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) report the inclusion of the orientation move in these emails as having a positive effect on the interpretation of the request due to the functions that it can perform within the email discourse:

The orientation move in this native speaker’s request functions not only to establish the focus of the request but also operates at an interpersonal level, serving to establish the extent of shared knowledge between the speaker and hearer and in doing so, decreasing the sense of social distance and increasing a sense of solidarity and involvement in the discourse.

Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010, p. 101)

Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis argue that non-native speakers may lack an adequate ability to manage shared knowledge in their interactive requests and that may lead to negative impressions. These negative impressions can be ascribed to the absence of the positive role of establishing the background at the interpersonal level, as highlighted in the above quotation: establishing the shared knowledge, decreasing the social distance and increasing solidarity and involvement.

The positive role of the discourse orientation moves is also highlighted in email netiquette manuals which recommend starting email messages, especially in business communication, with opening moves that identify the sender and provide background information that sets the scene. Angell and Heslop (1994, p. 22) make the following recommendation regarding the use of the introducing self move in the email message:
Identify yourself appropriately in the first few lines after your greeting if you’re sending a message to someone who doesn’t know you. It might be beneficial to let your reader know what department or company you work for or who referred you to him or her.

In her ‘Four Point Plan’ for composing adequate email messages, Taylor (2009) recommends four sections to be included in the body of the email message: ‘opening’, ‘details’, ‘action’ and ‘closing’ (p. 100). The opening section is the first part of the body of the message which includes the relevant background information that helps the recipient understand the context of the message. It is where the sender sets the scene and reminds the recipient of previous communication and events relevant to the context of the email. Taylor believes that writing brief messages that do not provide necessary background information is one of the common mistakes in email communication. She contends that the opening section of the email is the most difficult part to write as senders may not know where to start and what to include. However, the positive role of the opening section, according to Taylor, is attributed to the fact that it is the part where the sender can create ‘a real bond’ with the recipient (p. 101).

The absence of discourse orientation moves, especially the establishing the background move, in a number of INNESs’ emails has been reflected negatively on the evaluation of these emails. As we have seen in section 5.3, the evaluators’ comments on the email message in Text 45 ascribe the negative evaluation of this message to the lack of the required information to understand the message content. Most of the comments collected in this study indicate the evaluators’ preference of including information that sets the scene and clarifies the request email and its circumstances. Emails that lack the necessary information have attracted negative perceptions towards the email message and its sender, as is the case with the following email in Text 47.

Text 47

Subject: Log in issue [Subject line]

Good Morning [The Organization’s name] IT [Opening]

Hope you are well [Expressing courtesy]. Could you please assist me with my login issue? [Request]

Thanks a lot
The email in Text 47 was sent by an employee working in an organization to the Information and Technology (IT) office of the organization. The sender could not log into the organization website; therefore, he sent this email to request help from the IT office. His email message does not include information about the sender (e.g., his name, position or identification number) or a description of the issue and what he wants the IT recipient to help him with. The lack of identification information and background information about the issue for which the sender seeks support has negatively influenced the evaluators’ perception of the structure of the email message. The message structure has been evaluated as unclear, informal and not well written. One of the evaluators rates the message as unclear because it provides “[n]o details of the issue”. Another evaluator views this email message as follows:

Comment 13: “It is not clear what the nature of the log in issue is nor is any context given around the problem logging in. We can infer that it is likely the author's user name and password is not working for them”.

Obviously, the lack of background information for the above email is the main motive behind the negative evaluation of its structure. Establishing the background information, as indicated in the comments above, is needed to help the recipient understand the issue and how they can help the sender to fix it. The lack of background information, as comment 13 suggests, may compel the recipient to make inferences about the action requested in the message. Flynn and Khan (2003) emphasize the importance of including contextual information in email communication due to the fact that the sender’s meaning becomes vulnerable to misconstruction or misinterpretation if his/her email message is taken out of context. Providing the necessary background information can also reduce the imposition of the request email as the recipient does not have to spend time trying to understand or infer what the sender wants. It can also decrease the degree of imposition as the recipient will not be required to send emails seeking clarification from the sender, as argued by one of the evaluators in comment 14 on another email from the data:
Comment 14: “This is too short with no explanation as to the precise nature of the proposed topic. Also, some explanation was needed to set the request in context so the lecturer has the best possibility in understanding what the student was asking. Such brevity forces the lecturer to seek clarification and increases the imposition on her”.

Comment 14 has been made regarding the evaluation of the structure of an email message sent by a student to a lecturer in an Australian university. In this message, the student asks for the lecturer’s permission to write about a topic that is not included in the lecturer’s list of the assignment topics. The body of the message includes two moves only: introducing self (‘I am one of your students in evening class’) and the request act (‘Regarding to the major assignment, can I write about CLT in the EFL context’). There is no information provided about the context of this email such as which unit the student is doing, which assignment he is talking about, how this new topic is relevant and why he is interested in this topic. All these and other possible questions may impose on the lecturer to write a reply asking for background information about the context of the student’s request, as highlighted in the last sentence of the above comment. Similarly, previous research on email communication has documented the negative impact of the lack of necessary information in emails on the perceptions of these emails and their senders. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) demonstrate that native and non-native speakers’ request emails that do not include adequate explanations can trigger the recipients’ negative perceptions of the politeness and appropriateness of these emails, and their reluctance to fulfil the requests. Carmel (1999) reports that American English native speakers perceive overly concise email messages as rude. Vignovic and Thompson (2010) claim that unusually short email messages are likely to trigger the recipient’s negative perception of the sender’s personality traits.

5.3.2. Affect moves

Expressing courtesy, promoting further contact and thanking/appreciating the recipient act as affect moves within the email discourse for their role in stimulating the recipient’s positive impressions and developing interpersonal relationships (Table 1). These moves occur more frequently in emails evaluated as having clear
content, formal style, well written structure and contextual appropriateness than in those evaluated as lacking these attributes. They also occur more often in emails sent by senders evaluated as friendly, respectable, tactful and considerate of the recipient than in emails sent by senders evaluated as not having these characteristics. Furthermore, the evaluators indicate that they would not mind receiving future emails from most of senders who have used these moves in their messages. Expressing courtesy includes well-wishing expressions for the recipient (e.g., ‘I hope this email will find you in a good health and spirits’ or ‘Hope you are well and have a happy New Year’), while promoting further contact includes expressions that invite the sender for further contact or specify means of further contact (e.g., ‘looking forward to hearing from you’ or ‘for more details, please email or call me on [Phone number]’). The positive effect of these two moves on the evaluators’ perceptions can be ascribed to their role in promoting friendliness and solidarity between the sender and the recipient. In their comparative study of Australian and British English native speakers’ request emails, Merrison et al. (2012) identify these two moves as indicators of solidarity between the sender and the recipient. They find that utterances that express well-wishing as well as those that promote further contact have been used as means of what they call ‘doing ‘being friendly’’ in request emails (p. 1088).

The data analysis indicates that the utilisation of the expressing courtesy move in a number of INNESSs’ emails is one of the possible factors that promotes the positive evaluation of these emails and their senders. Comments from the evaluators confirm the positive effect of this move on the evaluators’ perception of the sender and his linguistic behaviour in the email message. For example, the email message in Text 5 (Section 4.3.2.1) was sent by a postgraduate student to ask the supervisor of his thesis to contact the examiners to follow up the late result of his thesis. The discourse analysis of this email shows that the body of the message starts with expressing courtesy move by including the well-wishing: “happy new year. I hope you are fine”. The use of this move at the very beginning of the message seems to have stimulated the evaluators’ positive perception of the email and its sender as reported in their comments. One of the evaluators thinks that “the pleasantries ‘happy new year, I hope you are fine’ are considerate of the receiver”. Another evaluator believes that this request email is “reasonable and is part of respecting
academic work of supervisors”. A third evaluator makes another point that “the sender seems to be asking for this information in a friendly manner”. The evaluators’ comments show their preference for the inclusion of a well-wishing expression at the beginning of the email message. This finding aligns with Merrison et al.’s (2012) study which shows that Australian participants prefer using examples of well-wishing expressions in their emails.

The promoting further contact move has been found more often in emails evaluated positively on the message structure attributes and the sender personality attributes than in those evaluated negatively on these attributes. For instance, the utterance ‘looking forward to hearing from you’ has been used in the email message in Text 10 (Section 4.3.2.1). It indicates that the sender is trying to encourage the recipient to reply to his request for a meeting to discuss his colloquium document. It also represents a polite ending for the body of the message. Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) classify the use of utterances that prompt the recipient’s reply or further contact, such as ‘I look forward to hearing from you’ as a strategy for ending the email message politely. They claim that these utterances are polite endings borrowed from the conventions of traditional letter correspondence. Thus, the use of the promoting further contact move seems to increase the politeness level of the email message. In the email message in Text 10, this move can be seen as one of the elements that motivated the positive assessment of the message as appropriate in its context, the request made in this message as reasonable, polite and acceptable in future email communication, and the sender of the message as friendly, considerate of the recipient and welcomed in future email communication.

The employment of the thanking/appreciating the recipient move in request email discourse can be one of the factors that have triggered the evaluators’ positive perceptions. The discourse analysis of the studied emails indicates that this move is utilised more frequently in emails evaluated positively on the evaluative statements than in those evaluated negatively on these statements. The positive effect of this move can be attributed to its role as a positive politeness strategy that indicates acknowledgement and appreciation of the recipient and his/her effort and time in performing the requested action. Showing appreciation of others, according to Murphy and Levy (2006), is an example of positive politeness strategies that appeal to the addressee’s positive face and his/her desire to be liked and appreciated.
Thanking the recipient of a request email indicates the sender’s acknowledgment of the recipient’s time (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). For these reasons, the inclusion of thanking and/or appreciating utterances in a number of INNESs’ emails has positively influenced the rating of these emails, especially on request attributes and sender personality attributes. For instance, the utilisation of the affect moves: ‘Thank you very much’ (thanking/appreciating the recipient) and ‘have a nice day’ (expressing courtesy) in the email message in Text 14 (Section 4.3.2.1) seems to be one of the factors that have influenced the positive evaluation of the request act and the sender.

