Openings and Closings in Institutionally-Situated Email Requests

Nicola Halenko & Lisa Winder

Abstract

The study abroad experience presents opportunities to enrich linguistic and cultural knowledge, but learners also face challenges negotiating within and between language systems. This chapter describes one such interlanguage challenge: managing online pragmatic interactions in upward email requests. Openings and closings sequences in emails of two academic discourse communities are examined: (L1) experts (*n*=162) and (L2) novices (*n*=159) from China. The request data are analysed for evidence of variance between the groups and to what extent a ten-month sojourn changes novice email practice. Results revealed that novices and experts adopt markedly different strategies for doing interpersonal work. Experts tend to take a less formal, egalitarian stance when composing emails while novices opt for increased levels of formality in structure and style. Most novice mismanagement of openings and closings can be traced back to either L1 influences or, more commonly, an overreliance on formal letter writing techniques.

1. Introduction

The development of L2 pragmatic competence in study abroad (SA) research continues to be of great interest because of the enormous potential for linguistic and cultural development in the target language community which may not be available in the at-home learning experience. Much has been empirically recorded on the effects of sojourns on the development of oral pragmatic competency, in particular. Kinginger's (2009; 2013) established work on SA effects

has documented that, although gains are sometimes modest, SA appears particularly valuable in developing abilities related to social interaction like pragmatic competence. Empirical studies report learners broadening their repertoire of speech acts, demonstrating a greater awareness of register and style, and incorporating more formulaic language into their speech as a result of L2 immersion (Kinginger, 2013).

Much less research has been conducted on learners' written pragmatic abilities during SA. Given learners' access to the target language community is more often than not facilitated by study programmes at international universities, investigations situated within academic higher education institutions provide fertile ground for examining SA effects on pragmatic performance. The recent surge in examining learners' L2 email practices within academic SA stays has begun to close this gap. As email communication is (fast becoming) the dominant medium of interaction between staff and students, e-communication also provides a wealth of authentically situated discourse for examining pragmatic development. The extent to which learners are socialised into their new academic discourse community and are able to learn the (culture specific) institutional rules and associated language conventions, has implications for both learners and academic staff.

This study takes both the SA context and academic email discourse as its central targets for investigating Chinese students' pragmatic development as novice L2 users of English. Specifically, it examines the dual influences of novice interactions with experts in the academic discourse community, and of studying in the target language community with its rich implicit and explicit exposure to the L2. As Kinginger (2013) notes, there are currently few longitudinal studies within SA research and few which incorporate a social dimension. Tracking

performance within a new academic discourse community over a SA period, and drawing on concepts such as language socialisation theory and rapport management, contribute to addressing both of these research gaps. The research questions are as follows:

1. How do experts and novices manage openings and closings in request emails to co-create and maintain interpersonal relations with academic staff?
2. Is there evidence of transformation from novice to expert email practices during study abroad?

2. Current research

The review of existing literature first draws on the interrelated concepts of language socialisation, academic discourse communities and rapport management as frameworks for analysing the email request data. The section concludes with an overview of opening and closing sequences, followed by a review of current research on Chinese students' production of L2 English emails.

2.1 Socialisation into academic discourse communities

Language socialisation theory draws on the premise that language is learned through interactions with more (linguistically and culturally) proficient others, who in turn provide mentoring or evidence about the appropriate uses of language, values and identities of its community members (Duff, 2010). Academic discourse refers to forms of oral and written communication, normally instilled within academic communities such as schools or universities, that are privileged, expected, conventionalised or ritualised (Duff, 2010). Combining these principles, academic discourse socialisation is concerned with examining,

among other things, how newcomers to an academic culture learn to participate appropriately, how they are inducted into local practices and develop their own voice, identity and agency, how expert others help facilitate this socialisation, and how their academic discourse practices evolve over time (Duff, 2007, 2010). These aspects are central features to the current study with regard to how the SA participants are socialised into academic email practices and how they frame their email pragmatic interactions with faculty members.

As Tarone (2005) suggests, a great advantage to analysing language use within the construct of discourse communities avoids the questionable practice of benchmarking non-native speaker competency against native speaker ideals. Instead, the actual performance of both expert and novice members of authentic discourse communities can be examined. Experts are members who know the linguistic and cultural conventions of the discourse better than others and act as informants and models within the discourse community. Adopting this perspective, experts could either be native or non-native speakers of the target language. The defining feature is on the expertise of members within the discourse community and not on their linguistic or cultural background (Tarone, 2005). In the case of the current study, the experts in this academic discourse community are in fact L1 users of English and the novices, L2 users of English as SA students. The experts featured, however, are considered such because of their extended three-year period of socialisation into UK institutional email practices. The expert participants are final year students in their academic degree programme at the point the Chinese students entered the same educational system for SA purposes.

2.2 Managing rapport in institutional emails

Spencer-Oatey (2000)'s contention that language has the equally important functions of information transfer and the management of social relations offers a particularly suitable framework for analysing email data, as previous studies have shown (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Zhu, 2015). What she terms 'rapport management' is broader in scope than the well utilised concepts of face as described by Brown and Levinson (1987). Central features of this framework are the management of (dis)harmony among people taking into account the aspects of face (people's sense of worth and reputation), sociality rights and obligations (people's concerns over fairness, consideration and appropriate behaviour), and interactional goals (interactants' tasks or relational goals). As such, communicative events like email requests should not only to attend to the illocutionary aspect (rapport threatening or enhancing features), but also to the discourse (e.g. topic management, organisation and sequencing of information) and stylistic aspects (e.g. appropriate lexis, syntax and address terms) of the task. The appropriate management of these domains is considered vital to establishing or maintaining harmonious relations. Since email exchanges are highly frequent and have an important function to (re)establish positive relationships in a SA university setting and to support positive future online interactions with academic staff, they offer valuable insight into how interpersonal work is managed.

Although the asynchronous nature of emails circumvents the need to consider the two further domains of participation (e.g., real-time turn-taking) and non-verbal aspects of rapport management (e.g., gestures, eye contact) in Spencer-Oatey's framework, this also brings additional challenges to email writing. Senders are likely to have to work harder to create positive rapport in e-communication in the absence of the participation and non-verbal domains

which would normally provide additional valuable support. Empirical research has suggested that academic relations can be easily damaged if email requests are not handled effectively. Negative outcomes may include non-compliance or more lasting negative impressions of the sender (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014; Savić, 2018). Opening and closing sequences of initial emails may therefore have additional communicative value and importance, especially in upward request emails to faculty members.

2.3 Openings and closings in L2 English emails

Emails are typically characterised as having three main structural components: *openings* (e.g. Dear/Hi first name/ last name), *topical sequences* which perform the main communicative act (e.g. When are you free to meet?) and *closings* (Best wishes/See you soon) (Bou-Franch, 2011; Crystal, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007). Topical sequences are said to be obligatory elements of emails as the communicative purpose is expressed in the body of the message (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Bou-Franch, 2011). As such, topical sequences have been the dominant focus of interest in email research (Chen et al., 2016; Chen, 2006; Li, 2018; Zhu, 2012). Openings and closings, on the other hand, are considered optional elements (Crystal, 2001; Bou-Franch, 2011). Cumulative research has in part provided some general understanding regarding the function and use of openings and closings sequences across different languages, but findings are generally presented within broader investigations of L2 emails (e.g., Chen, 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Savić, 2018; Zhu, 2017). Studies isolating openings and closings for independent examination are steadily growing (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Bjørge, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011; Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019; Waldvogel, 2007) but few have investigated these stylistic features with Chinese learners of English (Zhu, 2015 is an exception). This is a further research gap which this study aims to address.

