POLITENESS IN REQUESTS TO SUPERVISORS IN EMAILS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the politeness/impoliteness of supervisees' request e-mails to their supervisors at a research university in Malaysia. It aimed at determining how Iranian post-graduate students formulate requests when writing e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors.

The research aimed to determine if these requests were direct or indirect and if internal/ external modification was used. These modifiers are used to mitigate or aggravate the imposition force of a request. The aim of the research was to determine how polite or impolite Malaysian supervisors perceived these requests. This data consists of 128 e-mails from 20 Iranian post-graduate students to their Malaysian supervisors. 20 supervisors were provided a questionnaire which was designed, pilot-tested.

To achieve the objectives of the study, the move structures in request e-mails to their supervisors were first identified (Baugh, 2011). Next, Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework which is based on Blum- Kulka et al. (1989) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) was used to determine the level of directness of requests and the internal and external modifications used.

The results show that 14 types of generic elements might occur in the e-mails. The findings suggest that request e-mails usually composed of 4 moves which comprise of obligatory and optional steps within them. This result is in sharp contrast with the findings of Bough (2011).

Iranian students mostly tend to use 'Direct' and 'Conventionally Indirect' requests in their e-mails. More specifically, the use of 'Query Preparatory' was very prevalent. However, the analysis of the questionnaire indicates that Malaysian supervisors perceive 'Conventionally Indirect' strategy as polite whereas 'Direct' strategy as an impolite one. 'Politeness Marker 'please'', 'Downtoners' and 'Time intensifier' were

the most used internal modification. In this case, supervisors confirm that if a student uses internal modifications (especially 'Consultative devices' and 'Politeness Marker 'please'') in their e-mails they would be considered polite. Students employ 'Salutation', 'Closing' and 'Pre-closing/ Thanks' external modifications to a great extent which were in line with supervisors' perception of politeness.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyiasat tentang kesopanan/ketidaksopanan dalam e-mel pelajar yang berbentuk permintaan kepada penyelia mereka di sebuah universiti penyelidikan di Malaysia. Ia bertujuan untuk menentukan bagaimana penuntut ijazah lanjutan dari Iran membentuk cara permintaan apabila menulis e-mel kepada penyelia-penyelia mereka dari Malaysia.

Penyelidikan ini menyasarkan untuk menentukan jika permintaan-permintaan ini adalah dibuat secara langsung atau tidak langsung dan jika modifikasi dalaman/luaran digunakan. Modifikasi-modifikasi ini digunakan untuk mengurangkan atau memambahkan daya pemaksaan sesuatu permintaan. Tujuan penyelidikan ialah untuk menentukan tanggapan penyelia-penyelia Malaysia tentang apa yang dianggap bersopan atau yang tidak sopan tentang permintaan-permintaan ini. Data ini mengandungi 128 e-mel dari 20 penuntut ijazah lanjutan Iran ke penyelia-penyelia Malaysia mereka. 20 penyelia telah disediakan satu soal selidik yang mana telah direka bentuk dan diuji dalam satu kajian perintis.

Untuk mencapai objektif kajian itu, pertamanya struktur-struktur 'move' dalam e-mel permintaan mereka kepada penyelia mereka dikenalpasti (Baugh, 2011). Berikutnya, kerangka kerja Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) yang berdasarkan kepada Blum-Kulka dll. (1989) dan Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) telah digunakan untuk menentukan tahap kelangsungan dalam permintaan dan modifikasi dalaman dan luaran yang digunakan.

Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa 14 jenis elemen generik mungkin didapati dalam e-mel - e-mel tersebut. Penemuan mencadangkan e-mel permintaan itu biasanya terdiri dari 4 'moves' yang terdiri daripada 'move' wajib dan pilihan. Dapatan ini adalah sangat berbeza dengan penemuan Bough (2011).

Pelajar-pelajar Iran lebih cenderung untuk menggunakan permintaan yang 'Langsung' dan 'Secara Konvensional Tidak Langsung' dalam e-mel mereka. Secara spesifik, penggunaan 'Qeury Preparatory' adakah sangat meluas. Bagaimanapun, analisis soal selidik menunjukkan penyelia-penyelia Malaysia menganggap strategi 'Secara Konvensional Tidak Langsung' sebagai sopan manakala strategi 'Langsung' sebagai yang tidak sopan. Penanda Kesopanan 'Please", 'Downtoners' dan ''Time intensifier' adakah modifikasi dalaman yang banyak digunakan. Dalam kes ini, penyelia mengesahkan bahawa jika seorang pelajar menggunakan modifikasi dalaman (terutamanya 'Consultative devices' dan 'Politeness Marker 'please') dalam e-mel mereka, mereka dianggap sebagai bersopan. Pelajar menggunakan modifikasi luaran saperti 'Salutation', 'Closing' dan'Pre-closing/ Thanks' secara meluas dan ini sejajar dengan persepsi penyelia tentang kesopanan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

E-mails are known as a hybrid kind of text, which operate midway between conventional letter and phone call since they combine some features of written language from letters and conversational language. With the help of e-mail technology senders are able to think out and modify their messages ahead of sending them. Consequently, they have this opportunity to edit grammar, politeness, pragmatic clarity and mechanics. Moreover, e-mails are one of the most prominent mediums of communication in terms of personal and institutional purposes due to their high transmission speed and low intrusive nature (Chen, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Accordingly, e-mails are used in various contexts for different communicative purposes.

University interaction is one of the instances of a context in which e-mails are widely utilized as a means of communication between faculty members and students. Furthermore, university is considered as one of the places where institutional talks occur and a variety of interactional settings like conferences, seminars, and classes may happen there. In these situations students are compelled to use appropriate linguistics choices in respect to the institutional and social context (Pan, 2010:1).

However, previous studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) have shown that complaints from faculty members regarding students' e-mails have occurred, accusing students of using impolite tone or making irrational requests. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007:59) argues that if students "have flexible linguistic devices at hand and know which politeness devices and linguistic structures to use", they might be able to craft more appropriate e-mails.

Using e-mails is one of the most significant ways of communication between students and academics at university. As Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011:3194) stated, professors (in this case supervisors) nowadays motivate their students (in this case supervisees) to utilize e-mails since they may get a reply more quickly. Thus, supervisees are encouraged to go through cyber consultation with their supervisors rather than face to face interaction.

Students, especially those from other cultural backgrounds, are required to be very cautious in their communication style and choice of words. These international students might be unaccustomed with the proper social cultural norms in the new context and just reckon on those that are prevalent in their own cultures (Pan, 2012). It is even challenging for students with high level of English proficiency, since pragmatic success is not guaranteed by linguistics knowledge (Pan, 2010). Therefore, they might consider pragmatic norms as well as "cultural principles of the communication community where the English language is spoken" (ibid: 1).

Pursuing higher education has led many students to attend overseas universities. During the past few years an increasing number of international students have chosen Malaysia for this reason. Malaysia is now a destination for those students who want to have internationally recognizable education, high quality life and reasonable and acceptable tuition fees along with low costs of living (Najeeb et al., 2012). Iranian students are no exception.