The assumption that the inclusion of the thanking/appreciating the recipient move in the request email can add to the positive perception of the email and the sender personality is also supported by findings from previous studies. In her study of academics’ perceptions of students’ request emails, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) reports that although some students’ emails use the imperative form for the realization of the request act, they have been evaluated positively due to the use of ‘thank you’ as a pre-closing. In contrast, the email messages that lack such pre-closing in Economidou-Kogetsidis’ study have caused the evaluators’ negative perceptions of these emails as being rude, and lacking consideration and gratitude. Also, in their comparative study of English native and non-native speakers’ request emails, Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) demonstrate that native speakers are inclined to use various forms of thanking and appreciation as polite ending for their emails. They claim that the use of thanking and/or appreciating expressions increases the positive effect of the request email as these expressions indicate the requester’s acknowledgement of the cost of their request and enhance the recipient’s positive face.

The utilisation of optional moves such as introducing self, establishing the background, expressing courtesy, promoting further contact and thanking/appreciating the recipient can be seen as part of the mitigating work that INNESs have included in their messages. The use of these moves aims to overcome the limitations of the email medium and provide the textual cues that the recipient needs to form positive impressions about the sender’s intentions and linguistic behaviour. Misinterpretation and negative impressions can occur on the side of the recipient if the sender does not include the necessary optional moves on the basis
of adequate assessment of the situation (when, where and with whom to use these moves), as is the case with the email message in Text 48.

Text 48

Subject: assignment 1 [Subject line]

Hi [Recipient’s first Name], [Opening]

I attach two peer reviewed articles for assignment 1 that I found them interesting [Referring to attachment].

please may you check them if they are useful to my discussion and analysis [Request].

Thanks [Thanking the recipient], have a happy Easter. [Expressing courtesy]

[Sender’s first name and last name] [Closing]

The email message in Text 48 was sent by a student to a lecturer in an Australian university to seek her approval of the two articles that he had chosen for his assignment. The absence of the optional moves at the beginning of the email message has led to the negative evaluation of the structure of the message as clearly reported in the following evaluator’s comment:

Comment 15: “Without knowing the full background, the fact that the student did not have the articles ready for the class and has no explicit apology or excuse at the beginning of the email to acknowledge that fact (or if it is arranged at the permission of the lecturer then a thank you for the effort would be in order) an imposition is made on the lecturer”.

As indicated in the above comment, the imposition that the request includes is not addressed appropriately, taking into account the circumstances of the email situation. The body of the email message starts with referring to the attached articles without providing background information or any other optional moves that acknowledge the request imposition and the recipient’s effort and time in attending to the request. The second move in the body of the message is the request utterance which is formulated in a direct question form and does not include sufficient internal mitigation. The last two moves in the body are an informal expression of thanks, ‘thanks’, and an expressing courtesy move using the well-wishing statement, ‘have a happy Easter’. Although these two moves have added positive effect to the perception of the email message and its sender in our previous
examples, they have been perceived negatively as being part of the problem in this email, as reported in the following comment from another evaluator:

Comment 16: “It [the request email] is a bald, direct demand without any mitigation and the statement, "have a happy easter" [sic] can be seen as rubbing salt into the wound, an insensitive demand on the lecturers time in a holiday period where easter [sic] can be an important event”.

As clearly explained in comment 16, the use of the well-wishing statement, ‘have a happy Easter’, is one of the factors that have caused the evaluator’s negative perception. It indicates that the student knows about the Easter break which is an important holiday for Australians but he is trying to impose on the lecturer to do some work for him during the holiday. The same negative influence may have been assigned to the thanking/appreciating move, ‘thanks’, as the use of this move may indicate the sender’s presupposition that the recipient will comply with his request. Economidou-Kogetidis (2011) argues that using a thanking expression can add a negative effect to the email message as it presupposes that the request will be met with compliance.

In order to ensure that the structural moves (both basic and optional) employed in an email message provide effective and adequate textual cues that trigger positive impressions about the sender’s intentions, personality and linguistic behaviour, email senders need to base their choice and structure of these moves on an adequate understanding of the social and situational factors that influence their communication. However, that may not be an easy task for email writers, especially those writing emails in their second language, who want to use email to perform a face threatening act, like a request, as Merrison et al. (2012) explain:

In contrast to a face-to-face interaction, the author of an e-mail request does not necessarily have the ability to build it delicately over a series of turns. This creates a situation where they have to make their request and attempt to limit any offence it may cause within the single speech event – they have just one attempt to make good their request.

Merrison et al. (2012, p. 1081)
When writing a request email, according to Merrison et al. (2012), the recipient’s value system and norms have to be considered and subtle mitigating work needs to be carefully built into the structure of the email message. To make a request act in the email medium, non-native speakers do not only face the challenges of language use and email limitation but they also face the challenge of lack of awareness of the cultural value system and norms that govern the conventions of language use in email communication in the target community.

5.4. Cultural divergence

Another explanation of the evaluators’ perceptions of the negatively evaluated emails is that they might have been structured on the basis of cultural values that are dissimilar to those dominant in the Australian culture. Despite their advanced L2 language proficiency, INNESs may lack sociopragmatic knowledge of the social norms and conventions underlying proper linguistic behaviour in the target language. The evaluators’ comments on many emails show their frustration about the demanding nature of the INNESs’ requests, the shortness of their messages, the lack of information, and the ambiguity of the content expressed in these messages. These characteristics can not only decrease the comprehensibility of the email content but also increase the imposition of the request act. The following comments on the email message in Text 37 (Section 4.3.3.3.2) exemplify the evaluators’ concerns.

Comment 17: “It is demanding, it is abrupt and doesn't explain what is going on. It is presumptious [sic]. It demonstrates a language/communication problem (which could mean an International student having trouble with communicating in English or someone who finds it difficult to write succinctly and appropriately”.

Comment 18: “It demands, it doesn't explain or take into account the position of the recipient. Again, this is something to discuss in person or by phone, it is not an email communication”.

The above comments show the evaluators’ concerns regarding the demanding nature of the request in Text 37 and the lack of explanation due to, as declared in
comment 17, the presumptions that the sender might have. The evaluators expect the email message in the context of Text 37 to be clear with sufficient explanation, less demanding and less imperative. A close look at this email message shows that the sender may have structured his message on expectations that are based on different cultural values and communication norms. The content of this message, which was sent by a student to the supervisor of his research, is ambiguous and its structure is status-incongruent. One of the pragmatic infelicities reflected in this email is that the student focuses on what he wants from the supervisor (‘I really need to see you and [Name] in a meeting’, ‘I really need you and [Name] to read the colloquium document’) without including additional information that sets the scene, explains the request circumstances or justifies the urgency of the request. This style of communication seems to be transferred from the communication style prevalent in the Iraqi culture. This is one of the Arabic cultures that have been classified as high-context cultures, in which meaning is embedded in the context rather than coded in the message (cf. Hall and Hall, 1990). The sender might assume that the recipient will grasp the full meaning of the message from the situation, the shared background knowledge and the environment connected with the context of their communication, therefore, he does not include information that clarifies the situation of his request. Hall (1982, p.18) contends that in high-context cultures, “most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message”. In high-context cultures less text is deemed to be necessary for a successful communication and interlocutors rely on the information available in the interaction context and physical environment of their communication. Wurtz (2006) asserts that high-context communication draws on physical aspects of the environment in which the communication occurs, time, situation and the relationship between the interlocutors.

The communication style in high-context cultures has been identified as being indirect, ambiguous, reserved and understated (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida and Heyman, 1996). It has also been described as implicit, non-confrontational and with more reliance on the non-verbal aspects of communication than the verbal aspects (Wurtz, 2006). This may explain the tendency in many INNESs’ emails to include only the request move in the body of the message and
to leave out information which the evaluators see as essential for understanding the content and promoting positive perceptions of the email message and the sender. As seen in comment 17, the lack of sufficient information about the circumstances that underlie the request email has led to the assessment of the message as demanding and abrupt. The sender of the email in Text 37 seems to rely on the recipient’s ability to infer the information necessary for understanding the email message and the request circumstances from the context, and not from the message itself. The evaluator in comment 17 reports this tendency, saying “it is presumptuous” and that may have negatively influenced the evaluation of the message, as indicated in the following comment on the same email from another evaluator:

Comment 19: “Academics are busy people who may not be in a position to organise other Academic staff. The writer does not seem to understand this in their email content or presumes that the recipient will do what they want/ask. Some Academic staff could be offended by such an email. There is no explanation for why it is the last meeting. Has the student not organised themself [sic] well enough???”

Comment 19 also assumes that the email in Text 37 is presumptuous and does not provide sufficient explanation for the demanding nature of the message. The evaluators seem to have based their assessment of this email message as well as other INNESs’ emails on the basis of their cultural value system which appreciates low-context communication style. Australian culture, according to Hall (1976), is a low-context culture in which interlocutors convey the message through the code and content of the message rather than the context. Low-context cultures emphasize the importance of using words to explain, clarify and express messages, ideas and feelings (Cenere, Gill, Lawson and Lewis, 2015). Thus, the preferred communication style in these cultures is identified as clear, direct, confrontational, and focused toward an explicit outcome (Wurtz, 2006; Cenere et al., 2015). Australians, as members of a low-context culture, prefer to express their intentions, ideas and feelings through the content and the explicit code of the message. This communication preference may clash with the communication style preferred in high-context cultures and can lead to negative perceptions of the message as vague
and not well-structured, as shown in the following comments on the structure of three INNESs’ emails:

Comment 20: “Again, would appreciate some very clear details on who this person is (payroll number etc.) as the name may not be obvious to the finance officer in a large organisation”.

Comment 21: “I am not sure what the request is from the email alone. Are they informing the manager that IT need to organise this or management? Where is the request for approval?”

Comment 22: “I think the author should have added some descriptive or identification details for the loan. My guess is the bank officer would have numerous cases to process and identification information would assist the process”.