The opening and closing features of emails are the main focus of this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, as discussed earlier, the social and interactional constraints of email communication mean senders might need to exert additional effort into rapport-building strategies. Opening and closing sequences may therefore play an important role in helping to achieve this. Secondly, contrary to some email research suggesting an absence of these features due to the informality of e-communication (Crystal, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007), institutional emails have been found to contain high levels of openings and closings sequences (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Bou-Franch, 2011). This indicates these features may serve particular functions so are of investigative value.

Finally, and most importantly, Chinese SA students as novice email writers are known to vary their choice and form of opening and closing sequences in hierarchical institutional emails to staff, as the following studies report. Naturally-occurring emails examined by Biesenbach-Lucas (2009), Chen (2006), Huang (2016) and Zhu (2015) show repeated trends of reliance on the formalities of business letter writing and greater linguistic deference in comparison to experts. Openings are reported to be more elaborate and contain aspects of L1 transfer (formal names and titles). Closings often contain several formal steps (requests for response, phatic leave-takes and sign offs), in contrast to experts who produce fewer closing sequences and opt for a less formal tone. Such patterns have been reported in elicited email data too (Chen, 2015; Li, 2018; Zhu, 2017). Findings from this group of studies also point to confusion over address terms (Chen, 2015) and extensive use of self-introductions (Chen, 2015; Li, 2018) and positive politeness strategies such as small talk (Li, 2018). Emphasising solidarity and interrelationship through the use of complimentary closings, which extend best wishes to the addressee's

wellbeing or happiness, has also been reported (Chen, 2015; Li, 2018). To date, Chen (2006) provides the only longitudinal case study featuring some evidence of the development of opening and closings in email requests. Chen's graduate student initially preferred formal conventions to reflect the asymmetrical power relationship and reportedly transferred L1 understanding that communicating with professors required formal, respectful language. Over time, greetings and leave-takings contained fewer formal features and more conversational language, explained by developing relationships and adopting a style which mirrored the emails received from professors.

Collectively, these examinations report that Chinese SA students are under-prepared to interact in linguistically and socially appropriate ways via email. Only after two years did Chen's (2006) graduate student make appropriate changes to her email writing, suggesting SA sojourns, which are less than twelve months in most cases, are insufficient for developing email writing skills based on immersion alone. In addition to the broader challenges Chinese students face with adjusting to academic practices (learner independence and class participation), managing unfamiliar academic norms and socialising with home students during SA (Campbell & Li, 2008; Major, 2005; Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017; Trice, 2003), language barriers remain the most widely reported factor affecting the day-to-day experience of the Chinese SA sojourner. Host institutions should be concerned with how best to support novices to effectively participate in their new academic discourse communities. Studies such as this go some way to contributing to this process.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and email data

The opening and closing sequences derive from 321 authentic request emails sent to the two authors over an 18-month period. The senders of the emails were all final year undergraduate students between the ages of 20-23. The students providing the novice email data (*n*=159) were Chinese L1 speakers from an international business background, completing an academic year SA stay in the UK. These students had completed two years of undergraduate study at their partner universities in mainland China. The L2 English proficiency level of the SA students was intermediate to upper intermediate level (B1-B2 on the CEFR), as required by the SA programme. The students providing the expert email data (*n*=162) were L1 British English speakers studying towards a TESOL and modern language degree. These students had already completed three years of their degree programme at the institution where this study was undertaken. The data are examined in relation to these two academic discourse communities.

A passive consent approach was adopted to collect the data, as used in previous studies (Merrison et al., 2012; Savić, 2018). Students were contacted towards the end of the research period to explain the study and how their archived request emails would be used. The timing also coincided with the period after formal assessments, so students did not feel unduly pressured to participate. Students then had a four-week period to ask questions, view sample emails or opt out entirely from the study. Any withdrawals from the study meant emails were removed from the corpus. This after-the-moment approach ensured authenticity of the request emails and avoided any possible influence on email writing from having prior knowledge of the study.

To observe the role of opening and closing sequences, initiating emails (i.e., those not from a longer conversational thread) were the main focus since the longer the email chain, the more unlikely it is emails contain these features (Bou-Franch, 2011; Crystal, 2001). All the emails were upward requests to members of faculty (status-unequal) and contained requests for meetings (31%), requests for information (37%) or requests for action (32%). To answer the first research question, examining variance in expert and novice request emails, the two data sets were compared based on frequency and types of openings and closings produced. To answer the second research question, examining shifts towards L2-like email practices over time, the novice data were separated into two subsets; emails produced in the first half of the SA (Sept-Jan, *n*=81) and emails from the second half of the SA (Feb-June, *n*=78). All of the novices were represented in both subsets but not all novices produced the same number of emails within each time period or across the entire SA stay. As a result, the data analysis aimed to provide indicators of changes in L2 behaviour at the group level since the email corpus grew organically and did not allow for direct comparisons at the individual level.

3.2 Analysis of the opening and closing sequences

The openings and closings are broadly examined against Spencer-Oatey's (2000) illocutionary, discourse and stylistic domains of rapport management. The data are investigated quantitively and qualitatively in terms of how the openings and closings enhance or challenge positive rapport, and the organisational features and lexis employed. For comparability purposes, the data were analysed for (i) the occurrence of openings and closing sequences, and (ii) the types and frequency of opening and closing moves.

Categorising the data draws on existing sources which have investigated these specific components of emails (Bou-Franch, 2011; Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019) and studies which draw on email data from Chinese L2 speakers of English (Zhu, 2015). Tables 1-2 illustrate how the email components were coded and are organised in the sequence they typically appeared in both communities' data sets. Openings are said to consist of three moves (or a combination thereof): *Address term* (e.g., Nicola), *Greeting* (e.g., Good morning/Dear/Hi) and *Self-identification* (e.g., My name is). Closings typically contain four moves (or a combination thereof): *Looking forward to statement* (e.g., Hope to hear from you soon), *Pre-closing expression* (e.g., Thanks very much), *Complimentary closing phrase* (e.g., Regards) and *Signature* (e.g., writer's first name and last name). The presence or absence of these moves between the two discourse communities is the focus of examination.

Table 1. Coding for email openings

Openings	**Code**
Address term	
First name only	FN
Greeting	
Greeting only	G
Greeting and address term	
first name	G+FN
last name	G+LN
first name and last name	G+FN+LN
first name and title	G+FN+T
title	G+T
title and first name	G+T+FN
title and last name	G+T+LN
title and first and last name	G+T+FN+LN
Identification of self	
Name	N
Name and ID number	N+ID
Name and course	N+C
Name and class	N+CL
Name and course and class	N+C+CL
Class/course/status (I am from your X class/I am a (Chinese) student from..)	CorCL

Table 2. Coding for email closings

Closings	**Code**
Looking forward	LF
Pre closing expression	
Thanks Apology	TC AC
Complimentary closing phrase	
Regards, Best wishes	CP
Signature	
first name last name first name and last name	FN LN FN+LN

4. Findings

All the request emails from the expert or novice data sets featured either openings or closings, with the majority of emails (expert 86%, novice 67%) containing both moves. This is line with previous studies reporting the pervasiveness of these features in institutionally upward emails (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Zhu, 2015). The following sections report on the findings according to the two research questions framing the study.

RQ1: How do experts and novices manage openings and closings in request emails to co-create and maintain interpersonal relations with academic staff?

Beginning with openings, a comprehensive qualitative analysis of the openings can be found in Appendix 1 which documents the frequency and type employed by the two communities. Although a range of 21 opening types were identified, the same clear preferences for three specific types emerged for both groups. Figure 1 focuses on these most common variants (G; G+FN; G+T) since all other opening types represented no more than 12% of the data for either group. Figure 2 shows the most common variants within openings for experts and novices.