 Accordingly, international students are required to understand the notion of power relations with their supervisors from different culture while writing e-mails to them since it may have a remarkable influence on their choice of politeness strategies. Based on Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011:3194), non-native speakers (NNSs) of English may have dilemmas to make an apt and language congruent e-mail to an authority figure in university since they may not be familiar with the social and cultural norms. In this

regard, if students are not cautious, it would lead to improper choice of wording or strategies and therefore misjudgment by the addressees. Merrison et al. (2012:1078) also argue that e-mails written by students are accomplished in a situated context as well as "a broader societal milieu" where there are systematic cultural differences.

Another factor which may play an important role is non-native student's native language culture since it has a direct relation with their social interactions with supervisors and their perception of the status or role of supervisors. Along with this issue, Chen (2006:36) verifies that non-native speakers of English may be in short of "the sophisticated pragmatic competence in the L2 and critical language awareness of how discourse shapes and is shaped by power relations, identity, and ideologies established in the target culture".

Different kinds of speech acts can be found in students' e-mails to their supervisors, such as offering apologies, making requests, expressing information and so on. Among them, request is one of the speech acts which occurs frequently in a supervisor-supervisee communication. Spencer-Oatey (2000) defines request as rapport-sensitive acts which might be considered imposing by the receiver. However, by employing internal and external modifications this imposition would be minimized. Internal modifications, unlike external modification, are used to mitigate the imposition of the request and influence the utterance used for realizing the act. Internal modifiers are being used to internally soften the force of the imposed request. On the other hand, external modifications, which are the use of additional act, help the speaker/ writer to modify the illocutionary force indirectly as they influence the context they are manifested in not the imposed request act. Similar to internal modifications, external modifications can either mitigate or emphasise the force of the request (Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Pan, 2012). Lee (2004) presumed that in order to have an effective communication, composing a polite and appropriate request to people with

different social ranks is quite vital. Therefore, students are required to mitigate this imposition by using internal and external modifications along with their requests to make them indirect rather than direct.

The idea that indirectness can be associated with politeness, as Nguyen and Ho (2013) claim, is subject to cultural norms and expectations and needs to be interpreted through culture and language perspective. It is believed that levels of directness can influence people's perceptions of politeness. Furthermore, Merrison et al. (2012) consider that there are two ways to support the head acts; internal modification and external modification. Hence, this research will specifically elaborate on the degree of directness and amount and type of internal and external modifications of a request that make it to be perceived as polite/impolite. In other words, how foreign or second language learners make use of internal and external modifications and develop them in their e-mails requests, has yet to receive enough attention. So, this study attempts to fill this gap in the literature on interlanguage studies.

It is believed that politeness/impoliteness phenomenon is not something that human beings are born with and must be acquired through socialization (Reiter, 2000). Therefore, those who want to learn a foreign language should not only be restricted to learn how to use linguistic structure to speak and write, but also to acquire how and when to use these linguistic structures appropriately. Merrison et al. (2012) believe that in order to have the most effective communication in any interaction (i.e. e-mails exchanges) people with various language competency levels and different cultures utilize specific strategies. Therefore, e-mails contain a wide range of politeness strategies.

There has been an inconsistency regarding the definition of politeness/impoliteness among scholars in the past three decades. Even some scholars have altered their own definition or revised it. The politeness theory which is first introduced by Lakoff (1973),

Brown and Levinson (1978) and Leech (1983), has been used by many researchers as the theoretical framework for their studies.

Locher and Watts (2008:77) emphasize that politeness/impoliteness should be considered by researchers as a first order concept which means, a participant's judgment in an interaction towards the in/appropriateness of the social behaviour of the other participants. Their emphasis is more on hearers' perceptions and speakers' intentions. Having said that, Eelen (2001) claims that the norms of social behaviour are inescapably arises in making such evaluations.

Some researchers have attempted to analyse politeness in language utterances i.e. requests, by means of directness and indirectness. It is believed that directness and indirectness may not efficiently be considered as a politeness mechanism without referring them to interactants' interpretations. Therefore, this study makes an attempt to provide supervisors' perception rather than just focusing on the researcher's analysis of data. So far most of the studies on e-mails communication have investigated thoroughly the messages, and few studies examine the perceptions of addressee or addressor (Pan, 2010). The present study attempts to fill the gap by examining supervisors' perception of politeness/impoliteness in e-mails received from Iranian post-graduate students and to disclose how supervisors enact and interpret their students' e-mails.

Not many studies have been conducted regarding "e-politeness" (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012) of the e-mails sent by university students and their [supervisors] (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011:3194). Although, the issue of politeness/impoliteness and interlanguage research in e-mail communication has been investigated in many countries and among different nations such as Korean, American, Australian, Japanese and so on, e-mail interactions between Iranian supervisees and Malaysian supervisors in higher level education has not been investigated before.

One of the main functions of supervisee-supervisor e-mail interaction is requesting, which is believed by Baugh (2011) to be one of the issues which students might have struggle over. Academic request e-mails, being a unique way of communication, provides a distinct genre or group of communicative events which share a communicative purpose (Swales, 1990:58). Therefore, there is a need for disclosing the move structure of e-mails

Swales (1990:58) defines genre as a class of communicative events involved in by particular discourse communities in which members share some set of communicative purposes. Swales (1996) considered request messages, job application letters, and letters of recommendation as "occluded'' or "hidden from public record" as highlighted by Hyon and Chen (2004). The occluded nature of these genres makes them difficult to obtain for discourse analysis. Following Swales (1996), Baugh (2011) also referred to academic e-mails as occluded. Therefore, students may not be able to expose any example texts.

Genre analysis is also considered as one of the most remarkable and impressive concepts in language education which is able to compensate the inadequacies of other text analytic approaches. Consequently, Baugh (2011) further emphasizes that exploratory genre analysis of academic request e-mails parts could help. Analysing written genres to teach students to write in a proper way has attracted lots of researchers. However, there is no specific training in how to write a proper request e-mail. Therefore, this study is intended to explore supervisees' genre component preferences and the language used by Iranian post-graduate students to address their Malaysian supervisors. As a matter of fact, by move analysis of e-mails, students would know about the generic options that govern the rhetorical construction available for them in academic e-mails writing. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency

of their communication with their supervisors, supervisees are required to boost their awareness of the generic and formal features of the e-mails genre.

Obviously, the findings of this study may not be generalized beyond these particularized students communicating with these specific supervisors in this peculiar university. To obtain such results further research needs to be carried out (Merrison et al. 2012:1078).

1.2   Statement of the problem

Using e-mails as a convenient way of interaction is not an easy task and needs knowledge on how to convey a message thoroughly. Thus, using the right format of e-mails, relevant linguistic structures and politeness devices is necessary to conduct an efficient communication. Therefore, NNSs or even native speakers may be worried about how to obtain their goals and have some uncertainties towards politeness strategies in this computer mediated communication, especially where the power asymmetry needs to be maintained in an institutional hierarchical relationship.

In spite of the widespread e-mail usage, the network etiquette (netiquette) of institutionalised e-mail communication between students and faculty members (specifically supervisors) has not yet been delineated (Danielewicz-Betz, 2013). Probably there is not any explicit instruction regarding e-mail writing as variables such as power and distance come into play in communication between these interlocutors. As such, there has not been any exemplary format for e-mail writing.