Another cultural aspect that seems to influence the structure of INNESs’ emails is how the senders construct their relationship with the recipient and how they construct their identity across different settings of communication. In many email messages, especially those sent to someone with a high level of social power and/or a remote social distance, INNESs construct a hierarchical relationship with their recipients through showing deference and using indirect communication style. In these messages, they use titles to open their messages (e.g., Dear Dr, Dear sir/madam) and employ politeness strategies such as the utilisation of a politeness marker ‘please’ and the external mitigating devices grounder and apology to show an acknowledgement of the power and status of the recipient. At the same time, they construct their identity as dependent members of the society or the institution who need the recipient’s help and support. For instance, the email message in Text 1 (Section 4.3.2.1) includes clear indicators of the hierarchical relationship between the sender (a student in a university) and the recipient (an academic working in the university). These include the use of the title ‘Dr’ in the opening of the message, the inclusion of the introducing self move at the beginning of the message, and the use of a formal closing. At the same time, the request made in this message depicts the sender as a dependent student who is in a desperate need for help to accomplish his academic task. The request utterance is formulated in a need statement strategy preceded by the politeness marker ‘please’: ‘Please, I need your help and time to
check my research paper’. After the request utterance, the sender employs the utterance ‘I am waiting for your answer’ to emphasize his urgent need for the request to be fulfilled.

The structure of the email message in Text 1 reflects INNESs’ tendency to structure a hierarchical relationship with the recipient and their identity as dependent and needy individuals. This kind of structure is an example of the influence of pragmatic transfer from Iraqi culture on the INNESs’ requestive behaviour in email communication. Iraqi culture is one of the collectivistic cultures in which hierarchical relationships dominate the familial and societal structures (cf. Buda and Elsayed-Elkhouly, 1998). According to DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004), social hierarchy is a basic characteristic of social life in a collectivistic culture; therefore, social power and distance are influential factors that shape linguistic behaviour. In collectivistic cultures, priority is given to group welfare over the individual’s goals and desires (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, according to Hofstede, individuals in collectivistic cultures are interdependent with others and tend to construct deep-rooted relationships and loyal ties with other members in the group. In a number of INNESs’ emails, especially those sent to someone with a high hierarchical role and status, the senders construct their identity as dependent members of the institution who are in a desperate need of help. For example, the request in Text 37 (Section 4.3.3.3.2) shows the sender as unable to manage his institutional role as a student and therefore needing urgent assistance from his supervisor. This self-image is maintained through the use of need statement intensified by ‘really’: ‘I really need to see you….I really need you…’. Thus, this negative image of the sender has triggered the Australian participants’ negative evaluation of the sender as indicated in the following comment from one evaluator:

Comment 23: “It is very much ME ME ME help ME! [sic] and does not take in to account if the recipient is able to help in this circumstance, certainly Academics do no manage each other's diaries and many are very overworked with classes and research - they can't just drop everything because one student is in crisis. The sender is either ignorant or dismissive of what the recipient [sic] does, apart from their supervision of the sender's research project”.

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The above comment shows the evaluator’s frustration with the sender’s focus on his need without considering the recipient’s time and commitments. It indicates that the sender’s linguistic behaviour constitutes a threat to the recipient’s negative face by imposing the need for an urgent compliance on her. The recipient’s positive face has also been threatened as the sender does not show consideration of her role and status as an academic who has extensive work commitments and a tight timeframe. Furthermore, the sender’s linguistic behaviour has also damaged his own positive face as he depicts himself as a student who cannot accomplish his tasks and needs urgent interventions from others.

Interdependence is also reflected in INNESs’ email messages sent to recipients who have equal power relationship with the senders. This may explain the utilisation of direct request strategies, and the lack of mitigation strategies and optional moves in emails sent to socially equal recipients, especially in workplace settings. For example, the email message in Text 27 (Section 4.3.3.1.4) was sent by an employee working in a company to the payroll officer to request his payslip. The structure of this message features an informal style with an informal opening, ‘hi there’, the abbreviated form, ‘plz’, and the informal closing, ‘thanks’. The body of the message includes only two moves: the request act, which has been formulated in the most direct form, imperative, and the external mitigating device, grounder. The grounder indicates the reason for the request made in this message. The sender justifies his request by expressing his urgent need for the payslip. Moreover, the utterance, ‘I need it urgently today’ embedded in the grounder also intensifies the imposition of the request. It imposes a timeframe for compliance as it requires the recipient to comply urgently in the same day. The sender’s expression of an urgent need in order to justify his request may stem from his expectation of reciprocal obligation between himself and the recipient as co-workers. DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) contend that individuals in a collectivistic culture tend to have a sense of reciprocal obligation towards other members of the family or social group. Accordingly, when issuing a request to a colleague at work, a friend or a family member, the requester may expect cooperation and support as part of the addressee’s moral obligation towards him/her. That may explain the lack of mitigating strategies and optional moves in request emails sent to a recipient expected to have a moral obligation to comply.
However, the cultural value of reciprocal obligation may not exist in an individualistic culture like the Australian culture. Individuals’ independence and right to be free of imposition are highly valued in the Australian culture (cf. Wurtz, 2006; Merrison et al., 2012). Thus, it is not surprising that the email message in Text 27 has attracted the evaluators’ negative perceptions. Although the content of the message has been assessed as clear, its structure has been evaluated as informal, inappropriate in context and not well written. Two evaluators justify their negative evaluation of the message structure in the following comments:

Comment 24: “Email is bossy and assumes cooperation. The ‘please’ is minimised to ‘plz’, hence sounds like a token gesture”.

Comment 25: “I like emails that are clear about what is wanted, though the style of this would annoy”.

Furthermore, the request made in Text 27 is seen as impolite and unacceptable in future email communication and its sender is evaluated as unfriendly, unrespectable, untactful and inconsiderate of the recipient. The evaluators also indicate that they would not like to receive future emails from the sender. In their justification of the negative evaluation of the sender, two evaluators make the following points:

Comment 26: “Sender might think he's friendly, but actually sounds as though he thinks only about himself”.

Comment 27: “Is 'thinking of me only' respectable? Probably not”.

The evaluators’ comments indicate that they might have based their assessment of the email in Text 27, as well as other INNESs’ emails, on cultural assumptions and expectations which may contradict with those of INNESs. Australian culture has been identified as an individualistic culture in which priority is given to the individual’s goals and accomplishments rather than to those of the group (Winter, 2002). Individuals are expected to be independent and take care of themselves, their goals and their personal values, such as time and freedom (Wurtz, 2006). One of the fundamental values that characterize the Australian culture is egalitarianism: the view that individuals are socially, politically and economically equal (cf. Swangboosatic, 2006; Merrison et al., 2012). Goddard (2006) claims that
Australians have a social attitude that values equality between people in social interaction even in situations where differences in social roles and status are involved. He contends that egalitarianism is the main motive behind such an attitude:

> Many commentators have identified something like “egalitarianism” as an Australian social ideal, and despite the widening gap between rich and poor, most commentators recognise that an “egalitarianism of manners”, to use historian John Hirst’s (1998: 208) phrase, is still an important part of Australian social life.

Goddard (2006, p. 66)

Thus, when making a request speech act in any situation, Australian requesters tend to maintain the privacy and the negative face of the addressee, as well as their own positive self-image as independent individuals. Ting-Toomey (1988, as cited in Dainton and Zelley, 2011) argues that members of an individualistic culture try to protect the negative face of others and their self-images as confident, self-directed and independent individuals. Previous studies on requests by Australian participants (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Beal, 1990, 1998; Merrison et al., 2012) show the influence of the individualistic cultural values, especially egalitarianism, on Australians’ linguistic behaviour. These studies report the tendency of Australian participants to maintain their positive face and to protect the negative face of the addressee by using tentative and indirect request strategies. For instance, in her comparative study of Australian and French requests, Beal (1998) demonstrates that Australians, unlike the French, tend to be “unduly tentative, self-effacing and egalitarian” (p. 23); therefore, they use indirect requests with more downgraders.

Furthermore, INNESs’ emails that depict the senders as desperate and in need of help may have been seen as violating the Australian concept of “toughness” and practicality (cf. Goddard, 2006). They may also suggest the unprofessional, incompetent and dependent identity of the sender. Such self-image can trigger the negative perceptions of Australian recipients who draw on social attitudes that value competence and independence as important personality traits of the member in the society. In their comparative study of Australian and British students’ request
emails to faculty, Merrison et al. (2012) report that Australian students do not index a differential hierarchical status in their request emails as they treat faculty as social peers. They claim that Australians’ self-image as egalitarian, independent individuals influence the way in which they structure their emails when making requests, even if they send these emails to recipients with hierarchical roles and status. In addition to the basic email moves, Australian emails in Merrison et al.’s study use other moves that indicate solidarity and shared knowledge with the recipient such as ‘closeness’, ‘well-wishing’, ‘personal common ground’, and ‘communal common ground’ moves (p. 1094). Australians employ the conventional indirect request strategies such as ‘wondering’ which indexes uncertainty of entitlement to make the request. They also construct professional identity for themselves inside and outside the institutional context as their request mitigation is based on institutional, medical and employment reasons and does not include self-disclosure. Merrison et al. argue that such linguistic behaviour does not necessarily indicate Australians’ undue assumptions about their entitlements to make requests, but it shows how Australians project themselves as competent members of the society who are able to perform their institutional role. Such kind of linguistic behaviour can be explained on the basis of what Goddard (2006, p. 71) refers to as “an Aussie tough attitude”:

People who openly, frequently and fulsomely express how bad they feel about events or conditions of daily life face condemnation as whingers or sooks (Wierzbicka 1997: 214-217; Stollznow 2004), because in so doing they expose their emotional vulnerability and violate the traditional ethos of toughness and practicality.

Goddard (2006, p. 71)

INNESs’ pragmatic failure in email communication and pragmatic transfer from their first culture play a significant role in shaping the structure of their messages, the realization of their requests and the construction of their identity. They have a significant negative impact on the Australian evaluators’ perception of INNESs and their email messages. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2016) points out that non-native speakers including those with advanced proficiency level are vulnerable to pragmatic failure in intercultural email communication due to their unawareness of
social conventions underlying appropriate linguistic behaviour in the target language. The failure to observe the prevalent cultural values and expectations in the Australian society has added negative effect to the evaluation of INNESs’ emails and their senders. It indicates that INNESs do not share the Australian social identity which shapes Australians’ communication style and perceptions. Hsu, Hwang, Huang and Liu (2011) contend that in CMC interaction, a shared social identity can increase the level of trust between interactants and their willingness to help. However, as Hansen, Fabriz and Stehle (2015) argue, cultural divergence can lead to lack of a shared social identity which in turn can cause distrust between interactants and hinder their willingness to cooperate.