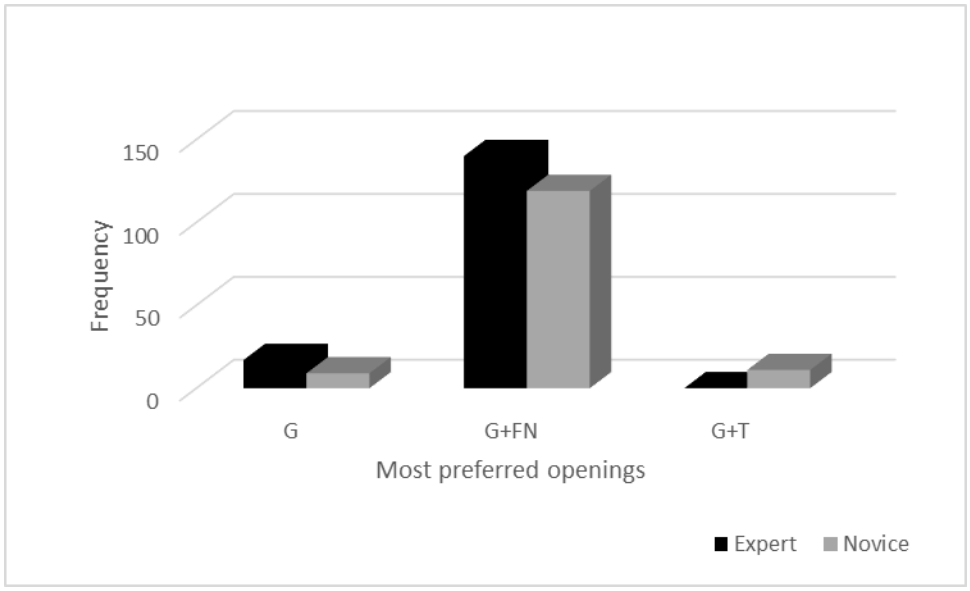


Figure 1. Most common openings in expert and novice request emails

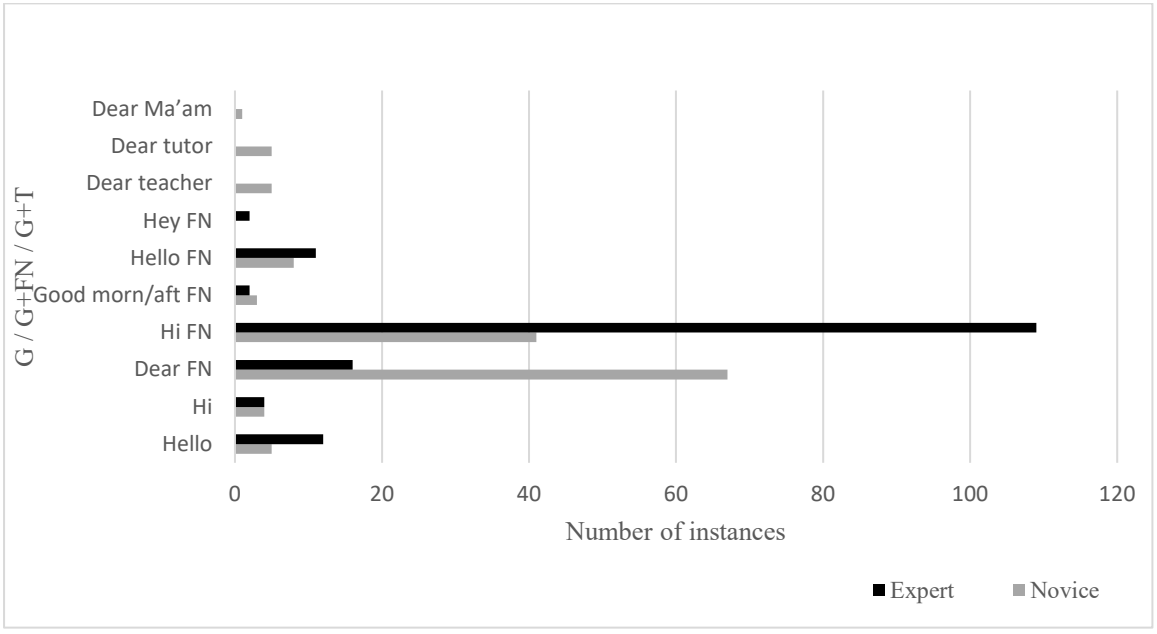


Figure 2. Most common variants within expert and novice openings

Whilst the two groups generally favour the same opening sequences in the frequency order of G+FN (Novices 75%; Experts 86%), G (Novices 6%; Experts 10%), and G+T (Novices 7%;

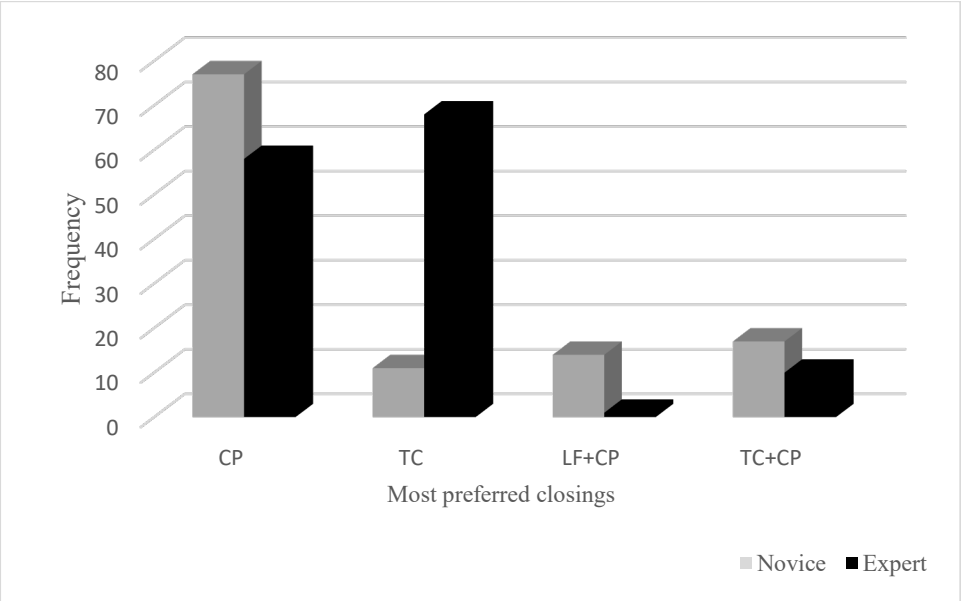
Experts 0%), the choice of variants for experts and novices differs considerably. Novice openers (G+FN) range from the very formal *Dear+FN* (56%) to the much less formal *Hi+FN* (34%), though the more formal variant is the majority choice. Experts, on the other hand, show the opposite pattern. The less formal *Hi+FN* (78%) is the overwhelmingly preferred sequence, and only a small number opt for the formal expression *Dear+FN* (11%). When openers contain only Greetings (G), novices appear to use both *Hi* (44%) and *Hello* (56%) interchangeably. Experts prefer the more formal *Hello* (75%) in this case, perhaps in the absence of a co-occurring first name which personalises the opener and suggests greater familiarity. The final most preferred sequence includes combining the Greeting with a Title (G+T). Notably, this sequence does not appear at all in the expert data. In contrast, novice emails combine a formal greeting (Hello/Dear) with a job title (teacher; tutor) in 8% of the openings. Such mismatches in Greetings and Titles appear in other openings too (Appendix 1). Combinations which are incorrect (Dear Ma'am; Dear Mrs FN; Dear Mrs FN+LN;) or inappropriate (Dear Miss LN; Dear Mrs LN) account for 5% of the novice openings across the data set.