Accordingly, it has been noted by different scholars (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Murphy, 2006; Chalak et al., 2010; Lazarescu, 2013) that in students-professors e-mails communication there have always been some advantages and challenges. Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) stresses that students are not usually provided with a feedback on the impression their e-mails might leave on their professors. Therefore, they have to model the same pattern and linguistics features received form their peers (Crystal, 2001). This

might be problematic for students since they are in a lower position and are expected to employ more mitigations and deference towards faculty's higher institutional status (in this case supervisors) (Scollon and Scollon 2001; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Consequently, students need to acknowledge that the way they write e-mails affects supervisors' impressions of them and their academic achievements respectively (Jessmer and Anderson, 2001; Bolkan and Holmgren, 2012; Danielewicz-Betz, 2013). A positive students-professors' relationship is definitely beneficial for student outcomes (Haidet and Stein, 2006; Young, et al., 2011).

Nonetheless, it is likely that e-mail communication between a supervisor and a supervisee leads to a controversy if polite norms of the context are overlooked. Haugh (2010) investigates an e-mail exchange between a student and a lecturer at a university in New Zealand which ended up with the dismissal of that lecturer. The student requested for an assignment extension which was not complied by the lecturer who replied back with more impolite tone instead.

In the past few years, scholars have tried to investigate the uncertainties and difficulties that NNSs may face while producing pragmatically suitable speech acts but studies on electronic communication have yet to receive appropriate attention. As a result, this research intends to examine how Iranian post-graduate students use e-mails to communicate with Malaysian supervisors in an institutional setting (University of Malaya). In addition, scholars like Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003; Haugh, 2007 believe that the way in which recipients may evaluate a request as polite/ impolite are different, even if the writers attempted to use polite/ impolite utterances in making a request. Therefore, the focus of this research is on evaluations of supervisors towards students' e-mails to find out to what extent their e-mails are perceived as polite or impolite.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Culpeper (2011:xii) highlights the presence of a sociolinguist in the study of politeness/impoliteness and presumes that "contrary to the old saying 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me', research in sociology has found that verbal behaviours are sometimes considered potentially more hurtful and damaging than physical violence."

Therefore, politeness/impoliteness in e-mail interaction between Iranian post-graduate students and Malaysian supervisors within the university context is the central focus of this research. This study compounds verbal behaviour by cross-cultural factor as perceptions of what is viewed as polite/impolite discourse vary across cultures. The objectives of this study are fourfold: The first one is to find out how Iranian post-graduate students formulate the requests when writing e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors. Determining whether these requests are direct or indirect is the next objective of this paper as levels of directness can influence people's perceptions of politeness. These students need to modify their requests within moves with internal and external modification, in order to reduce the imposition of their requests placed on the supervisors; therefore, in the next step, this research intends to evaluate whether these requests are modified with internal and external modification or not. Finally, this research intends to investigate how polite or impolite Malaysian supervisors perceive these requests as they receive them from Iranian post-graduate students.

This research is designed to provide some useful insights regarding the mismatches between the expectation of the writer of e-mails and the interpretation of the e-mails receiver which sometimes may lead to intercultural misunderstanding and miscommunication.

1.4 Research Questions

The research will be guided by four research questions as mentioned below:

1. What moves are used by Iranian post-graduate students in their request e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

2. What level of directness do Iranian post-graduate students use within the moves of requests e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

3. What internal and external modifications are used by Iranian post-graduate students within the moves of request e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

4. How polite or impolite do Malaysian supervisors perceive these requests?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can contribute towards and enhance the existing literature in the field of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, genre analysis and discourse studies since they are relevant to supervisors, educators, students and those interested in the study of sociolinguistics and especially in the area of request, politeness/impoliteness strategies and interlanguage studies.

It is hoped that this study would shed light on cross-cultural factors which have an impact on perceptions of what is deemed polite or impolite discourse in institutional discourse between unequal participants who come from different cultures. Indeed, the significance of this study lies primarily in the fact that in the light of politeness/impoliteness research, supervisors and students can have a better understanding of proper e-mails messages. Haugh, Davies and Merrison (2011) assert that "the text type within which the communication is situated (e.g. computer-mediated discourse) also affects (and tell us more about) the functions of im/politeness."

This study will help students with their e-mail writing by elaborating on how to use politeness devices (internal and external modifications) in their e-mails. Our schools and universities syllabus lack e-mail writing skills and need to incorporate them for the sake of teaching students to have an effective interaction in their daily life by learning appropriate and language congruent e-mail content.

The results of this study may be used to improve supervisees' awareness of typical features as well as generic structures in academic e-mails in order to write in a way to sound more academic. Therefore, the results will have remarkable implications for the members of this discourse community especially on supervisor- supervisee relationship, and in general on faculties. Haugh, Davies and Merrison (2011) claim that "the in-depth study of politeness phenomena within a particular setting – such as Educational setting- can also deepen our knowledge of how im/politeness functions, and contributes to the theorizing of the discipline."

In conclusion, cross-culture communication studies provide us with more insights about the nature of the communication from multi-cultural perspectives and help us to develop a better understanding of why and how people communicate in different ways.

1.6   Limitations of the study

E-mails are usually considered as a private medium of communication and getting access to them is not that easy.

In this study the researcher had problem to persuade students to share their e-mails. The researcher tried to collect as many e-mails as possible; however, there were some students who were reluctant to contribute to this study and send their e-mails. Therefore, this fact limited the number of e-mails.

Since, the focus of this study is just on students of Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, it may not be possible to generalize the findings to the students of other

faculties due to the fact that the participants from this faculty may have better English proficiency.

1.7 Organization of the study

This thesis is composed of five chapters. Introduction which illustrates an overview of the study: background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, significance and limitations of the study. Chapter two presents the literature on the nature of e-mail communication, politeness and impoliteness, requests and interlanguage and genre studies. In chapter three, research methodology of this study will be delineated. It provides the theoretical framework used, data collection procedures, the participants, as well as data coding and analysis procedures. Chapter four illustrates and exemplifies the findings of the study based on the analysis. Final chapter draw upon the discussion and conclusion of the study, limitations, pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter one has elaborated the background to the study in relation to interlanguage request modification, politeness and impoliteness strategies as well as genre analysis in computer mediated communication. This chapter also presented the objectives of the study, research questions, significance and limitation of the study.

Having set out our purposed destination, in addition to our expected points of departure, next chapter will cover literature on which the analysis rests.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   Introduction

Having set out the objectives of the study in the previous chapter, this chapter is devoted to highlight the main findings and methodologies of the previous studies as well as the research gap. It intends to unravel the views on linguistic politeness, indirectness, genre analysis, and requests in students-faculty e-mails communications. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks used in this research are described in depth in this chapter. This chapter concludes with the merits of research on supervisor-supervisee e-mail communication.

2.2   Literature Review

Highlighting the key concepts of this research, this section reviews previous research on politeness/impoliteness, genre analysis, and request. It specifically elaborates on supervisee-supervisor e-mail communication.