5.5. Language errors

In addition to the negative role of pragmatic failure and sociopragmatic transfer from their natal culture, INNESs’ lack of linguistic competence manifested in a number of their emails has also contributed negatively to the assessment of their emails. Grammatical and graphological errors found in a number of INNESs’ emails have also been reported as triggers of negative evaluation of these emails. Graphological deviance in email, according to Crystal, 2006, includes misspellings, punctuation mistakes and other typographical irregularities. This term, according to Crystal, does not only include the errors that occur due to the slip of hand or finger but also the errors that occur because of the writer’s ignorance and inadequate linguistic competence. Although some previous studies (Danet, 2001; Lewin and Donner, 2002; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Crystal, 2006) contend that the use of casual language including non-standard grammar, abbreviations and typographical irregularities is a characteristic of email communication, grammatical and graphological errors have been perceived negatively by the evaluators in this study.

Some comments by the Australian evaluators in this study refer to language errors as causes of negative perceptions of the clarity, structure and appropriateness of the email message. They also indicate the negative impact of these errors on the perception of the sender personality. Some evaluators demonstrate that they do not like to receive emails from senders who have made errors in their messages as these
errors require them to work hard to figure out the content and therefore there is a significant increase of the request imposition. For instance, the structure of the email message in Text 24 (Section 4.3.3.1.3) has been evaluated as informal, not well written and inappropriate in context. Some evaluators attribute the negative evaluation of the structure of the message in Text 24 to the language errors found in the message, as shown in the following comments:

Comment 28: Problems with the English used. If i [sic] got this email, i would be concerned that the literature review was written the same way and that it would be a waste of time for the student to send me a lit review that needed a lot of work on it. While the email is "clear", I am not sure a supervisor would want a draft that is not complete at this stage.

Comment 29: "Bad" English used - is this student an International Student or a domestic student that needs help with their communication skills?? [sic] Or someone who doesn't check before sending an email?? [sic]

The language errors also seem to have influenced the evaluators’ perceptions of the request included in Text 24. The request has been evaluated as reasonable, but direct, impolite and unacceptable for future email communication. The evaluators may have considered the rights and obligations involved in the situation of this request email. As being members of academic institutions, they are aware that research students have the right to ask their supervisors to provide feedback on their written work; therefore, they have assessed the request as reasonable. Nevertheless, the linguistic errors involved in the message have influenced the perception of the request as impolite. They have also motivated the evaluators to indicate their unwillingness to receive similar requests in their future email communication. Some of the evaluators justify their negative assessment in terms of the increased imposition of the request on the supervisor. They think that the poor structure of the message indicates the need for hard work at the part of the supervisor to help the student write an adequate piece of writing, as reported in comment 28 and the following comment from another evaluator:

Comment 30: While I think the request is reasonable, as a Supervisor I would "panic" getting an email that showed poor proof reading and/or communication skills with a "draft" attached for me to read. I would think, how much work will I need to do to help this student provide a professional piece of work?? [sic]
The sender of Text 24 has been evaluated as unfriendly, unrespectable, inconsiderate of the recipient, and unwelcome in future email communication. Again, the evaluators’ comments indicate their concerns regarding the problematic structure of the sender’s email message. As indicated in comments 28, 29, 31 and 32, the poor language that the sender has used in his message may have depicted the sender as an incompetent and dependent student who needs a lot of help. It may also have shown the sender as a careless student who does not proofread his emails before sending.

Comment 31: As i [sic] said before, if someone can't proof read an email before sending or appears to have problems writing in English (regardless of type of student ie [sic] domestic or international) I would be concerned about the quality of work to be provided. It is too direct and doesn't ask for me to respond.

Comment 32: sending poorly worded emails is not being considerate of the recipient.

The email in Text 24 may have violated the evaluator’s expectation of a well-structured email message by a university student in an Australian university. Academic emails, according to Biesenbach-Lucas (2005), have typically been identified as having little non-standard grammar, few abbreviations and few typographical irregularities. This typical characterization of email structure in academic settings may stem from the expectation that university students have adequate linguistic competence and therefore they are likely to produce well written and appropriate emails. However, the occurrence of language errors in emails sent in other settings such as service encounter and workplace has also triggered negative perceptions, as is the case with the email message in Text 25 (Section 4.3.3.1.3) sent by a job seeker to the recruitment officer of a language teaching centre. The language used in the message shows grammatical errors, misspellings and punctuation mistakes. These linguistic problems, according to the evaluators’ comments, increase the possibility of miscommunication and negative perceptions. They have rendered the message difficult to comprehend and caused the evaluators’ negative perception of its structure, the request it conveys and the personality of its sender. Some of the evaluators justify the negative perception of this email by referring to the problematic language used in the message, as indicated in the following comments:
Comment 33: Grammar and punctuation are poor and it isn’t structured very well at all.

Comment 34: It’s frustrating to have to make sense of a messy email.

Comment 35: No real way to tell from the content, but the fact that his grammar and spelling is so poor would lead me to assume he isn’t [respectable].

As diagnosed in the above comments on Texts 24 and 25, language errors seem to have a negative impact on the evaluation of the structure of the email message, the request act conveyed in the message, the sender personality, and the evaluators’ willingness to receive similar requests or to be emailed by the sender in the future. Previous research has reported similar findings regarding the negative impact of language errors on the evaluation of the sender and his/her linguistic behaviour. Some studies (e.g., Lea and Spears, 1992; Jessmer and Anderson, 2001; Vignovic and Thompson, 2010) demonstrate that participants in CMC interaction may develop negative attitudes towards the sender of a message with typographical errors as they may attribute these errors to the carelessness of the sender. Jessmer and Anderson (2001) argue that recipients of emails with grammatical errors are likely to develop an impression that the senders have not edited their messages or have spent less time editing them. Vignovic and Thompson (2010) investigate the influence of language violations (grammar and spelling errors) and deviations from etiquette norms in email communication on the recipient’s perceptions of the sender personality. They found that the inclusion of grammar and spelling errors and the use of unusual style have a negative impact on the personality attributes of conscientiousness, intelligence and trustworthiness. Vignovic and Thompson explain these results from a social psychological point of view: when communication problems occur in a CMC event, the participants in that event may ascribe these problems to ‘dispositional variables, such as the sender’s carelessness, poor attitude, or personality’ (p. 266). They argue that email recipients are likely to attribute communication problems including errors to dispositional factors due to the lack of contextual and situational information in a text based, asynchronous medium like email.
Similarly, netiquette manuals suggest that the use of erroneous grammar, spelling and punctuation has a negative impact on the acceptance and intelligibility of an email message. Taylor (2009) asserts that recipients may find difficulty in understanding the content or eliciting the purpose of badly structured email messages. Flynn and Khan (2003) encourage email senders to use well-structured sentences with accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation; otherwise their messages may not be accepted or understood. Moreover, some netiquette manuals contend that linguistic errors in email communication can cause an increased imposition on the recipient who may have to spend more time and make more effort trying to understand the content of the message. They can also attract negative evaluations of the sender as the recipient may question the sender’s credibility and competence, as Angell and Heslop (1994) explain in the following excerpt:

> If you think that you're saving time by not correcting spelling errors, think again. The time saved not checking your spelling is multiplied by the time that it takes for a reader to decipher the misspelled words. Misspelled words jar your reader's concentration by diverting attention away from the idea you are expressing. Not only are misspellings annoying and confusing, they also cause the reader to question your credibility. Misspellings make you look sloppy or, worse yet, incompetent.

(Angell and Heslop, 1994, p. 83)

Crystal (2006) argues that linguistic errors, especially misspellings, can trigger negative social judgements if they make the recipient pause, or make an utterance ambiguous or unintelligible. He asserts that the immediate consequence of not proof reading the message before sending it is that the recipient may have to send a reply requesting clarification of the sender’s message. That will increase the imposition on the recipient’s time and trigger negative perception of the sender’s competence as linguistic errors may represent a deviance from the norms of standard English. However, as claimed by Crystal, the occurrence of linguistic errors, especially misspelling and lack of punctuation, can be viewed as a natural phenomenon in email communication. He adds that due to the speed and spontaneity of the medium, senders may not revise and edit their email messages before sending them. These errors, according to Crystal, are usually tolerated by recipients as long as they do
not impede the intelligibility of the email message. Furthermore, some of the comments collected in this study indicate that native speakers may tolerate errors in non-native speakers’ emails as long as these errors do not impact their understanding of the content. If they identify that the email message has been written in a second language, native speakers may sympathize with non-native speaking senders due to their understanding of the difficulties that non-native speakers may face in communicating their intentions appropriately in a second language.

5.6. Evaluators’ sympathy

Some of the evaluators’ comments indicate that they have judged INNESs and their email messages less harshly when they identified them as being non-native speakers of English. Although the evaluators have not been told that the senders of the email messages are non-native speakers, they have been identified as non-native speakers from their language, especially their discourse structure, and the grammatical and graphological errors found in their messages, as reported in comments 36, 37 and 38:

Comment 36: ‘The writing is stilted and appears to come from someone who has trouble with English/communication skills’.
Comment 37: ‘I believe this email may have been written by a person with English as their second language due to the phrasing used…’
Comment 38: ‘The grammar makes it obvious that English isn't his first language’.

As they have identified INNESs as non-native speakers, some evaluators have shown sympathetic orientation towards the assessment of the structure of the emails, the requests involved in these emails, the personality of their senders, and willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders. They seem to understand that the linguistic and pragmatic problems in INNESs’ emails stem from the senders’ lack of proficiency in English rather than an intended deviation from the Australian norms and communication conventions, as indicated in the following comments:
Comment 39: ‘It is clear that the sender is a non-native speaker of English so the way the receiver perceives the email depends on whether they can empathise with the difficulty of writing in a foreign [sic] language’.