Immediately following Greetings, self-identification of the sender is an additional opening component in around a third of the novice data (36%; 58 instances). This feature, however, is completely absent from the expert emails. Where novices self-identify, this typically involves stating names (I am/I'm; my name is) (49%; 26 instances), class or course (I'm an X course student) (16%; 9 instances) or a combination of both (I'm FN from your X course/class) (28%; 16 instances). This finding is examined further in RQ2.

Overall, there are few instances where openings are not employed in the emails by either group (experts 1%; novices 4%), but this is where the similarities end. Openings in novice emails are

typically characterised by the formal sequence 'Dear+FN', with some additions of self-identification of which the move 'Dear Lisa, my name is X' is the most common. Experts' opening sequences, on the other hand, generally follow the more fixed, less formal pattern G or G+FN, typically realised by sequences such as 'Hello' or 'Hi Nicola'. Generally speaking, much variance exists between the two groups with type and frequency of openings.

Turning to examining closing moves between experts and novices, further evidence of group variation is also observed here. As before, a detailed overview of all the 31 different closing types and frequencies can be found in Appendix 2. This section limits the findings to the most frequent types which account for the majority of the data. Figure 3 illustrates that both communities utilise the following as their preferred leave-takes in the order; CPs (Novices 48%; Experts 36%), TCs (Novices 7%; Experts 42%), TCs + CPs (Novices 11%; Experts 6%) or combinations thereof with LFs (Novices 8%; Experts 1%),



Figures 3. Most common closings in expert and novice request emails

However, as seen in the opening moves, the variants of these produced by each group differ in type and frequency. Figures 4 and 5 focus on the preferred variants within the CP and TC moves as these most represent the variance found in the two discourse communities.

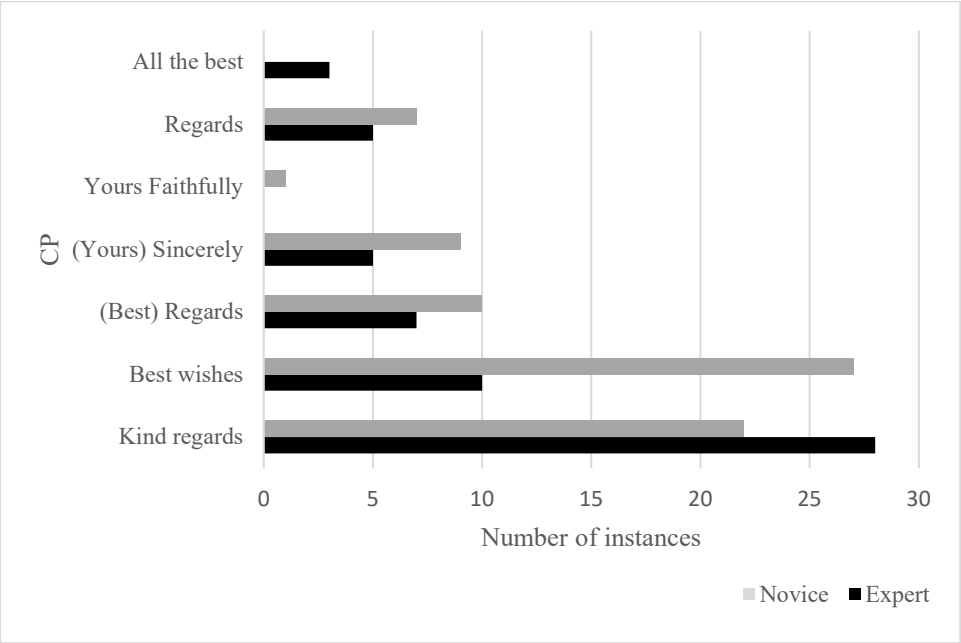


Figure 4. Most common variants in the CP moves

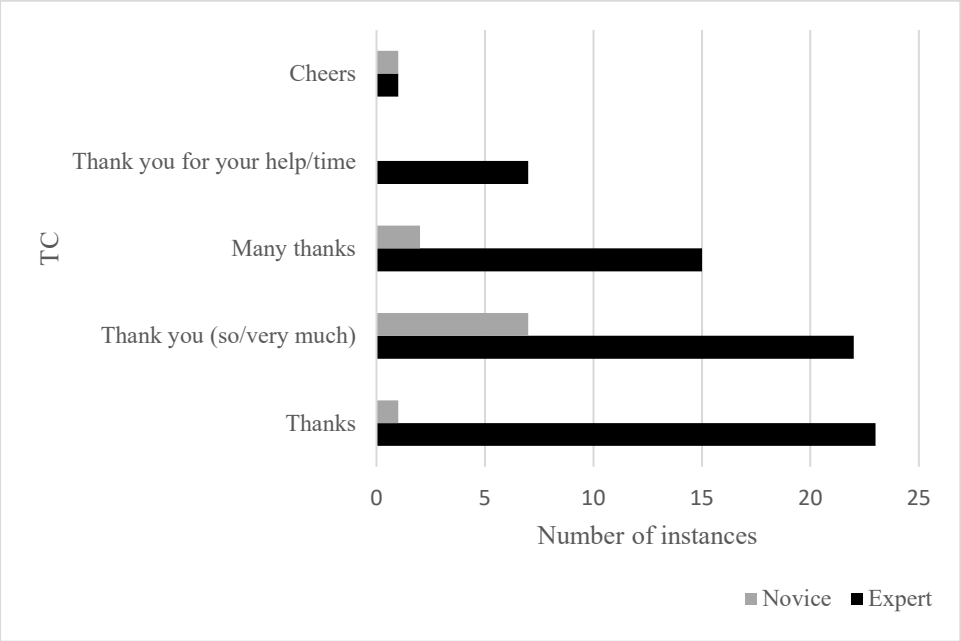


Figure 5. Most common variants in the TC moves

Figure 4 shows novices select the formulaic complimentary closes (CPs) *Kind regards* or *Best wishes* to similar high levels (29% and 36%), whilst experts rely heavily on *Kind regards* (48%) in most cases. Highly routinised expressions *Yours Sincerely* or *Yours Faithfully*, derived from formal letter writing, are observed in both data sets to a lesser extent, but appear twice as often in the novice emails (10 instances). Expressions of gratitude (TCs) are highly frequent in the expert emails (48%; 68 instances), ranging from the less formal *(Many)Thanks* (38 instances) to the formal *Thank you (very much)* (22 instances). Offering gratitude in advance of knowing the request outcome is the most favoured leave-take overall in the expert data set. Novices, by contrast, rarely adopt any single expressions of gratitude (7%; 11 instances), though some occurrences in combination with CPs do appear (11%; 17 instances). Sequences which combine multiple closing moves (TC+CP) are observed for both groups but to a lesser degree. LF variants in fact only appear as a combination (LF+TC and LF+CP). It is novices, however, who more frequently adopt any LF strategy as a rule (novice 8%; expert 1%). Their preferred pragmatic routines such as '*Looking forward to hearing from you'* and *'Looking forward to your reply'* (12 instances) show further influence of borrowing from formal letter writing techniques.

Including a signature as part of the closing sequence acts as an extended identity function (Crystal, 2001) and typically signals the end of the email. Most emails (expert 99%; novice 77%) concluded with some form of sign off, showing the salience of this feature for both groups. Figure 6 illustrates the range of signature types employed by the two groups.