2.2.1   Politeness/Impoliteness

There is a discursive argumentativity or dispute over evaluation of politeness and impoliteness in interaction which is due to the variability in the perceptions of norms and expectations (Haugh, 2010:1). Therefore, few scholars have a common understanding about the concept of politeness. Undoubtedly, politeness theory postulated by Brown and Levinson in 1978, is the most effective and productive theory to date which put emphasis on the concepts of face, mitigation and face-threatening act. They follow Goffman (1967), who proposed the concept of 'face works', emphasizing

that a person forms their identities and behaves in line with who their audiences are and in what social interactions. They affirm that there are three predominant variables which make us able to determine the amount of face threat: power, social distance between the interactants, and rank (the degree of imposition). They consider their framework as a universal theory which can be used in interpersonal communications (Duthler, 2006). It merits pointing out that these theories of politeness have been criticised by scholars in the past, especially politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1978).

House (2012:286) asserts that utterances should not be analysed out of context they are performed. Meaning has always been ascribed to context in anthropology, social psychology and philosophy. Moreover, in apprehending interpersonal phenomena like politeness and impoliteness, Bolkan and Holmgren (2012:253) assert that culture and context have valuable impact.

Politeness and impoliteness are embedded in our daily communication and since no linguistic forms are inherently polite or impolite, they depend on interactants' evaluation of norms of appropriateness or inappropriateness. As such, Watts (2003:255) calls both utterances made by a speaker (in our written discourse writer) towards addressee and inferences derived by addressee from those utterances a kind of social act.

In fact, each individual assesses utterances as polite or impolite based on their background of their own habitus (Locher and Watts 2005:29). Watts (2003:168) claims that "no linguistic structures can be taken to be inherently polite" and they rely on individual's perception of that utterance as polite or impolite, He realizes that "linguistic structures do not in themselves denote politeness".

Following Watts (2003:8–9) and Locher and Watts (2005), this perspective over politeness/impoliteness notion is considered for the purpose of this study as it is

believed that a theory of politeness or impoliteness must be based on the understanding and evaluating of the lay members about the social norms ruling interaction as they may have politeness or impoliteness in them. Based on this notion, supervisors' perception towards their students' request e-mails is taken into account in this study to see whether they find those e-mails as polite or impolite.

Fraser and Nolan (1981:96) stress that it is not the expressions themselves that we think they are impolite but "the conditions under which they are used that determine the judgement of politeness". Indeed, Spencer-Oatey (2008:2) claims that "politeness is a social judgement, and speakers are judged to be polite or rude, depending on what they say in what context." Spencer-Oatey (2008:1) described one of the incidents she experienced during her first overseas teaching post at a college in Hong Kong, as follow:

Waiting in a bus stop, a group of her students asked her, 'Where are you going?' She felt irritated and thought to herself that the students were being intrusive and disrespectful. However, based on Chinese conventions, the students were being friendly and polite in giving such a greeting.

To be considered as polite, Hei et al. (2011) claim that a speaker (in this case writer) needs to give high regards to the hearer and this objective can be accomplished by saving the face of the addressee. In addition, Mills (2003) claims that a speaker or a writer makes use of certain strategies in an attempt to minimize any face-threatening acts towards the addressee.

In this regard, having a successful and smooth communication requires human beings to pay attention to politeness while interacting with others (Xie, 2003:811). Participants interact with each other in a particular situation with obtained knowledge from past experiences in terms of "what forms of social behaviour are appropriate and

inappropriate" to that special situation. Speakers can rely on their "individual, socio-culturally generated knowledge in the form of 'frames'" Since they are rooted in their culture. These frames can be acquired in earlier socialization via language used in a particular culture (House, 2012:287).

In order to study for a theory of politeness and impoliteness, Watts (2003:47) posits that, first order approach (known as discursive approach) should be applied since it relies on lay perceptions of politeness and impoliteness. He suggests that not every person concurs about what comprise polite or impolite language usage. Locher and Langlotz (2008:166) differentiate between first order and second order and refer the latter one as etic where researchers are willing to discuss theoretical whereas in the first on, researchers, pursuing exploring of an emic, study the perception of lay members.

Discursive approach was introduced on account of two reasons as Locher and Langlotz (2008:166) highlighted: firstly, first order term has been under change over time; it means the way people perceive politeness and impoliteness nowadays is different with the way it was treated in 18th century. This reason is in line with what Watts (2003:9) considers as politeness, a term which has always been struggled over in the past and possibly be in the future. Secondly, 'politeness', 'impoliteness' and 'rudeness' are treated differently by interactants of various practices. Consequently, there should be an investigation in each practice to figure out the norms of behaviour that provoke the judgments.

The interactants' judgement and perception is considered to have three main components, as hypothesized by Spencer-Oatey, (2005:96): "face sensitivities, interactional wants and behavioural expectations". The obligations and rights a person may expect to be bestowed or given in a specific practice are referred to as 'face sensitivities' whereas the goals that negotiated on the spot and arise in the interaction considered to be 'interactional wants' and finally, the 'behavioural expectations' are

related to interactants' intuition about what is "prescribed, permitted and proscribed" (ibid:97).

Over the past decades different scholars (Lachenicht, 1980; Culpeper, 1996, 2005; Culpeper et al., 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2005; Bousfield, 2008; Bousfield and Locher, 2008; Watts, 2008; Mills, 2009) have attempted to establish the idea that impoliteness may not be explained by theories of politeness. This might be due to the overlooking of impoliteness phenomenon in linguistics. The notions of impoliteness and rudeness have recently been of concern on how to be distinguished. Terkourafi (2008:61) acknowledges rudeness as a face-threat which is intentional and impoliteness as an accidental face threat. House (2012:287) refrains from differentiating between impoliteness and rudeness and considers impoliteness as an aspect of behaviour which breaches analysts' and interactants' expectation norm and consequently perceived negatively. In this study, the concepts of politeness and impoliteness have been addressed as the notion of rudeness, which is perceived to be much more severe, might be a rare case in a context like supervisee-supervisor interaction.

In any type of interaction, politeness and impoliteness play an important role especially in cross-cultural communication where they might be vital due to the danger of misunderstanding or even breaching of the norms in society (House, 2012:284). Supervisee-supervisor e-mail interaction is one of these instances where politeness and impoliteness play a significant role, especially in the current study where the interactans are from different cultures. As such, politeness and impoliteness are advised to be one of the main concerns while students want to compose an e-mail to their lecturers. Bolkan and Holmgren (2012:266) emphasize that students should be mindful about the effect of their messages on their instructors and need to know how to accomplish their relational and rhetorical goals through composing an appropriate e-mail. They

emphasized that if students apply polite e-mails when asking a request from their instructors, they may obtain more positive outcomes for themselves.

Adopting e-mail as a convenient way of communication with professors requires students to be mindful of their use of e-mails as impolite messages might have negative impact on their professors. Foral et al. (2010) notice that students' tones are perceived by faculty members to be more unprofessional in e-mails compared to face to face communication. Jessmer and Anderson (2001) investigated the impression of polite and impolite messages and discovered that those who compose polite messages are more willing to be friendly. In the case of students- teacher interaction, when students send polite e-mails to their instructors they make them have positive affect towards them (Bolkan and Holmgren, 2012:259).