Comment 40: ‘It is clearly written by someone without a strong command of English - the idea of well written here needs to take that into consideration’.

Comment 41: ‘This email style would not upset me having received similar ones and also living among many different people’.

Comment 42: ‘I think they are trying to be respectful but their language use is failing them’.

The above comments indicate that the Australian evaluators excuse the problematic structure of INNES’s request emails due to the difficulties that INNESs may face in formulating appropriate request emails in a second language. They also indicate that there is a possibility that native speakers sympathise with the difficulties that non-native speakers may find when writing emails in a foreign or second language. The Australian evaluators may assume that the senders are trying to use appropriate language when making request emails but their lack of proficiency in English hinders them from presenting well written messages. Thus, those who understand cultural diversity and language barriers in intercultural communication tend to avoid any prejudice towards the senders’ inefficient linguistic behaviour. Some Australian evaluators also report their sympathy with INNESs whose request emails violate Australian social norms and expectations underlying appropriate linguistic behaviour in email communication. The following comments indicate that the evaluators’ identification of the senders as non-native speakers has mitigated their negative perceptions of the senders and their messages for violating the interaction norms of the Australian culture.

Comment 43: ‘I would think the student was disorganised and demanding. It would make me see them in a negative light. As an Acdemic [sic] it might very well annoy me and make me less likely to respond. However, if it was an International Student, i [sic] might be more relaxed about such an email as i would understand the language used…’

Comment 44: ‘“you need to re-assess my application” is a bit harsh, but probably the student lacks English speaking appropriateness experience. They are probably translating how they would say it in their native language’.
Comment 45: ‘Probably, s/he is in his/her own culture. There's a strong possibility that the person is not familiar with the politeness principles and social conventions needed in email communication in Western cultures’.

Examples of INNESs’ violation of the Australian cultural norms and expectations are reported in the above comments, such as the use of demanding language, the realization of the request act in a direct form, and unfamiliarity with politeness principles and social norms that govern email communication in the Australian culture. Nevertheless, the evaluators in the above comments show sympathy with INNESs and attribute their violation of the Australian cultural norms and conventions to the lack of pragmatic competence and the occurrence of pragmatic transfer from their first language and culture. In her study of native speakers’ perceptions of non-native speakers’ request emails, Hendriks (2010) provides a similar explanation regarding the absence of negative effects of the lack of modification in non-native speakers’ requests on native speakers’ perceptions of the sender personality. She claims that the identification of the senders as being non-native speakers has prompted native speakers to ignore any deviations from the native norms. Some of the participants in her study provide comments indicating that they have ‘ignored any unidiomatic or uncharacteristic style elements in the e-mails which they felt were probably due to non-native competence in English’ (Hendriks, 2010, p. 238).

The Australian evaluators’ sympathy with INNESs can be seen as a manifestation of politeness in the Australian culture. Previous perspectives on politeness have listed showing sympathy as an aspect of politeness. Lakoff (1973) includes showing sympathy as a third rule of his three politeness rules. Similarly, Leech (1983) introduces sympathy as one of the politeness maxims in his Politeness Principle. Brown and Levinson (1987) regard sympathy as an aspect of positive politeness in their politeness theory. Positive politeness strategies include showing interest, approval and sympathy towards the addressee and their possessions including their linguistic behaviour. Accordingly, as an aspect of their positive politeness, some Australian evaluators in this study may want to show approval and inclusion of INNESs and therefore they may want to ignore their linguistic and pragmatic deviations. This tendency may explain the evaluation of most of the requests made
in INNESs’ emails as acceptable in future email communication and justify the evaluators’ willingness to engage in future email communication with the senders of most emails. This assumption is supported by some of the evaluators’ comments regarding the acceptance of INNESs’ requests and their senders in future email communication:

Comment 46: ‘qualified [for future communication]- I receive many emails from second language English speakers’.

Comment 47: ‘Just because it has some writing flaws, I wouldn’t take offence or be annoyed. I might have to respond to clarify if there was a request or not’.

As reported in the above comments, receiving emails from non-native speakers is supported by Australians’ acceptance and approval of non-native speakers as members of the Australian society as well as their tolerance of any linguistic and/or pragmatic deficiency in their email structure. In their study of the incorporation and interpretation of politeness strategies found in Australian and Korean participants’ emails, Murphy and Levy (2006) demonstrate the Australian participants’ preference of using positive politeness strategies, especially those that show interest and sympathy towards the recipient, in intercultural email communication. The tendency of Australian native speakers to show sympathy and interest towards others may stem from their inclination to show their good manners and courtesy towards others, which has been identified according to Haugh and Hinze (2003) and Haugh (2004) as an important characteristic of politeness in English.

The Australian evaluators’ tolerance of INNESs’ linguistic and pragmatic deviations in email communication can also be explained on the basis of Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958; Jones and Nisbett, 1972) in social psychology. According to this theory, people usually seek to understand others’ behaviour and may attribute one or more causes to that behaviour. According to Heider, people can make two attributions: internal (dispositional): the attribution of causes to the person him/herself and external (situational): the attribution of causes to the situation in which the behaviour has occurred. Similarly, when problems occur in CMC communication, people seek the causes or reasons to understand the source of these problems. These problems can be attributed to situational factors such as technology problems,
cultural differences or second language constraints, or to dispositional factors such as carelessness, attitude or personality (Vignovic and Thompson, 2010). Due to the lack of situational information and immediate feedback in an asynchronous, text-based CMC mediums, people favour dispositional over situational attribution (Becker-Beck, Wintemantel and Borg, 2005). Thus, when reading an email with linguistic and/or pragmatic problems, the attributions that the readers usually make can influence their perception of the sender.

However, as Vignovic and Thompson (2010) argue, if the recipients identify the sender as being from a different culture, they are more likely to excuse the errors when evaluating the sender and attribute these errors to situational factors. “That is, they are likely to make allowances for the person due to situational constraints (i.e., writing in a second language) imposed by cross-cultural collaboration” (Vignovic and Thompson, 2010, p. 267). Thus, as demonstrated by Vignovic and Thompson, if cross-cultural constraint is evident in email messages, recipients tend to rely on situational factors in assessing senders’ linguistic behaviour. Accordingly, Australian evaluators may have excused the language errors and the violations of their interaction norms in INNESs’ emails which show signs of being written by non-native speakers. Linguistic errors are not the only signs indicating that senders of emails in this study are non-native speakers but also the pragmatic failure in structuring appropriate messages, as reported in some of the evaluators’ comments. Therefore, Australian evaluators might have assessed these emails less harshly and attributed the issues of language errors and pragmatic failure to situational factors, especially the assumption that these emails have been written by non-native speakers who may experience difficulties in mastering the Australian interaction norms and the conventions of English language use.
5.7. Conclusion

The email samples and their contextual data used in this study have provided general information about the communicative behaviour of Iraqi participants across different situations in different communities of practice. The academic, workplace and service encounter settings are the main venues where most intercultural communication between members of a minority group and the host society occur. Using emails from these settings has provided insight into the influence of various social and contextual variables on the structure of Iraqi emails and the evaluators’ perceptions of these emails. In order to reach reliable and solid conclusions regarding the causes and effects of the issue under study, it was necessary not to confine this research within the limitation of the contextual norms of one specific setting.

The results discussed in this chapter suggest the multi-dimensionality of the issue of language attitudes in email communication. One aspect of the multi-dimensionality of this issue is represented in the multiple attributes that can be negatively or positively evaluated on the basis of email senders’ linguistic behaviour. The recipients’ attitudinal reactions are not confined to the evaluation of the email message or the request act included in the message but they are also extended to the assessment of the sender personality and his/her prospective email communication with the recipient. Another aspect of the multi-dimensionality of the issue of language attitudes in email communication is evident in the variety of factors that cause this issue. As we have seen, there is a number of factors that have influenced the evaluators’ perceptions of the examined request emails and their senders. These factors can be categorized into seven levels: the email discourse level, the request act level, the contextual level, the cultural level, the email technology level, the sentence level and the individual level (see Figure 4).
At the discourse level, the use of short email messages consisting of the basic rhetorical moves only (subject line, opening, request and closing) can make the sender and his linguistic behaviour vulnerable to negative perceptions if the content of the message is unintelligible, and the basic moves are not structured according to the norms and expectations underlying the communication context. The inclusion of the optional moves, both orientation and affect moves, can increase the positive effect of the email message and the intelligibility of its content. These moves can have a positive effect on the evaluation of the email message and the sender personality through setting the scene, establishing shared background knowledge, prompting a sense of solidarity between the sender and the recipient, providing the necessary information for understanding the content, acknowledging the imposition of the request email, and decreasing social distance with the recipient.

At the request act level, INNESs’ emails that use conventionally indirect request strategies are perceived more positively than those that use the direct request strategies, especially imperative forms and want statements. Conventionally indirect strategies indicate the requester’s tentativeness and their endeavour to protect the addressee’s face. Furthermore, the inclusion of internal and external
mitigating strategies can positively influence the perception of the politeness, reasonableness and acceptance of the request made in the email message. Most of the requests in the examined emails that lack sufficient mitigation have been evaluated negatively although some of these requests are formulated in conventionally indirect strategies. At the contextual level, INNESs’ assessment of the contextual characteristics of the communication situations may differ from the evaluators’ assessment of these characteristics. It is likely that INNESs have structured the negatively evaluated emails on different understandings of the relationship with the recipient, the roles of the sender and the recipient, the sender’s right to make the requests, and the recipient’s obligation to comply. These understandings are based on norms and expectations different from those dominant in the Australian culture.

At the cultural level, the assumptions and values that underlie the structure of the negatively evaluated emails may contradict with those of Australian evaluators who appreciate the egalitarian, competent and independent identity of individuals. The linguistic behaviour of these emails indicates sociopragmatic transfer from the Iraqi high-context and collectivistic culture. This may explain the underuse of optional moves in the studied email messages and the reliance on the recipient’s inference of information from the context of communication rather than from the message itself. The impact of the collectivistic values may also explain why INNESs construct an interdependent relationship with their recipients and construct their identity as dependent individuals who expect reciprocal obligation from the recipient.