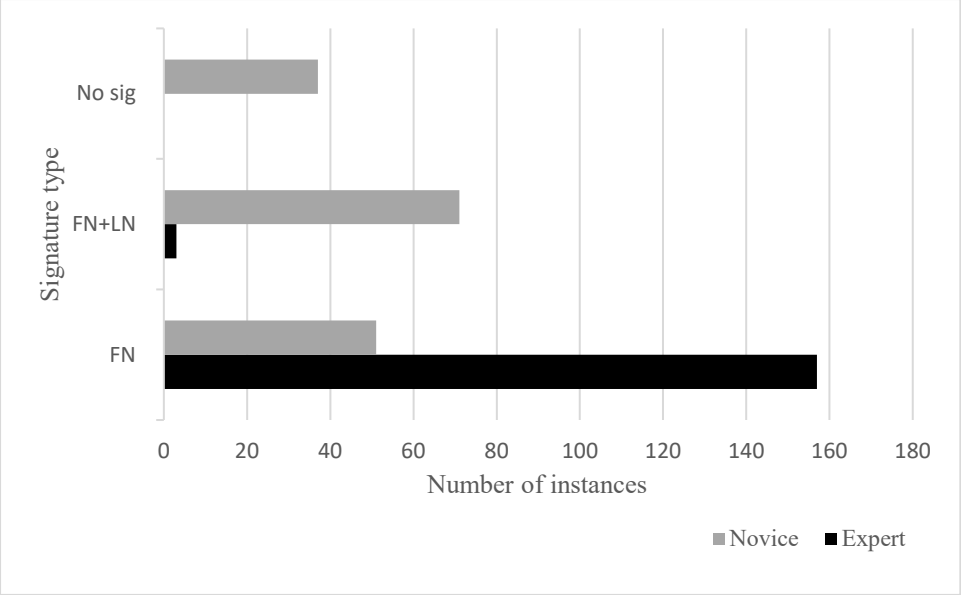


Figure 6. Signature types in expert and novice request emails

Experts predominantly chose a less formal *FN* ending (97%) which mirrored the tone of their preferred opening greeting *Hi+FN* found in the majority of emails (1% = no signature). More variance was established in the novice emails. Almost half of the novice signatures contained both FN+LN (45%) (including 5 instances of LN+FN), followed by FN (32%), or no signature (23%). Such a strong opening and closing connection was not apparent in the novice data. A general observation to be made, however, is beginning and ending with some formal letter writing style e.g., 'Dear' (opening) and FN+LN signature (closing).

To summarise, the expert and novice data sets differ in choice of preferred closing sequences and their variant parts. In addition, experts are more likely to include a closing sequence (88%) than novices (73%). Similar to observations on openings, novices tend to employ more closing moves than experts and use a wider range of variants to formulate them. Expert closing sequences typically included expressions of gratitude (TC) and complimentary closer (CP). A

typical example blending differing levels of formality is ‘Thanks +kind regards’. Novices, by contrast, did not produce more closing moves but favoured different combinations and expressions of increased formality e.g. single complimentary close (CP) e.g. ‘Best wishes’, or other combinations such as LF+CP e.g. ‘I am looking forward to hearing from you +best wishes’, and TC+CP e.g. ‘Thank you very much +best wishes’.

RQ2: Is there evidence of transformation from novice to expert email practices during study abroad?

As a reminder, developmental changes were examined at the group level by comparing the frequency and types of openings and closings occurring in the first five months and last five months of SA. Where percentage frequency counts are introduced in this section, these represent +/- differences between the two time periods to illustrate changes in performance. Since the changes observed are small, the actual number of instances are reported where appropriate.

Beginning with openings, Table 3 shows changes in type and frequency of openings between the two time periods. The overall trend is that novice email behaviour largely remains the same and still differs considerably from that of experts. Only marginal changes are made in terms of frequency and type of openings and closings produced during the ten-month period.

Table 3. Developmental changes in openings during study abroad

Code	Variant	Frequency of variant(s) Sept-Jan	Frequency of variant(s) Feb-Aug	**Total use of variant(s) Sept-Jan**	**Total use of variant(s) Feb-Aug**
FN	Lisa	1	0	**1 (1%)**	**0**
G	Hello	3	2	**6 (8%)**	**3 (4%)**
	Hi	3	1		
G+FN	Dear FN	35	32	**59 (76%)**	**60 (80%)**
	Hi FN	19	22		
	Good morning/ Good afternoon FN	3	0		
	Hello FN	2	6		
G+FN+LN	Dear FN+LN	2	2	**2 (3%)**	**2 (3%)**
G+FN+T	Hello FN teacher	1	2	**1 (1%)**	**2 (3%)**
G+T	Dear teacher	2	3	**4 (5%)**	**7 (9%)**
	Dear tutor	1	4		
	Dear Ma'am	1	0		
G+T+FN	Dear Mrs FN	1	0	**1 (1%)**	**0**
G+T+FN+LN	Dear Mrs FN+LN	1	1	**1 (1%)**	**1 (1%)**
G+T+LN	Dear Miss LN	1	0	**2 (3%)**	**0**
	Dear Mrs LN	1	0		
T+FN	Ms FN	1	0	**1 (1%)**	**0**
Total use of openers				**78**	**75**
NIL		3	3	**3**	**3**
Total emails				**81**	**78**

Note: The figures represent the number of instances these variants occurred within the request emails

G+FN (+4%) continues to be the most common greeting sequence at the end of the SA period as it is as the start. Learners' preference for initiating their emails with Dear+FN (+3 instances) rather than the less formal Hi or Hi+FN (+1 instance) remains mostly unchanged. The practice of incorporating either incorrect or inappropriate titles as part of the greeting sequence is also sustained, though some evidence of change can be observed here. Adopting the L1 deferential titles of 'teacher' or 'tutor' in fact increases (+5 instances) at the end of the year, whilst the use of more situationally-inappropriate titles (Dear Miss LN; Dear Mrs LN) marginally decreases (-2 instances). Some combinations observed at the start of the year abroad (Dear Ma'am; Dear Mrs FN; Dear Miss LN; Dear Mrs LN; Ms FN) are absent from the data at the end of the ten-month stay, signalling some change over time.

Use of self-identification is still a key feature of request emails throughout the SA period, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Developmental changes in self-identification use during study abroad

Code	Variant	Frequency of variant(s) Sept-Jan	Frequency of variant(s) Feb-Aug	**Total use of variant(s) Sept-Jan**	**Total use of variant(s) Feb-Aug**
N	I am/I'm	13	9	**15 (44%)**	**11 (46%)**
	My name is	2	2		
N+C	I'm FN from X course	1	8	**1 (3%)**	**8 (33%)**
N+C+ID	I'm FN from X course. Student number X	2	1	**2 (6%)**	**1 (4%)**
N+CL	I'm FN from your X class	6	1	**6 (18%)**	**1 (4%)**
N+ID	I'm FN. Student number X	3	1	**3 (9%)**	**1 (4%)**
CorCL	I'm an X course student	4	1	**7 (21%)**	**2 (8%)**
	I'm an international student	3	1		
Total use of self id				**34**	**24**
NIL				**47**	**54**
Total emails				**81**	**78**

Note: The figures represent the number of instances these variants occurred within the request emails

There are, however, fewer instances of learners reporting their class, course or international status alongside their names (-13%) and, overall, more learners choose not to include any form of self-identification by the end of the year (+11%). As a general observation, all decreases observed in the opening sequences can be attributed to a positive shift away from a reliance on moves most likely transferred from L1.