Locher (2004:91) presumed that speaker and hearer (in e-mail communication sender and receiver) may not interpret the same utterance as polite or impolite since they might have different explanation of what is deemed polite or impolite (Graham 2007:744). Therefore, this study seeks to get the perception of Malaysian supervisors towards politeness and impoliteness in e-mails as it might be different with Iranian students' perspective.

2.2.2   Indirectness and politeness

There is an assumption in pragmatics politeness theories (e. g., Leech, 1983 and Brown and Levinson, 1987) that there might be a relation between politeness and indirectness. Leech (1983:108) indicates that the addressee can infer optionality from indirectness and "a more indirect kind of illocution" can influence the degree of politeness (Cited by Ogiermann, 2009).

Studies have established a correlation between indirectness and politeness; one of them being that a higher level of indirectness indicates a higher level of politeness (Brown

and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Leech 1983; and Searle, 1975). Among traditional Malaysian Malays as an instance, indirectness is highly valued as it reflects a cultured and refined upbringing which has been upheld as a way of living at every level of the society.

Following scholars like Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), who are the strong believers about the link between politeness and indirectness, Marti (2006) emphasizes that in politeness research indirectness plays an important role. She highlights that when in any research the concept of indirectness is the issue, there should be an association with regard to politeness. This notion is not always supported by all scholars since Blum-Kulka (1987) illustrated in her research that these relationships do not always hold. This idea is also confirmed by House (2012:291) who indicates that indirectness may not be equated with politeness without considering lingua-cultural context.

Different scholars scrutinize the relation between politeness and indirectness within nations of different cultures (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Marti, 2006; Kádár and Mills, 2011; House, 2012). Kádár and Mills (2011) stressed that the focus of research on East Asian politeness is more on indirectness. In addition, being implicit, indirect and reserved are the characteristics of communication in an East Asian context, as highlighted by Gao (1998) and Miike (2006). In intercultural communication the type of relationship between communicators is absolutely a crucial element regarding the chosen politeness strategies. There are some factors that have a significant influence on face work (especially in East Asian countries) as highlighted by Pan (2000), their social attribute (gender, status, age and rank), addressee's importance in society as well as level of familiarity (Kádár and Mills, 2011).

Within any context people from a particular group are orienting to their particular gender identity, regional and class. It is highlighted by Kádár and Mills (2011) that

politeness and impoliteness are not easy to describe but essential to the construction of these roles and identities. They emphasized that, it is a misunderstanding to postulate that "indirectness signals politeness" in any particular groups or cultures. Furthermore, it should be noted that even the meaning of indirectness might be different among various groups in a culture. However, we can make a generalisation about a particular group tendency towards using a particular form and the resources available for them. In this regard, we will be able to understand how individuals construct their identities in accordance to what are perceived to be societal norms. However, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2005:270) highlights that the notion of politeness is more pertinent to culture. It means what is recognized as a polite behaviour in a culture might not be considered in the same way in other cultures.

Verbal strategies like directness and indirectness are the crucial elements in many contexts, for example universities. Moreover, appropriate levels of politeness and formality are expected in supervisee-supervisor e-mail communication. Therefore, acquiring soft skills in communication is very vital for students especially those at tertiary education. In this research the speech act of request act is chosen as an example of illocutionary act which generally occurs in an institutional setting like university. Accordingly, the intention of this study is to find out the level of directness and to see how Malaysian supervisors perceive them as polite or impolite within the request e-mail genre.

Swales (1990:58) presumes that academic request e-mail can be a separate genre in its own since there is a communicative aim in it and it is also considered as a unique way of communication. As Genre Analysis is one of the focuses of this study, the following section will elaborate on this notion.

2.2.3 Genre

Genre analysis is considered as one of the remarkable approaches to text analysis which most developed by the prominent works of scholars such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). Functional components or "moves" are the basic elements of a genre (Swales, 1990) and it is assumed that they can be taught to a novice writer of a particular genre (Bhatia, 1993). Swales (1990) states that genre comprises of a series of "moves" which achieve a particular purpose within the text. These moves are embodied with a number of constituent elements called "steps".

The ways people in a community create, encounter, interpret and react to particular texts can be recognized by genre analysis, as Miller (1984) discussed. She asserted that "[a] classification of discourse will be rhetorically sound if it contributes to an understanding of how discourse works − that is, if it reflects the rhetorical experience of the people who create and interpret the discourse".

It is believed that a schematic structural component moves in a particular context can diagnose some set of communicative purposes which are in common by the users of a genre (Swales, 1990 and Bhatia 1993). These communicative purposes, recognised by the members of the discourse community, comprise the rationale for the genre. The choice of style and content, the structure of the discourse, lexical and syntactic choices constrains in the genre are shaped by these rationales. Swales (1990) pinpoints that a genre can be constituted by the shared purpose rather than the identical content or form. Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) propose a framework regarding the move structure analysis which is enable to recognize the strategic functional options applied by the writers to articulate the communicative purpose of a specific genre, the order of these moves and the linguistic features utilized to identify them. Bhatia (1993) points out that the only way a communicative activity can be considered as genre is that the

participants comprehend its purpose while accepting its ruling conventions and the constraints on their form of communication (Nguyen and Miller, 2012). He further added that:

> "*investigating instances of conventionalised or institutionalised textual artefacts in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures in order to understand how members of specific discourse communities construct, interpret and use these genres to achieve their community goals and why they write them the way they do*" (2002:6)

Bhatia (2002) dedicates four goals for generic research which a person needs to have knowledge and understanding about these perspectives on the universe of discourse.

- The real world perspective

- The writer's socio-cognitive perspective

- The discourse analyst's perspective

- The pedagogical perspective

Genre is one of the most prominent and effective concept in language education which is considered as an insightful description of academic and professional texts. There has been a pile of studies on the concept of genre analysis with the focus on first and second language, which provide an insightful knowledge and understanding of socially interactive discursive practices. However, scant studies have been conducted exploring e-mails, specifically request e-mails, from genre analysis point of view. These few studies are elaborated below.

In a recent study, Kerkeb (2013) explores 60 e-mails, exchanged between Algerian employees and their native speaker interlocutors, from a genre analysis perspective. Following Bhatia's (1993) framework for the study of 'unfamiliar' genres, the researcher intended to identify the rhetorical structure and the communicative purposes

of the messages. The results show that the e-mails collected include three types of e-mail genres and it was revealed that there is a discrepancy between native and the non-native speaker employees in terms of move and step used. The schematic structure of the e-mails in this study is presented below:

Move 1: Identifying the Subject (no steps are used with)

Move 2: Salutation (no steps are used with)

Move 3: Establishing Credentials

Step 1: referring to previous contact

Step 2: indicating enclosure or acknowledging piece of information

Move 4: Soliciting/ Providing Information

Step 1: requesting/ specifying product/ service detail

Step 2: requesting/ specifying transaction

Move 5: Prompting Further Contact

Step 1: expressing expectation of reply/attention

Move 6: Ending politely (no steps are used with)

Move7: Signature (no steps are used with)

In a study focusing on move analysis of e-mails, Ho (2011) explored e-mail requests (89 e-mails) within three groups in Hong Kong. 43 e-mails from Chinese IT professionals at a firm, 15 e-mails from native-English speakers working at different schools, and 31 e-mails from Chinese teachers working at one school were collected among these three groups. Table 2.1 represents the final moves found in this corpus.