At the email technology level, the limitations of email as a decontextualized text-based medium that provides insufficient social and contextual cues increase the possibility of pragmatic failure and negative perception in intercultural communication. The absence of these cues deprives the email users from gaining an accurate assessment of the contextual characteristics of the communication context and expressing their feelings and intentions adequately. It also deprives the recipients from extra resources that help them to understand the content of the email message and to form accurate perceptions about the senders and their linguistic behaviour. Thus, INNESs have to depend on the text and the textual cues of the
email message to convey their intended meanings and to get the desired impressions. The structure of many negatively evaluated messages in this study indicates that INNESs’ may not have structured their messages adequately to compensate for the email limitations and induce the evaluators’ positive impressions.

At the sentence level, the evaluators’ comments demonstrate their frustration and negative perception of language errors found in some INNESs’ emails. These errors may depict the senders as incompetent communicators in English and/or careless email users who do not proofread their messages. They may also impede the recipients’ understanding of the content of the email message and therefore increase the request imposition as the recipients may have to spend more time trying to understand the content or send replies to the senders asking for clarification. At the individual level, the evaluators’ assessment of the linguistic behaviour of INNESs also depends on their personal judgement and experience in intercultural communication. Comments collected from the evaluators indicate sympathy towards INNESs and their request emails after identifying them as non-native speakers of English. These evaluators tend to excuse the language errors and pragmatic deviations and attribute these to the difficulties that INNESs experience in using English as a second language. The evaluators’ sympathy may also stem from the evaluators’ tendency to show positive politeness towards INNESs through showing approval of INNESs as members of the Australian multicultural society.
Chapter six: Conclusion

6.1. Concluding remarks

The Australian society is multi-cultural and includes minority groups with different cultural values, norms and language use conventions. The use of English language by members of these groups in communication with others from the Australian host society may produce tensions related to the appropriate use of English according to the Australian cultural values and norms. The purpose of this study has been to investigate the attitudinal reactions that Australian English native speakers are likely to develop when receiving request emails from members of the minority Iraqi community. It examined the Australian evaluators’ perceptions towards Iraqi email senders and their linguistic behaviour in their email messages. It also examined the possible motives behind the Australian participants’ attitudes through exploring the discoursal and linguistic characteristics of Iraqi non-native English speakers’ request emails.

The research design of this study aimed to provide answers to the stated research questions. Collecting authentic email messages from INNESs increased the validity and reliability of the results as these emails reflect a genuine representation of the INNESs’ linguistic behaviour in email communication with Australian English native speakers without being confined to the restrictions of data elicit methods. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to collect relevant and sufficient information about the circumstances in which the emails were written. Collecting contextual information was essential to explore the evaluators’ attitudinal reactions and examine the structure of the email discourse. This assumption is supported by the postmodern theorists (cf. Terkourafi, 2005; Mills, 2011) who emphasize the role of situational characteristics of the communication context in shaping meanings and perceptions in social interaction.

The questionnaire employed to explore the attitudinal reactions of AENSs towards the emails and their senders provided adequate input from the evaluators. Descriptions of email circumstances enabled the understanding of the emails in their original contexts and allowed for judgments based on the social and contextual
characteristics. Responses to the evaluative statements of the survey provided insight into the evaluators’ attitudes regarding important structural, linguistic and interpersonal aspects of the email messages. It was beneficial to avoid confining the evaluation process to one aspect of the email messages and to extend it to include perceptions of the message structure, the request act, the sender personality and future email engagement with the sender. The evaluators’ rating of these aspects provided a comprehensive picture of the possible impact of non-native speakers’ linguistic behaviour in intercultural email communication on native speakers’ attitudes. The evaluators’ comments on the attributes of the examined emails provided explanations for the evaluations of these emails and supported these evaluations with practical reasons.

A major challenge in the collecting of the evaluation data was finding evaluators with relevant backgrounds. Finding evaluators familiar with the selected email settings was very time consuming. Another difficulty was related to the use of Rasch model for the analysis of the evaluation data. This model produced a detailed description of the rating of each email on each evaluative statement, but it did not produce an overall rating of all emails on each statement. Thus, the researcher had to use another method to calculate the overall results. Generally speaking, the survey and the analytical framework used for collecting and analysing the evaluation data in this study can both be useful in future research. They can be employed for examining attitudinal reactions to linguistic behaviours in email communication as well as other CMC formats, such as instant messaging, online forums and social network services. If the survey and the analytical framework of the current study are used to examine evaluators’ perceptions of linguistic behaviour in other CMC formats, complete messages or turns of interaction have to be used to enable the evaluators form adequate impressions.

Analysing the email messages at the discourse level and the request realization level assisted the researcher in the understanding of the structure of the request emails and the motivation behind the evaluators’ attitudinal reactions. The linguistic analysis of the request utterances provided insight into the level of in/directness of the request acts and the amount of modification employed and their influence on the evaluators’ perceptions. It was beneficial to deal with the email as a genre that
has its own characteristics and rhetorical moves. However, it was necessary to adopt various moves from different previous frameworks to meet the requirements of the data analysed in this study. The genre analysis framework was also complemented by the sub-categories of the *external modification* move borrowed from previous studies on request speech acts. These sub-categories are not located within the request utterance but in the email message discourse; therefore, they had to be considered in the categorization of the segments of the message discourse. That facilitated the practice of email discourse analysis and produced a comprehensive understanding of the rhetorical structure of the email messages.

The findings reported in this study show a germane relationship between the linguistic behaviour of Iraqi speakers of English in email communication and Australian English speakers’ attitudinal reactions towards the email messages and their authors. AENSs’ attitudinal reactions are influenced by the way in which INNESs structure their emails and realize their request utterances. These reactions tend to be negative if the email messages violate the recipients’ expectations. These findings support the premise that non-native speakers’ pragmatic infelicities in intercultural email communication can cause native speakers’ negative perceptions (cf. Chang and Hsu, 1998; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). At the same time, they illustrate the complexity of the relationship between native speaker recipients’ attitudes and non-native speaker senders’ linguistic behaviour due to the variety of factors that cause this issue and the multiple attributes that can be influenced by the recipients’ evaluation. They also imply that the degree of acceptability of members of minority groups within the host community is influenced, to some extent, by their ways of using the target language. Linguistic and pragmatic deficiencies in intercultural communication can contribute negatively to the issue of social isolation between non-native and native speakers in English speaking communities. However, further research is needed to test this assumption and to investigate how inadequate language use can impede social acceptance from native speakers’ point of view, as well as from non-native speakers’ experiences and perspectives.
6.2. Implications for ESL/EFL pedagogy

The influence of poorly structured request emails on recipients’ negative perceptions of the senders and their messages suggests the need for urgent pedagogical interventions. ESL/EFL learners need direct instructions on the appropriate way of performing face-threatening acts like requests in email communication. Performing requests in email communication requires attention to the structure of the email message at different levels. At the request act level, learners need to understand that requests are face-threatening acts that can cause damage to the recipients’ face and thus they should know how to redress the imposition of their requests through the employment of effective in/directness and mitigation strategies.

At the email discourse level, ESL/EFL learners need to learn how to structure an email message that is clear, informative, polite and considerate of the recipient. They should be aware of the fact that composing a request email is not only about what they want but also about what the recipients expect to see in their messages. The findings of this study show that the use of optional moves can increase the clarity of the content and the politeness level of the message through providing the necessary information and indicating solidarity with the recipient. At the cultural level, it is important for ESL/EFL learners to develop their awareness of the cultural values and social norms that shape the conventions of language use in email communication with members of native English speaking communities. Structuring email messages according to different values and norms may violate the expectations of the recipients and trigger their negative impressions. At the email technology level, ESL/EFL learners need to keep in mind the limitations of email which can impede the sender from grasping an accurate assessment of the communication context and the recipient from gaining accurate interpretation and evaluation of the message. The lack of contextual and non-verbal cues in email necessitates the reliance on the text itself in achieving the communication objectives and promoting cooperation and positive reaction.

To develop the learners’ awareness and competence in intercultural email communication, relevant instructions and activities can be included in ESL/EFL syllabi. Teachers and curriculum designers can refer to comparative studies on
linguistic behaviour of native and non-native English speakers in email communication, as well as email etiquette manuals which provide recommendations and guidelines on how to structure appropriate email messages in English. Comparative studies might be a better source of information than email manuals due to the fact that most of the manuals aim at helping readers to write appropriate email messages in business settings only. These studies report research findings on the issues that English non-native speakers experience in intercultural email communication and the expectations underlying successful email communication with native speakers.

6.3. Implications for intercultural communication

Participants in intercultural email communication need to be mindful of the fact that people of different cultural backgrounds may structure and/or see email messages on the basis of the sociocultural assumptions and expectations dominant in their cultures. Non-native speakers should use linguistically appropriate language and observe the norms and conventions underlying the use of English in email communication. They should also be aware that poorly structured email messages can cause miscommunication and negative evaluation of their messages and their personality attributes. Due to the decontextualized nature of email communication and the lack of non-verbal cues, email recipients tend to make use of any textual cues in the message to form impressions and understand the sender’s intentions. Thus, it is important for non-native speakers to compose email messages based on adequate awareness of the recipient’s expectations to avoid being negatively evaluated. They also need to reduce language errors through proofreading and editing their messages before sending them. Language errors can depict the sender as linguistically incompetent or as a careless email user.

Native speakers should also take some of the responsibility for the occurrence of misunderstanding and negative attitudes in intercultural email communication with non-native speakers. Before blaming non-native speaker senders for committing linguistic and pragmatic violations in their messages, native speakers have to consider the situational constraints as main causes for these violations. They need
to understand that non-native speakers are writing their email messages in a second or foreign language and they may not have been exposed sufficiently to the use of English in authentic email communication. They also need to consider non-native speakers’ inability to express themselves appropriately and adequately due to the limitations of email technology and the pragmatic transfer from their first language and culture. Vignovic and Thompson (2010) encourage email recipients to seek contextual information about email senders, as such information can help them to understand the contextual constraints that may impede the appropriate structure of email messages. This may help prevent the recipients from developing unjustified negative perceptions of the senders. Thus, native speakers need to develop a sense of tolerance of linguistic and pragmatic violations in non-native speakers’ emails and try to ascribe the causes of these violations to possible situational factors rather than negative personal characteristics of the senders. In this way, the issue of negative language attitudes in intercultural email communication can be reduced, and the serious consequences of this issue can be eliminated.