Developmental changes in the use of closings are the next focus. Although the overall trend shows the non-linear trajectory towards expert requests continue, there is some evidence suggesting closings are expressed in a simpler way than at the start of the year (Table 5). The

two main trends accounting for this change are fewer variants in the email requests (learners appear to opt for more formulaic routines) and less embellishment of leave-take expressions (pragmatic routines are not supported by extraneous facework moves). These features are examined in more detail in this section.

Table 5. Developmental changes in closings during study abroad

Code and Variant	Frequency of variant(s) Sept-Jan	Frequency of variant(s) Feb-Aug
CP		
Kind regards	14 (32%)	8 (24%)
Best wishes	15 (34%)	13 (39%)
(Best) Regards	3 (7%)	7 (21%)
(Yours) Sincerely	6 (14%)	3 (9%)
Yours Faithfully	1 (2%)	0
Regards	5 (11%)	2 (6%)
	44	***33***
LF		
Looking forward for you	0	1 (50%)
Looking forward to your reply	0	1 (50%)
	0	***2***
LF+CP		
Hope to hear from you soon +CP	0	0
I hope I can hear from you as soon as possible	0	2 (40%)
(I) look forward to your early reply +CP	1 (11%)	0
(I am) looking forward to your reply +CP	4 (44%)	1 (20%)
(I am) looking forward to hearing from you +CP	4 (44%)	2 (40%)
	9	***5***
TC		
Thanks	0	1 (17%)
Thank you (so/very much)	3 (60%)	4 (67%)
Many thanks	2 (40%)	0
Thank you for your help/time	0	0
Cheers	0	1 (17%)
	5	***6***
TC+CP		
Thank you (so/very much) +CP	4 (40%)	3 (43%)
Thank you for your help/time/ attention/consideration +CP	5 (50%)	1 (14%)
Thank you in advance +CP	1 (10%)	0
Thanks	0	3 (43%)
I greatly appreciate your help	0	0
	10	***7***
Total use of closings	**68**	**53**

NIL	**13**	**25**
Total emails	**81**	**78**

Note: The figures represent the number of instances these variants occurred within the request emails.

By the end of the SA, it is more common for novice emails to omit any form of closing (-50%). This may be indicative of the closer relationship formed with staff over time, though this is not replicated in the expert data where closings remain highly frequent. The data also show slight decreases in other areas. The use of CPs decreases overall (-3%) which is observed in all variants with the exception of *Best wishes* (+5%) and (*Best) regards* (+14%). Notably, *Yours Faithfully* is absent in the data set towards the end of SA and use of *Yours Sincerely* reduces by 5%. LF moves still mostly occur in combination with CPs (-4%), though more standard LF formulaic expressions begin to emerge too (e.g., 'Looking forward to your reply') (+1 instance). The frequency of TCs as a single expression remains low (+5%) in comparison to experts who almost always include this feature. The combinations TC+CP evidence a slight decrease (-2%).

What is most noticeable are the qualitative changes made. The closings of emails sent in the second half of the SA stay are no longer enhanced with the same levels of positive facework. Unlike experts, novice rapport-building techniques at the start of the year consist of email sign offs embellished with positive politeness statements (see examples 1-5). Such interpersonal efforts and attention to detail when signing off are not evident in their later emails.

(1) 'I am so happy that you can do this for me.'

(2) 'I would be very much obliged if you could approve my request.'

(3) 'I will be so grateful if you could consider my request thoroughly.'

(4) 'Thank you for spending your time on reading such a long message.'

(5) 'It was a great pleasure to take part in this course.'

As the final closing move, the variation of signature types, seen in early emails, continues. Novices tend to still opt for more formal endings which reflect the overall style of the request email itself; FN+LN (+2%), FN (-5%), or no signature (+10%). One observable change is the absence of the Chinese structure LN+FN in the second half of SA.

5. Discussion

Far from being "optional elements" which are largely "phatic in nature" and "empty of communicative content" (Bou-Franch, 2011: 1773), the openings and closings in our institutionally-situated upward request emails seem to play an important affective and communicative role in initial emails. We agree with Waldvogel's interpretation that openings and closings serve an important function for "personalising messages, reinforcing status relationships and underlining positional expectations" (2007: 458). Similar conclusions have also been drawn elsewhere (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Bou-Franch, 2011; Codina-Espurz & Salazar-Campillo, 2019; Zhu 2015). This investigation also suggests the strength of openings and closings in initial emails replaces the important rapport-building aspects of face-to-face interaction such as nonverbal cues, for instance.

In answering research question one, examining upward email request behaviour in novice and expert academic discourse communities, the findings are comparable to existing research in several ways. From a broader perspective, experts tend to take a less formal, more egalitarian stance when composing emails and show little linguistic variation in either openings or closings (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Li 2018; Merrison et al., 2012). Novices meanwhile opt for increased levels of formality in both structure and style (Huang, 2016; Li, 2018; Zhu, 2015).

The variation and combinations of opening and closing types produced suggests novices experience hesitation and uncertainty regarding local pragmatic norms when composing request emails.

More revealing of group differences was linguistic choice for opening and closing components, as found in other studies of this kind (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Whilst both novices and experts are clearly conscious of projecting a positive image of themselves and creating good interpersonal relationships with staff, this is handled in markedly different ways. The influence of business letter writing on novices is no less striking in this study than others (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Chen, 2006; Huang, 2016; Li, 2018; Zhu, 2015). In contrast to experts, novice writers seem to opt for more formal letter writing conventions in their openings and closings for two related reasons. First, L1 email writing conventions, which mandate deference and respectfulness, are frequently reproduced in the novice emails. This negative transfer is characteristic of other email studies employing Chinese learners of English (Chen, 2006, 2015; Huang, 2016; Li, 2018; Zhu, 2015, 2017). The novices' tendency in the present study to mark the hierarchical relationship with an overuse of formal address terms and professional titles, for example, is comparable to Zhu (2015) and Chen (2006). Zhu (2015) suggests the high status of the teacher and need to show respectfulness in communication justifies this move, even if the individuals are familiar and get along. Chen's (2006) interview with her graduate student confirmed the need to "show respect and make a good impression" were the underlying reasons for her initial use of formal address terms. As the choice of greeting is decided by how the email writer perceives the relationship (Bjørge, 2007), this is a further indication of the influence of L1 pragmatic norms in the novices' preferred choice of highly formalised expressions.

Other aspects of reported transfer are also evident in the present study. Chen (2015) suggests the pervasiveness of self-identification within openings may be residual transfer from L1 practices which necessitate clarity of personal identification due to large class sizes and cohort numbers commonly found in Chinese universities. This explanation may also account for the range of identification moves observed in the present study, given the SA group cohorts here average much smaller numbers. Li (2018) reported the practice of including extended best wishes as a typical politeness strategy in L1 Chinese emails which may also explain similar features found in the novices' earlier emails. Finally, similar to Huang (2016), this study also observed direct translations from L1 Chinese practices in the choices of opening and closing variants and sentence structures.

Not all instances of divergence from the expert data may result in negative assessment, of course. It is likely some pragmatic choices will have more serious impacts than others. Savić (2018), for instance, found lecturers perceived the presence of greetings to be more important than closings in academic emails. In relation to form and register, Lewin-Jones & Mason (2014) suggested lecturers had particularly strong feelings regarding informality or over familiarity in emails. Nonetheless, the cumulative effects of multiple or persistent pragmatic missteps also risks leaving a bad impression or may generate a continued feeling of awkwardness when interacting online. A need for identifying email pragmatic norms in academic discourse communities is clear but is not without its challenges, as discussed in the following sections.