Table 2.1: Ho's (2011) Final Moves in Status-equal Business Request E-mails

Addressing	Expressing Feelings/Ideas/ Emotion/Wishes
Acknowledging	Attending to Recipients" Situation
Responding to Earlier E-mail	Showing Appreciation
Providing Background Information	Showing Gratitude for Requested Help
Requesting	Closing
Elaborating	Signing Off
Convincing	Leaving Contact Information
Sharing Personal Experience	

(Adopted from Ho, 2011: 311-312)

Focusing on e-mails as personal rather than academic genre, Yasuda (2011) explores how genre analysis would help students learn about e-mail writing. Following systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach, Yasuda found that students may benefit from genre pedagogy even in their L1 and their writing fluency is improved to a great extent as opposed to their lexical diversity. The results of the study also recommend that genre pedagogy would be of great help for low level students.

Baugh (2011:12) acknowledges that there should be a method for teachers to train their NS or NNS students a clear-cut guideline on how to create pragmatically appropriate e-mails. It is believed that genres are able to organize communication, which is a vital component in organizations, into distinguished templates. Skovholt (2009) purported that situational factors like professional roles and communicational purpose are the main streams that make e-mail style to be varied.

Reviewing literature on genre analysis discloses that most of the studies in this field focused on genre in letters, printed media and research articles and it is clear-cut that

genre analysis in e-mails has not yet been given much attention so far, specifically in supervisor-supervisee e-mail communication.

To bridge this gap in the literature, this study intends to depart from a genre analysis perspective to analyse Iranian supervisees' e-mail in order to find the typical moves while asking for a request from their Malaysian supervisors. Through this descriptive analysis supervisees (especially NNSs) will have a better understanding on how to communicate through e-mail more efficiently and quickly. It might be helpful for them as stepping into the new culture and crossing cultural boundaries requires one to learn again about the construction of the genre in the new culture. Therefore, for a person from one culture who is willing to interact with a person with different culture, negotiating cultural differences in genres would be a part of their writing.

2.2.4   Supervisee-supervisor Communication

In the past few years, supervisors- supervisees' office hour meeting makes more rooms for supervisors- supervisees' communication via e-mails in universities. It may even surpassed face to face communication since it helps them to save time and may lead to quick conversation. As mentioned above, e-mail is a type of communication which might be more challenging for non-native speakers of a language since it shares borders with written and oral communication and at the same time there is no specific and clear conventions for it. This could specifically be more challenging for non-native speakers of English, in this study Iranian students, who may suffer from inadequate pragmatic and linguistics skills. They may be unfamiliar with the norms of the target culture as well as the netiquette rules in English.

It is even worse where it has to be written in a foreign language, emphasis added in this case to Iranian post-graduate students, who they have little or no background about Malaysian norms, conventions and culture. Overall, students must strive for courtesy

and politeness while writing to their supervisors, in order to avoid miscommunication and misjudgement.

Students (in this case supervisees) may use e-mail to interact with their professors (in this case supervisors) due to variety of reasons like making requests.

Baugh (2011:1) claims that students may have little or no knowledge of the rules of the community of practice while composing e-mails to their professors [supervisors]. Consequently, this lack of knowledge may lead to inappropriate e-mail composed by students which might be of disadvantage for them especially non-native speakers (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Baugh, 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

Scholars like (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Wenger, 1998) describe community of practice as not just a mere aggregate of people in a joint enterprise but also a mutual engagement in a way that beliefs, stories, values, ways of talking and doing can be shared and expanded in relation to activity, people and world. Investigating politeness/impoliteness strategies from community of practice spectrum may boost our knowledge of how politeness/impoliteness are employed and perceived (Darics, 2006). In this regard, Graham (2007:743) highlighted that we have to boost our realization of how politeness and impoliteness affect the constructing of identity and the management of rapport within communities. Lee (2004) claims that academic context is considered as a real community that can smooth the practice.

Universities as an academic context, is a potential ground for students (supervisees) to impose different types of request towards their lecturers (supervisors). Asking a request from a supervisor might be considered as a face-threatening behaviour according to Brown and Levinson (1987) which can be modified by suitable etiquette (Bolkan and Holmgren, 2012:253). Besides that, in order to have effective communication,

understanding how to make an appropriate and polite request to a person of different social ranks is critical.

2.2.5   Request

Request is a directive act in which its fundamental characteristic is that it comprises efforts by the speaker to make the hearer complies with the request. This type of speech acts requires learners to have a high level of pragmatic competence in it during an interaction. Being highly face-threatening, requests require certain politeness strategies for its execution. This type of speech acts is usually referred to as face threatening acts since they might risk the interpersonal relationship of the interlocutors.

Request as a main function of e-mail in supervisors- supervisees' communication has been the main focus of interlanguage pragmatic studies which might be due to its high imposition towards the hearer. Cross-linguistic variation is a factor which Krulatz (2012:54) highlighted as a reason for the challenge second language learners faced while performing a request. Moreover, there is not any guideline or models for supervisees regarding how academic e-mail requests should be. As such, most of non-native or even native speaker students may have difficulty in this genre (Baugh, 2011).

Types of requests usually determine the degree of politeness and mitigation elaborated in an e-mail. In high imposition requests students are required to express various degrees of e-politeness and formality by choosing specific forms. This is the time when various mitigators could be of great help for students to modify their requests to a person of higher status (in this context, supervisors) in order to maintain a considerable amount of politeness and formality (Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). Of course in a context like university it is up to the supervisor to decide whether a request is polite or impolite.

Politeness as well as directness and indirectness play an important role in the negotiation of face while composing a request. More specifically, requests proposed by

foreign students whose first language is not English might be potential to misunderstanding as students' background cultures are different with the addressee's. Thus, it seems that in a hierarchical politeness system like university, students are expected to employ high levels of mitigation and deference.

2.2.6   Interlanguage Request

In the 1980s, due to advancement of communicative competence, the development of pragmatic ability attracted scholars in second language acquisition. In another word, they wanted to teach students how to apply language appropriately to interact in different contexts. Therefore, it pushed interlanguage research more towards second language learners' discourse and pragmatic competence. With emphasis on politeness and illocutionary dimensions, apologies, complaints, refusals and requests were the focal point for investigation in interlanguage pragmatics studies.

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), which is derived from cross-cultural pragmatics, is defined as the study of non-native speaker's use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1996:145). ILP draw in domains of pragmatic transfer and comprehension, production of linguistics and communicative effect (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993). Language learners' knowledge of the pragmatic conventions of the target language and the way learners employ such knowledge in doing speech act in that language were the two main areas of research in recent years. In ILP studies, it is found that the most noticeable strategies native and non-native speakers of the target language both favoured in is conventionally indirect strategies (especially Query Preparatory). Besides that low proficiency levels students showed a tendency to use direct strategies which are mostly acquired earlier.