6.4. Theoretical implications

The results of this study may have important contributions to both knowledge and research practice within the field of intercultural pragmatics. They can enhance the perspectives in this field by reporting findings related to the use of email technology in intercultural communication. Email users have to depend solely on the written text to convey their intentions and trigger the recipient’s positive impression due to the absence of non-verbal cues. This can add another layer of challenge for non-native speakers who try to communicate in a second language via a widely used communication channel. However, there is a lack of research on the perceptions that non-native speakers’ emails can trigger in various communication settings. The findings of this study provide insight into the relationship between the linguistic and discoursal characteristics of non-native speakers’ email messages and the possible attitudinal reactions they can trigger. They highlight how the social and contextual variables of the settings in which the email interaction occurs can influence the structure and evaluation of the email message.
This study has also added Iraqi culture to the cultures examined in terms of the linguistic behaviour of their members in intercultural communication and the influence of the pragmatic failure and transfer on that behaviour. Iraqi culture has not attracted a lot of research in intercultural pragmatics. The study of Iraqi non-native speakers’ communicative behaviour can highlight how Iraqi cultural values, including Islamic values, shape their language use in intercultural settings. It can also sharpen our knowledge regarding the influence of collectivistic values on communicative behaviour in a target individualistic culture.

The analytical framework employed for analysing the email corpus in this study is another contribution to the field of intercultural pragmatics. It is based on previous studies but enhanced by adding new categories to meet the requirements of analysing email data. An important aspect of this framework is that it integrates the analysis of the linguistic realization of the request acts to that of the discoursal structure of the email messages in which these acts occur. It is important to consider the discoursal characteristics of email as a genre that shapes the content of the message and influences the recipient’s perception. The data analysis of this study indicates that the rating of the request act characteristics, such as directness, has been influenced by the evaluators’ assessment of the email discourse and the move sequence within the email message. It is hoped that the analytical framework of this study will be helpful in future research on linguistic behaviour in request emails. It can be utilised in comparative studies analysing data collected from participants of different cultural backgrounds with categories and sub-categories of the proposed framework expanded or modified according to the requirements of the data. It can also be used in interlanguage studies that examine the development of ESL/EFL learners’ linguistic and pragmatic competences in email communication.

6.5. Limitations

The present study has a few limitations regarding the methods used for data collection and the analysis of the email message structure. To ensure that the email corpus used in this study is representative of the linguistic behaviour of INNESs in email communication, it would have been advantageous to collect a larger volume
of email texts. The email corpus could also be enhanced through recruiting female participants. Only male participants were recruited in this study due to the difficulty in finding female participants wishing to contribute samples of their email messages.

In terms of email evaluation, it would have been useful to recruit the original recipients of the INNESs’ email messages to assess these messages. The original recipients possess the necessary background information about the email situations and their relationships with the senders and would be able to provide authentic introspective evaluations. However, ethical issues and the difficulty in finding the original recipients have impeded the endeavor to recruit them. In addition, the evaluation survey employed in this study could be triangulated with qualitative interviews with the evaluators to explore in depth their views and explanations regarding their evaluations of INNESs’ emails. These interviews could highlight the evaluators’ concerns and justifications for their rating of the structure of the email messages, the request acts and the sender personality on the evaluation attributes presented in the survey.

Regarding data analysis, the discourse and linguistic analyses of this study examined the email corpus in terms of rhetorical moves, request strategies, and internal and external modification devices. It would have been beneficial to examine other linguistic features of the language used in INNESs’ messages such as linguistic errors, capitalizations and emoticons. These features have been reported in previous studies (e.g., Byron and Baldridge, 2007; Vignovic and Thompson, 2010) as influential factors that can have an impact on recipients’ attitudinal reactions. However, they are beyond the scope and limitation of this project and require space and effort that cannot be covered in one project.

6.6. Directions for future research

The above limitations can be considered in future research aiming to investigate the issue of language attitudes in intercultural email communication. This issue can be investigated from a broad perspective through collecting an adequate email sample
from people from different non-native English speaking backgrounds. Examining the linguistic behavior of non-native speakers of different cultural backgrounds and its impact on native speakers’ perceptions can show if the issue of language attitudes is a common problem that non-native speakers experience in intercultural email communication with native speakers. It can also indicate if native speakers base their attitudes solely on the linguistic behavior of non-native speakers without being influenced by existing stereotypes towards a particular cultural group.

According to the findings of this study, the discoursal characteristics of the email message and the linguistic realization of the request act in the message are not the only motives behind the recipients’ attitudes. It is beneficial to examine the role of other linguistic features in shaping recipients’ attitudinal reactions, such as grammatical errors, misspellings, capitalization mistakes and emoticons. Future research is needed to examine the influence of these features on the recipients’ attitudes in email communication between native and non-native speakers of English. Such research will contribute in sharpening our understanding of important issues in intercultural communication, such as miscommunication and negative language attitudes, and it will provide important implications for ESL/EFL pedagogy and intercultural communication.
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Appendix 1
Ethics application documents

ORGANISATIONAL plain language statement and consent form

To: Iraqi Australian Solidarity Association

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes.

Principal Researcher: Dr. Zosia Golebiowski

Student Researcher: Mohammed Aldhulaee

Associate Researcher(s): Dr. Brian Doig and Dr. Fethi Mansouri

- Purpose:

  The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of email senders when performing requests in email communication and the attitudinal reactions that recipients are likely to develop towards the senders and their linguistic behaviour. It also aims at exploring the motives behind the recipients’ attitudes through examining the linguistic and pragmatic performance of the senders in their email messages. That can shed light on the issue of language attitude and its consequences in email communication.

- Methods:

  Samples of email messages and information about these messages will be collected from Iraqi participants in semi-structured interviews. The participants will be asked to provide samples of email correspondence including requests sent to Australian recipients. They will also be asked to describe contextual variables that underlie each email message, including gender, age and status of the sender and the recipient; the relationship between them in terms of social power and distance; the setting of the interaction; and the perceived degree of imposition of the requests. Then these messages will be added to a survey that will be sent to a sample of Australian English native speakers to evaluate the content and structure of these messages on the evaluation items provided in the survey. Familiarity with email
communication and high proficiency in English represent the selection criteria of participants. If any participant does not meet these criteria, his/her data might be excluded from this study.

- **Risks and potential benefits:**

The participants may feel discomfort to disclose the content of some of their email messages, or the names and the email addresses used in these messages. However, only emails with general content will be used in this study. Any email with a confidential or private content will not be included as well as emails with specific content related to a professional or educational setting. The names, email addresses and positions found in the participants’ messages will be replaced with codes before the email messages being used in the evaluation survey and the linguistic analysis. The identification of the participants will also be kept anonymous. The participants will also be asked to delete the names, email addresses and any other identifiers of the recipients before giving the email messages to the researcher.

The results of this research can develop email users’ awareness of the necessity of developing their competence and knowledge of the norms and rules that govern email communication in the Australian society. It is hoped that this project will provide insights into the issue of miscommunication in email interaction and its impact on email users’ attitudes towards each other. These insights can enrich our understanding of the issue of language attitudes and their impact on social relationships in the Australian society.

- **Dissemination of the research results:**

The results of the research will disseminated in a thesis form, publications and conferences. These results can be reported to participants who want to get a copy of the research outcomes. The participants will need to add their email addresses in the consent form under their names. The participants who will take the evaluation survey can contact the researcher at a later stage to get a copy of the research outcomes. In addition, the research outcomes will be available on DRO on Deakin University website after the submission of the thesis.

- **Monitoring:**

The principle supervisor will monitor the progress of the research through reviewing the work of the student researcher and inspecting samples of the data. The ethic committee at Deakin University will also monitor the progress of this research through reviewing the annual report that the student will submit regularly.

- **Withdrawing:**

The participants have the right to withdraw from the participation at any stage of the research project. They can also withdraw their data at any stage. The researchers understand this right and they will not constrain the participants to continue with their participation or to keep their data for the project use.

- **Contact details of the researchers:**

  **The principle researcher**  
  Dr Zosia Golebiowski  
  Faculty of Arts and Education  
  Deakin University, Melbourne campus  
  221 Burwood Highway

  **The student researcher**  
  Mohammed Aldhulaee  
  35 Hawking Ave  
  Hampton Park, VIC 3976  
  Phone: 0403225355
Complaints
If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Please quote project number [HAE-14-015]
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO:  Iraqi Australian Solidarity Association

Organisational Consent Form

(To be used by organisational Heads providing consent for staff/members/patrons to be involved in research)

Date:

Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes

Reference Number: ________________________________

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I give my permission for members of Iraqi Australian Solidarity Association to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

The researcher has agreed not to reveal the participants' identities and personal details if information about this project is published or presented in any public form.

I agree that

1. The institution/organisation MAY / MAY NOT be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.

2. I / We EXPECT / DO NOT EXPECT to receive a copy of the research findings or publications.

Name of person giving consent (printed)  .................................................................

Signature  .................................................................  Date  .................................
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Iraqi participants

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients’ attitudes.

Principal Researcher: Dr. Zosia Golebiowski

Student Researcher: Mohammed Aldhulaee

Associate Researcher(s): Dr. Brian Doig and Dr. Fethi Mansouri

• Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of email senders when performing requests in email communication and the attitudinal reactions that recipients are likely to develop towards the senders and their linguistic behaviour. It also aims at exploring the motives behind the recipients’ attitudes through examining the linguistic and pragmatic performance of the senders in their email messages. That can shed light on the issue of language attitude and its consequences in email communication.