A second reason for the high levels of borrowing from formal letter writing appears to be the lack of explicit guidance or feedback on the dos and don'ts of academic email practices and the rules of institutional talk. As identified in email perception studies (Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014; Savić, 2018), heterogenous views of staff and students concerning appropriate email conventions and style suggest reaching a consensus, to share as a learning tool, may be challenging. Relationships with the writer, (perceived) seniority and status of staff, as well as the email purpose and context are all known as key influencers in email composition (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Economidou Kogetsidis 2011; Lewin-Jones & Mason, 2014; Savić, 2018). Accounting for all these aspects in email writing places a considerable burden on the academic socialisation of SA students. Formal letter writing conventions then become novices' go-to information source which serves a dual purpose. For novices, it ticks the boxes in terms of illocutionary force, discourse and style to project a positive politeness image (albeit one drawn from L1 practices), whilst also providing the L2 linguistic means of showing they are attending to the status-unequal relationship.

As Børge (2007) contends, email norms are not settled. In addition to differing attitudes and expectations leading to disagreements on appropriate norms, these may also vary according to the L1-L2 mapping and how the host culture perceives the teacher-student relationship. It is therefore plausible that target cultures, and even individual host institutions, may develop what House (2010) terms a localised pragmatic norm, adding to the challenges of academic socialisation for novice SA students. As provided by the expert data in this study, the localised norm of adopting a 'formal/semi formal but friendly' style is comparable to that preferred by British lecturers in Lewin-Jones & Mason (2014). This blend of formality levels is seen in the experts' choice of closings, for example, which often favoured the 'Thanks + Kind regards'

sequence. In the case of this study, the experts are advantaged by time and opportunity to develop this style over the course of their studies, unlike the novice SA group.

Turning to research question two, tracking shifts to expert-like email practices over time, immersion through the SA experience seems to have offered little in the way of support. This result mirrors the more extensive work undertaken on spoken requests during SA which often points to non-linear developments in target-like output (see Xiao, 2015 for a review). Studies such as Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos (2011) and Bella (2011) highlight intensity of interaction, rather than length of stay, to be an influential factor. In other words, how often learners are exposed to and engage in the L2 is a better determiner of their success in producing situationally-appropriate language than how long they reside in the target culture. Emails are highly frequent types of interaction in institutional settings and are nowadays the norm for carrying out academic matters. Students therefore have extensive implicit input available to them to learn the rules of institutional talk, but this still appears to have been inadequate for the novices in this study. Lewin-Jones & Mason's (2014) survey further highlighted that staff and students felt it was part of an academic's role to implicitly set and model appropriate standards of email behaviour which students could emulate. This strategy proved successful for Chen's (2006) graduate student who consciously replicated the email style of the authority figures with whom she communicated during her overseas experience. Sadly, the relatively short SA stay was not sufficient for the novices in this study to develop their email writing skills in the same way.

As a result, only subtle developmental shifts were noted over the ten-month period. Openings, for instance, included fewer inaccurate or inappropriate variants and closings were less

elaborate. The take-away point here is that these shifts were generally decreases in L1-like practices rather than moves towards expert-like behaviour. Still, noticing the pragmatic gaps and adjusting pragmatic behaviour in this way, is a valuable first step. Following this trajectory would mean much more exposure and practice, however, to be able to more closely emulate expert email practices. Observable changes in Chen's (2006) student's emails did not develop quickly but required time and gradual socialisation into institutional email culture as a result of an evolving understanding of email practice.

6. Conclusion and Implications

In the context of a UK study abroad setting, openings and closings of upward request emails by expert (L1 English) and novice (L2 English) academic discourse communities were examined. The aim was to address research gaps which have yet to consider pragmatic development along these dimensions or have tracked email request development longitudinally. The study found experts tended to opt for less formal and more 'fixed' sequences whereas novices showed much more (formal) stylistic variation. Comparisons to existing research also suggested time and opportunity (or lack thereof) surfaced as the probable indicators of why only modest developmental changes, mainly in terms of reduced cases of L1 transfer, occurred. In the absence of explicit guidance on email writing, the novices worked out their own ways of doing interpersonal work. The novices' strategy relied on accessing the best target-language equivalent to be able to convey the sentiments of respectfulness and deference they believed request emails required i.e., formal letter writing conventions. This behaviour continued throughout their time-limited overseas stay.

Adopting the Goldilocks principle to achieve the 'just right' balance of brevity and politeness in email communication may be easier said than done. Research, however, does offer some practical teaching solutions which SA programmes or teachers might do well to consider. For instance, Chen (2015) reported the highly formulaic nature of framing moves (openings and closings) were particularly amenable to instruction and teacher-centred deductive techniques proved most successful in classroom delivery. Lewin-Jones & Mason (2014) recommended a focus on the importance of opening and closing as politeness markers in initial emails and the possible less formal options available for these as the conversational thread evolves or relationships between parties are developed over time. Linguistic resources could take a data-driven approach, given the increase in studies of this kind, providing empirical data on localised pragmatic norms. In this way, teaching contexts are not only natural laboratories (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005) providing insights into how people do facework and build relationships, but also allow for the generation of data for direct classroom application.

This study has highlighted email communication limited to one particular context, focusing on one speech act and with two specific groups of adult university students. Clearly, more research on different learner groups is needed to be able to generalise findings to wider populations. Building a corpus of authentic email data came with the challenges of not being able to analyse pragmatic performance at an individual level and was reliant on providing general insights into group behaviour. In addition, to what extent novices actively initiated and participated in email interaction during SA was not captured in detail and would be useful supporting data.

As a final note, overseas international programme hosts (and faculty members) often make assumptions on the preparedness of international students for the study experience. Such

assumptions include learners having ample access to the discourse practices they are expected to emulate (Duff, 2007), or that learners will interact with experts on a regular basis to enhance their linguistic and cultural knowledge (Ranta & Meckelborg, 2013). None of these assumptions is well-founded. Those involved in SA programmes need to be responsible for teaching and learning resources which provide guidance on the (local) rules of institutional talk and how this is best formulated and delivered in email interaction. Such teaching materials are likely to benefit all learners moving in to a HE context. As research shows, the challenges of email writing are not exclusive to SA students, but they are the ones who are likely to be disadvantaged the most during their time-limited overseas stay.

References

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Bastos, M. (2011). Proficiency, length of stay, and intensity of interaction and the acquisition of conventional expressions in L2 pragmatics. *Intercultural Pragmatics,* 8(3), 347-384.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. & Hartford, B. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Exploring institutional talk.* New York: Routledge.

Bella, S. (2011). Mitigation and politeness in Greek refusals: Effects of length of residence in the target language and intensity of interaction on non-native speakers' performance. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 43(6), 1718-1740.

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

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2009). Little words that could impact one's impression on others: greetings and closings in institutional emails. In R.P. Leow, H. Campos & D. Lardiere (Eds.), *Little Words: Their History, Phonology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatic, and Acquisition* (pp. 183-195). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Bjørge, A. K. (2007). Power distance in English lingua franca email communication. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics,* 17(1), 60-80.

Bou-Franch, P. (2011). Openings and Closings in Spanish Email Conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 1772-1785.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campbell, J., & Li, M. (2008). Asian students' voices: An empirical study of Asian students' learning experiences at a New Zealand university. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 12(4), 375-396.

Chen, C-F E. (2006). The development of e-mail literacy: From writing to peers to writing to authority figures. *Language Learning and Technology,* 10(2), 35-55.

Chen, Y-S. (2015). Developing Chinese EFL learners' email literacy through requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 75, 131-149.