One aspect of learners' communicative competence, according to Felix-Brasdefer (2012), is pragmatic knowledge. Sociopragmatic and Pragmalinguistic knowledge are

two essential components of pragmatic knowledge. The former one refers to the knowledge of social conventions at the perception level, and the latter one refers to the linguistic resources in a specific language which are essential to convey a specific communicative impact. For example, student's knowledge of what appropriate expression to use while requesting for an extension for their final project, is considered as sociopragmatic knowledge whereas knowledge of expressions and forms of address for composing an e-mail request for the purpose of explanation about course syllabus is pragmalinguistic knowledge (ibid).

It seems that while international students are in a new country to pursue their higher education, their sociopragmatic knowledge of e-mail within their new community of practice is not well developed yet. Understanding of the social expectations surrounding communication is considered by Leech (1983:10) as Sociopragmatic knowledge whereas Pragmalinguistic knowledge "refers to the ways a particular language allows for something to be expressed" (Baugh, 2011).

Sociopragmatic improvement is a tough process for international students which occurs very slowly. In a longitudinal case study, Chen (2006) delved into development of a Chinese student's e-mail literacy at a US university and found a track of progress in her sociopragmatic knowledge within two and a half years of her study. Many pragmatic deficiencies were discovered in her earlier e-mails such as: desire for lengthiness and irrelevant details, failure to establish status-appropriate politeness, ineffective use of supportive moves like explanations and reasons and preference for want statements rather than conventional indirectness. These changes on the students, as Chen (2006) elaborated, were due to enhanced pragmalinguistic competence, increased awareness of politeness and level of indirectness. As Chen (2006:51) highlighted her strategic choice of using these forms to construct an identity she desired to perform, is the cause of her pragmatic failures, not lack of linguistic knowledge about native speaker norms.

Different scholars investigated the uncertainties and difficulties ESL/ EFL learners may face while producing pragmatically suitable speech acts (Cohen, 1996). ESL/ EFL learners and native speakers have found to be different in performing speech acts. They are distinct in terms of semantic formula, content and form, choice of speech acts and use of internal and external modification (Cohen, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Some of these studies are summarized below.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), exploring request strategies in a variety of languages, namely, English, French, Hebrew and Spanish, pinpointed that the most desirable strategy is conventional indirectness.

Koike (1989) examined how adult American learners of Spanish understand and produce three kinds of speech acts: request, apology and command. This study, which was done at University of Texas Austin, intended to investigate the transferability of the L1 Pragmatic forms. The findings reveal that there were more politeness markers in L1 requests which were not always transferred to the L2 Situations. In contrast, in another study, House and Kasper (1989) states that German learners of English, due to impact of their L1 way of performing a request, employ more politeness marker "please" rather than English native speakers.

In a British higher education institution, Woodfield (2008) compared British English graduate students with graduate student learners of English with respect to their interlanguage requesting behaviour. Eliciting data through verbal report and written DCTs, the overuse of preparators in supportive move and zero marking in internal modification were found. It is revealed that learners modify their requests internally less frequent than British students. On the contrary with Woodfield's (2008) study, the current research is used an authentic data from students.

Comparing Greek ESL university students' patterns of request modification with British English native speakers, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009) found a greater use of external modification and an underuse of internal modification in interlanguage requests. The author claimed that Greek learners may still produce requests which breech social appropriateness in the target language, even though they have exposed to British culture for a long time. Unlike Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2009) study the current research focuses just on Iranian students and no comparison is involved.

In another study, Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) conducted a study in British higher education institutions in the U.K. based on elicited written DCT, to examine requests produced by 92 British English native speaker students and 95 advanced mixed-L1 learners. Native speakers modified the request internally more than learners. In addition, there was an underuse of the syntactic modifier along with underuse of the politeness marker 'please' and other lexical/phrasal devices. The researchers found students' lack of confidence as the main causes of this problem due to two reasons: first, their social role as overseas students and their non-native linguistic proficiency consequently.

The literature is full of research on the uncertainties and barriers ESL/EFL learners may have in performing pragmatically proper speech acts but e-mail messages still need more attention as addressed by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) and Pan (2012).

2.2.7 E-mail

E-mail is a mode of communication which a sender and a receiver can utilize at their convenience since it is not bound by geographical limitations and time zones. In its affective dimension, it feels like a hybrid form, combining elements one would expect in letters, on the phone, or in face to face conversation (Spooner and Yancey, 1996:254). Indeed, e-mail is a medium of communication which is something between

written and spoken communication and since it is considered as a new method of communication, few well-designed linguistic conventions are available in the literature (Krulatz, 2012:47). Herring (2001) believes that the language used in CMC is less coherent, correct and complex comparing to the standard written language.

The reason this study focuses on e-mail is threefold: first, e-mail caters authentic language data which is the reflection of students' actual language performance in a real life interaction; next, since e-mail has a hybrid nature of both written and spoken discourse components it is considered as a unique type of text; and finally, it has been used as an interpersonal communication medium which in institutional settings mostly has a requesting function (Chen, 2001).

In e-mail communication we are not able to utilize our voice tone and body language to contribute to our meaning making. This is even complicated where feedback and verbal cues are missing in e-mails in contrast to face to face interaction (Murphy and Matas, 2009). Lack of pragmatic and visual clues, written format and the physical absence of the interlocutors, characterizing written modes of communication are the features of the e-mail messages. On the other hand, it is highlighted by fast feedback, limited editing and planning and informal style (Krulatz, 2012:48).

Baugh (2011:1) posits that we are about to become a digital native (Prensky, 2009) since we live in a web world which is an augmenting attitude towards it. E-mails have changed the way people communicated before as it nowadays replaced the social interaction which was possible through face to face (Bloch, 2002). It is also referred as an ideal means of constructing and maintaining social relationship (Baron, 1998:155). It has the capability of facilitating the communication in any time as well as informality of speech. (Bloch, 2002:119). The informal style of e-mails especially in communicating in a foreign language makes it less threatening and even more attractive for intercultural communication. However, Murphy and Matas (2009) proclaim that some users might

face difficulties choosing "appropriate cultural level of formality or informality" while composing an e-mail.

There is a disagreement among researchers in the literature regarding what to label e-mails, either as a genre or a medium. Yates and Orlikowski (1992) consider organizational communication as occurrence of a certain number of repeated communicative actions, or genres. Following social approach, they proposed that genres are build, rebuild and altered over time. Therefore, they put forward a distinction between "the physical means of communication (media) and the typified social actions (genre)" (Yates and Orlikowski 1992:310). Within organizational communication, e-mail has been investigated as a social activity (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson 1999, Skovholt, 2009). Being grounded by a social constructionist perspective, this approach considers daily communication and writing at workplace as an activity that constructs and keeps social and organizational structures. Through this type of approach e-mail, as "typified social actions", i.e. as *genres* can be explored as social action or communicative practices associated to hierarchical roles and communicative purposes within a community (Skovholt, 2009).

Previous studies on e-mail communication considered it as a genre (Nickerson, 1999, 2000; Virtanen and Maricic, 2000; Ho, 2010). Hoermann (2013:2) stresses that "E-mail, like other genres of writing, is a communicative correspondence that comes with its own specific reader expectations, or conventions". It has been for a decade that e-mails find their space in academic world, particularly at universities. There is a belief that genre is able to help student learn e-mail.