• Methods:
Samples of email messages and information about these messages will be collected from the participants in semi-structured interviews. The participants will be asked to provide samples of email correspondence including requests to Australian recipients. They will also be asked to describe the situations in which these email messages have been composed. Then these messages will be used in the evaluation survey that will be given to a sample of Australian English native speakers to evaluate the content and structure of these messages. Familiarity with email communication and high proficiency in English represent the selection criteria of participants. If any participant does not meet these criteria, his/her data might be excluded from this study.

• Risks and potential benefits:
Only emails with general content will be used in this study. Any email with a confidential or private content will not be included. As a participant, you will decide what emails you would like to contribute in this research. Your identification will be kept anonymous because your name, email address and position will be replaced with codes before your messages undergo the evaluation and linguistic analysis. You will also be asked to delete
the names, email addresses and other information of your recipients before giving the email messages to the researcher.

The results of this research can develop email users’ awareness of the necessity of developing their competence and knowledge of the norms and rules that govern email communication in the Australian culture. It is hoped that this project will provide insights into the issue of miscommunication in email interaction and its impact on email users’ attitudes towards each other. These insights can enrich our understanding of the issue of language attitudes and their impact on social relationships in the Australian society.

- **Dissemination of the research results:**

The results of this project will be disseminated in a thesis form, publications and conferences. These results can be reported to you. If you want to get a copy of the research outcomes, you will need to add your email address in the consent form under your name. In addition, the research outcomes will be available on DRO on Deakin University website after the submission of the thesis.

- **Monitoring:**

The principle supervisor will monitor the progress of this project through reviewing the work of the student researcher and inspecting samples of the data. The ethic committee at Deakin University will also monitor the progress of this research through reviewing the annual report that the student will submit regularly.

- **Withdrawing:**

You have the right to withdraw from the participation at any stage of the research project. You can also withdraw your data at any stage. The researchers understand this right and they will not constrain you to continue with your participation or to keep your data for the project use.

- **Contact details of the researchers:**

  **The principle researcher**
  
  Dr Zosia Golebiowski  
  Faculty of Arts and Education  
  Deakin University, Melbourne campus  
  221 Burwood Highway  
  Burwood, Victoria 3125  
  Tel.: (61 3) 9244 3841  
  Email: zosia@deakin.edu.au

  **The student researcher**
  
  Mohammed Aldhulaee  
  35 Hawking Ave  
  Hampton Park, VIC 3976  
  Phone: 0403225355  
  Email: maldhula@deakin.edu.au

**Complaints**

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,  
Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au  
Please quote project number [HAE-14-015]
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Iraqi participants

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Number: HAE-14-015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.
I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.
I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.
The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................
Signature ............................................................... Date ....................
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO:

Withdrawal of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date:

Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes

Reference Number:

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................

Signature .................................................................................................. Date .................................

Please mail or fax this form to:

Dr Zosia Golebiowski
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University, Melbourne campus
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, Victoria 3125
Tel.: (61 3) 9244 3841
Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes

Do you want to participate in an illuminating research project on email requests?

The aim of this research project is to explore the relationship between language in email communication and the attitudes that recipients develop towards senders and their emails. I am looking for speakers of English to evaluate the content and structure of email messages collected in this project. You will need to respond to a survey that contains email messages and descriptions of situations where they occurred.

The survey will probably take 15 minutes of your time. If you would like to participate, please contact me on the email address or the phone number below. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Mohammed Alshulaee
Email: maldhula@deakin.edu.au, Ph. 0403225355

Ethics approval number: HAE-14-015
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Australian participants

Plain Language Statement

Date:

Full Project Title: Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients' attitudes.

Principal Researcher: Dr. Zosia Golebiowski

Student Researcher: Mohammed Aldhulaee

Associate Researcher(s): Dr. Brian Doig and Dr. Hossein Shokouhi

• Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the linguistic behaviour of email senders when performing requests in email communication and the attitudinal reactions that recipients are likely to develop towards the senders and their linguistic behaviour. It also aims at exploring the motives behind the recipients' attitudes through examining the linguistic and pragmatic performance of the senders in their email messages. That can shed light on the issue of language attitude and its consequences in email communication.

• Methods:

As a surveyor, you will be asked to evaluate the content and structure of some email messages presented in the survey. The survey consists of three parts: a description of the situation in which each email message has been sent, the email message, and the evaluation statements. You will be asked to rate the structure of the email messages, the personality of the sender, the requests and future interaction with the sender on a 5-point scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Familiarity with email communication and high proficiency in English represent the selection criteria of evaluators. The demographic information that evaluators will provide in the first page of the survey will be used to exclude any data that may not align with the aims of this study.

• Risks and potential benefits:

There is no expected risks that may result from taking the evaluation survey. Distributing and collecting the survey are conducted anonymously. You are not required to provide any information that may indicate your personal identification. You just need to respond to the evaluation items presented in the survey and send it back to the researcher.
The results of this research can develop email users’ awareness of the necessity of developing their competence and knowledge of the norms and rules that govern email communication in the Australian society. It is hoped that this project will provide insights into the issue of miscommunication in email interaction and its impact on email users’ attitudes towards each other. These insights can enrich our understanding, as researchers and members of a multicultural society, of the issue of language attitudes and its impact on social relationships in the Australian society.

- **Dissemination of the research results:**

The results of this project will be disseminated in a thesis form, publications and conferences. These results can be reported to participants who want to get a copy of the research outcomes. If you would like to be informed about the outcomes of this project at a later stage, you will need to contact the researchers on the contact details available at the end of this document. In addition, the research outcomes will be available on DRO on Deakin University website after the submission of the thesis.

- **Monitoring:**

The principle supervisor will monitor the progress of the research through reviewing the work of the student researcher and inspecting samples of the data. The ethic committee at Deakin University will also monitor the progress of this research through reviewing the annual report that the student will submit regularly.

- **Consent**

If you agree to take part in this research, please complete and return the survey. The return of the completed survey will be taken as agreement for your information to be used in this project.

- **Contact details of the researchers:**

**The principal researcher**

Dr Zosia Golebiowski  
Faculty of Arts and Education  
Deakin University, Melbourne campus  
221 Burwood Highway  
Burwood, Victoria 3125  
Tel.: (61 3) 9244 3841  
Email: zosia@deakin.edu.au

**The student researcher**

Mohammed Aldhulaee  
35 Hawking Ave  
Hampton Park, VIC 3976  
Phone: 0403225355  
Email: maldhula@deakin.edu.au

**Complaints**

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Research Integrity, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au  
Please quote project number [HAE-14-015].
Appendix 2

Ethics Approval Letter

Memorandum

To: Dr Zosia Golebiowski
   School of Education

B cc: Mr Mohammed Aldhulaaee

From: Faculty of Arts & Education Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG)

Date: 12 March, 2014

Subject: HAE-14-015

Linguistic behaviour in email interaction and its impact on recipients’ attitudes: The case of email requests by Iraq speakers of English

Please quote this project number in all future communications

The application for this project has been considered by the Faculty HEAG under the terms of Deakin University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC).

Approval has been given for Mr Mohammed Aldhulaaee, under the supervision of Dr Zosia Golebiowski, School of Education, to undertake this project from 12/03/2014 to 12/03/2018.

The approval given by the Faculty HEAG is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Faculty HEAG immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HREC's.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

The Faculty HEAG and/or DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Kylie Koikouelinas
HEAG Secretariat
Faculty of Arts and Education
Appendix 3

The Interview Questions

About you:
Your cultural background: □ Iraqi □ Other
Educational background: □ primary □ High school □ Tertiary
Age range: □ 20-35 □ 35-50 □ more than 50
Email usage per day: □ once a day □ 1-5 times □ 5-10 times □ more than 10 times
Purpose of email use: □ social □ for work □ for education □ for services

Describe the situation in which you have sent this email.

About the recipient:
1. To whom did you send this email message?
2. Did you know him/her very well?
3. Were you both of the same age?
4. Was the recipient a male or female?
5. What was his/her position?
6. What was his/her role according to this position?
7. What kind of relationship did you have with the recipient?

About the message:
1. Why did you need to send this message?
2. Why didn’t you make this request in a face to face meeting?
3. Were you hesitant to send this email?
4. How can you describe the setting of your communication, e.g. academic, business, social, etc.?
5. What did you ask the recipient in your request?
6. Did you have the right to ask this?
7. Was the recipient obliged to fulfil your request?
8. Was it ok to send this request to the recipient?
9. Were you asking too much?
10. Did you expect a positive or negative reply?
11. Did you receive a positive or negative reply?
12. Did the recipient agree to fulfil your request?
13. Were you satisfied with the recipient’s reply?
## Appendix 4

Sample of Rasch result map

<table>
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<th>Items</th>
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<tr>
<td>8.0</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7.0</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>SE40, 4 SE41, 3 SE42, 4 SE43, 5 SE44, 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>-6.0</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-10.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5

The codes used for analysing the evaluation data

Emails

- **AC**
  - Academic email
- **WP**
  - Work place email
- **SE**
  - Service encounter email
- **AC1**
  - Academic email number 1
- **WP2**
  - Work place email number 2
- **SE3**
  - Service encounter email number 3

Rating categories

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Not sure
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

First evaluative statement about academic email number 1

Third evaluative statement about work place email number 2

Fifth evaluative statement about service encounter email number 4

Participants

Each participant is given a serial number starting from 001, e.g. 001 (participant 1), 002 (participant 2), 003 (participant 3), etc.
## Demographic data

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you identify yourself as Australian?</td>
<td>1: Yes, 2: No, 3: Not sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you lived in Australia?</td>
<td>000: From birth, 024: 24 months, 120: 120 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is English your main language for everyday communication?</td>
<td>1: Yes, 2: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your age range:</td>
<td>1: 20-29, 2: 30-39, 3: 40-50, 4: Over 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td>1: Male, 2: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many emails do you send per day?</td>
<td>1: No email, 2: 1-4, 3: 5-10, 4: 11-20, 5: More than 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many emails do you receive per day?</td>
<td>1: No email, 2: 1-4, 3: 5-10, 4: 11-20, 5: More than 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your purpose of email usage:</td>
<td>1 if the choice is ticked, 9 if the choice is not ticked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>