Codina-Espurz, V., & Salazar-Campillo, P. (2019). Openings and closing in emails by CLIL students: A pedagogical proposal. *English Language Teaching,* 12(2), 57-67.

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

Duff, P. (2007). Problematising academic discourse socialisation. In H. Marriott, T. Moore & R. Spence-Brown (Eds.), *Learning discourses and the discourses of learning* (pp. 01.1 - 01.18). Clayton Vic Australia: Monash University ePress.

Duff, P. (2010). Language socialization into academic discourse communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics,* 30, 169-192.

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

Hartford, B. S., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). At your earliest convenience: A study of written student requests to faculty. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, Volume 7, (pp. 55-59). Division of English as an International Language, University of Illinois: Urbana Champaign.

Halenko, N., & Jones, C. 2011. Teaching pragmatic awareness of spoken requests to Chinese EAP learners in the UK: Is explicit instruction effective? *System,* 39(2), 240-250.

Halenko, N. & Jones, C. (2017). Explicit instruction of spoken requests: An examination of pre-departure instruction and the study abroad context. *System,* 68, 26-37.

Halenko, N., Jones, C., Davies, L., & Davies, J. (2019). Surveying pragmatic performance during a study abroad stay: A cross-sectional look at the language of spoken requests. *Intercultural Communication Education,* 2(2), 71-87.

House, J. (2010). The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca. In Trosborg, A. (Ed.), *Pragmatics Across Languages and Cultures,* (pp. 363-387). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Huang, L-J. (2016). Discourse organization and features of email writing among EFL students in Taiwan. In Y-S Chen, D-H.V, Rau & G. Rau (Eds.). *Email discourse among Chinese using English as a lingua franca* (pp. 37-59). Singapore: Springer.

Kinginger, C. (2009). *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of Research*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kinginger, C. (Ed.) (2013). *Social and cultural aspects of language learning in study abroad.* Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Lewin-Jones, J., & Mason, V. (2014). Understanding style, language and etiquette in email communication in higher education: A survey. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education,* 19(1), 75-90.

Li, S. (2014). The effects of different levels of linguistic proficiency on the development of L2 Chinese request production during study abroad. *System,* 45, 103–116.

Li, W. (2018). *Pragmatic Transfer and Development: Evidence from EFL Learners in China.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Major, E. M. (2005). Co-national support, cultural therapy, and the adjustment of Asian students to an English-speaking university culture. *International Education Journal*, 6, 84-95.

Merrison, A. J., Wilson, J., Davies B., & Haugh, M. (2012). Getting stuff done: Comparing e-mail requests from students in Higher Education in Britain and Australia. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 44, 1077-1098.

Ranta, L., & Meckelborg, A. (2013). How much exposure to English do international graduate students really get? Measuring language use in a naturalistic setting. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 69(1), 1–33.

Savić, M. (2018). Lecturer perceptions of im/politeness and in/appropriateness in student e-mail requests: A Norwegian perspective. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 124, 52-72.

Schieffelin, B. B., & Ochs, E. (1986). *Language socialization across cultures.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport Through Talk Across Cultures.* London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Spencer-Oatey, H., Dauber, D., Jing. J., & Wang, L. (2017). Chinese students' social integration into the university community: Hearing the students' voice. *Higher Education,* 74, 739-756.

Tarone, E. (2005). English for specific purposes and interlanguage pragmatics. In K. Bardovi-Harlig, & B. S. Hartford (Eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (pp. 157-174). New York: Routledge.

Trice, A. (2003). Faculty perceptions of graduate international students: The benefits and challenges. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 7(4), 379-403.

Waldvogel, J. (2007). Greetings and closings in workplace email. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12, 456–477.

Wang, V. X. (2011). *Making Requests by Chinese EFL Learners*. Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Xiao, F. (2015). Adult second language leaners' pragmatic development in the study abroad context: A review. *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad,* 25, 132-149.

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

Zhu, W. (2015). A cross-cultural pragmatic study on openings and closings in upward academic email requests. *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science,* 9(3), 206-222.

Zhu, W. (2017). A cross-cultural pragmatic study of rapport-management strategies in Chinese and English academic upward request emails. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(2), 210-228.

Appendix 1: Frequency of Expert and Novice Openings

Code and Variant	Frequency of variant(s) *Novices*	Frequency of variant(s) *Experts*
FN		
FN	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
	1	***1***
G		
Hello	5 (56%)	12 (75%)
Hi	4 (44%)	4 (25%)
	9	***16***
G+FN		
Dear FN	67 (56%)	16 (11%)
Hi FN	41 (34%)	109 (78%)
Good morning/ Good afternoon FN	3 (3%)	2 (1%)
Hello FN	8 (7%)	11 (8%)
Hey FN	0	2 (1%)
	119	***140***
G+ FN+LN		
Dear FN+LN	4 (100%)	0
	4	***0***
G+FN+T		
Hello FN teacher	3 (100%)	0
	3	***0***
G+T		
Dear teacher	5 (45%)	0
Dear tutor	5 (45%)	0
Dear Ma'am	1 (9%)	0
	11	***0***
G+T+FN		
Dear Mrs FN	1 (100%)	0
Hello Dr FN	0	1 (100%)
	1	***1***
G+T+FN+LN		
Dear Mrs FN+LN	2 (100%)	0
	2	***0***
G+T+LN		
Dear Miss LN	1 (50%)	0
Dear Mrs LN	1 (50%)	0
Hi Ms LN	0	1 (100%)
	2	***1***
T+FN		
Ms FN	1 (100%)	0
	1	***0***
Total use of openers	**153**	**160**

NIL (no openings included)	6	2
Total emails	**159**	**162**

Appendix 2: Frequency of Expert and Novice Closings

Code and Variant	Frequency of variant(s) *Novices*	Frequency of variant(s) *Experts*
AC		
Apologies	0	1 (50%)
Sorry for the inconvenience	0	1 (50%)
	0	***2***
AC+TC		
Sorry for the trouble and thank you very much	0	1 (100%)
	0	***1***
CP		
Kind regards	22 (29%)	28 (48%)
Best wishes	27 (36%)	10 (17%)
(Best) Regards	10 (13%)	7 (12%)
(Yours) Sincerely	9 (12%)	5 (9%)
Yours Faithfully	1 (1%)	0
Regards	7 (9%)	5 (9%)
All the best	0	3 (5%)
	76	***58***
LF		
Looking forward to seeing you	0	1 (100%)
Looking forward for you	0	0
Looking forward to your reply	0	0
	0	***1***
LF+CP		
Hope to hear from you soon +CP	0	1 (100%)
I hope I can hear from you as soon as possible	2 (17%)	0
(I) look forward to your early reply +CP	1 (8%)	0
(I am) looking forward to your reply +CP	4 (33%)	0
(I am) looking forward to hearing from you +CP	5 (42%)	*0*
	12	***1***
LF+TC		
Looking forward to meeting you. Thank you so much for fitting me in	0	1 (100%)
	0	***1***
TC		

Thanks	1 (9%)	23 (34%)
Thank you (so/very much)	7 (64%)	22 (32%)
Many thanks	2 (18%)	15 (22%)
Thank you for your help/time	0	7 (10%)
Cheers	1 (9%)	1 (1%)
	11	***68***
TC+CP		
Thank you (so/very much) +CP	7 (41%)	5 (50%)
Thank you for your help/time/ attention/consideration +CP	6 (35%)	0
Thank you in advance +CP	1 (6%)	3 (30%)
Thanks	3 (18%)	1 (10%)
I greatly appreciate your help	0	1 (10%)
	17	***10***
Total use of closings		
NIL (no closings included)	**43**	**20**
Total emails	**159**	**162**