2.2.8 Requests in Student-Faculty E-mails Communication

The literature in cross-cultural and interlanguage studies abounds with research on speaker's strategy choice, the performance of interlocutor's speech acts, along with

linguistic forms utilized to reflect politeness and meaning (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011:3195). However, investigating authentic e-mail communication in cross-cultural and interlanguage studies has yet to receive the attention it deserves since most of the researchers elicited their data based on role play (Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Hassall, 2001; Otcu and Zeyrek, 2008) or discourse completion test (DCT) (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1986; Fukushima, 1990; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009). The data of this research relies on authentic e-mail data rather than Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in which the researcher is unable to prove that students will make the same request in a real situation. Moreover, a lot of data were sent to the researcher as the students' teacher and in a small amount (Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006).

E-mail interaction between faculty members and students has always been under investigation by various scholars. (Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth, 2000; Biesenbach- Lucas, 2005, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2001, 2006; Bloch, 2002; Hendriks, 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Pan, 2008, 2012; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). These studies mostly scrutinized the level of low and high imposition requests, features that applied to modify e-mail requests internally and externally, in addition to topics or purposes of the messages. Their main focus was on differences between native and non-native speakers' way of e-mail communication and its distinction with oral discourse in the L2. Few of them focus on how students formulate e-mails in terms of genre analysis (Baugh, 2011) as well as how they modify their request internally and externally (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

Methods of collecting the data in student-faculty interaction studies were either by simulated or authentic data. Félix-Brasdefer (2012:95) postulates that the results of both trends are in the same line where they prove that second language learners use fewer frequency and restricted variety of syntactic and lexical mitigators. Having said that, the

outcome of simulated data driven studies should be taken in to account with some caution (ibid).

Most research done by the scholars on requests so far derived from two main entries, one following Brown and Levinson (1978) and another interested in Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework. In the latter, the focus is on how speech act makes a request polite or impolite, whereas in the former the researcher examines the same impact through the idea of face. Brown and Levinson (1978) propose that each person has two faces, positive face which is a willing to be admired and approved by others whereas a desire not to be imposed upon and be autonomous is considered as negative face. Among researchers analysing request, CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project), developed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), was of more interest than Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1978) (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007:63). Some of these studies are highlighted below.

One of the earliest studies carried out on student–faculty e-mail requests is Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig's study (1996) which explored how faculty members evaluate native and NNS e-mail requests. The result of the study reveals that students' choice of forms "reflect an apparent overestimation on the part of the student of the faculty member's level of obligation to comply" (Hardford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996:58). No significant differences were identified regarding range of linguistic forms employed by NSs and NNSs. Lack of status-congruent language and acknowledgment of the degree of imposition to the addressee, inadequate and improper mitigation were the main pragmatic infelicities seen in NNSs' e-mail.

In a study by Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2000), negotiation moves by NSs and NNSs were examined in a university level. The researchers make use of 7 negotiations as: justification, proposal, context, options, request for response, request for information, and other requests. They have concluded that NNSs provide less

effective negotiation than NSs who furnished their requests with more options, justification and context.

Exploring differences between NSs and NNSs, Chen (2001) asked students to send her 2-3 e-mail requests (basically requests for recommendation letter, special consideration and an appointment) they had written to professors. E-mails were collected from American (NSs) and Taiwanese (NNSs) students and the analysis drew upon Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978). The results indicate that Americans perform their request at the beginning of their e-mails, while Taiwanese students, following politeness strategy of Chinese indirectness, ask their requests at the end of the e-mail. Moreover, they followed a Chinese maxim of respectfulness to address their professors by 'title + last name'. Want statements and query preparatory strategies were the most favoured strategies applied by Taiwanese and American students. Lexico-syntactic modifications were found most in NS students' e-mails which shaped more indirect and polite requests. Another finding is that Americans minimized their requests in order to express politeness whereas Taiwanese students chose gift-giving strategy to demonstrate their imposition requests appropriately. This finding is in line with Chang and Hsu (1998:131) who said "Chinese say more to decrease the degree of imposition, Americans say less". However, overlooking addressee's point of view in this study is a shortcoming which was also proved by Baugh (2011).

Exploring NSs and NNSs graduate students' e-mail messages, Biesenbach-Lucas (2005) aimed to find out their communication strategies and topics. Substantive, facilitative and relational topics were the main categories found in the data. Communication strategies like negotiating, reporting and requesting response were examined through each of these classifications. The two latter ones were recognized as the most frequent strategies NSs and NNSs used. Although the outcome of such a study would be different if the e-mail addresses are faculty members who are not engaged in the research or the researcher

herself/himself. The current study overcomes this deficiency by using e-mails sent to supervisors and not the researcher himself.

Students-faculty e-mail messages were examined from a different angle by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) who focused on the level of imposition and degree of directness. Having analysed data based on two different types of coding classifications, the author investigates NSs and NNSs e-mail request. The first classification relies on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) where as in the second one she modified classification of request strategies. Results of the study based on the latter one (modified version) illustrate a preference for conventional indirectness. On the other hand a preference for direct requests was found implementing Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) original classification. All in all, NNSs were more willing to apply direct requests in lower imposition requests (e.g. request for appointment) and NSs adopted direct requests when they perform request for feedback and appointments. It is believed that to compose an e-mail, students are not able to revise, plan and edit in order to have a polite and appropriate e-mail unless they conceive which politeness devices and linguistic structures to choose and have flexible linguistic means at hand (ibid).

Academic e-mail composition is also the center of attention in Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) study on request strategies in a corpus of 533 e-mails among NSs and NNSs. The author adopted Blum-Kulka et al.'s framework (1989) to examine the degree of directness and indirectness in the corpus. The data was collected over a period of six semesters and NNS students had Asian backgrounds. The quantitative analysis of the data, demonstrated that there were similar patterns between NNSs and NSs. They utilized more hints and conventionally indirect for higher imposition, whereas for lower imposition they preferred direct strategies. Non-native speakers' students tended to use less syntactic politeness devices than Native students.

English e-mail requests written by Dutch learners are examined in terms of the impact of lexical and syntactic used (Hendriks, 2010). Personality dimensions of e-mail senders as well as comprehensibility of the e-mail requests were evaluated by native speakers of English in an online survey. The results show that NNSs used limited range of modifiers and fewer syntactic and lexical modifiers. On the contrary, native English students were more likely to make use of various lexical and syntactic means. The author concluded that underuse of elaborate request modification (syntactic and lexical) may affect perceptions of recipients and may result in pragmatic failure.

In another intercultural pragmatic research on academic e-mail, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) studied requests by analysing internal and external modification as well as salutations. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) collected her data for the study from Cypriot Greek students at an English-medium university in Cyprus. Comparing to Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) study the data was collected from 11 different teachers to compensate the "single-recipient shortcomings" (Baugh, 2011:10). She adopted a modified version of request strategies by Blum- Kulka et al. (1989) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) to analyse requests for information and action. The results signify that Cypriot Greek students apply more direct strategies which were interpreted as rude by NSs. Although for the purpose of request for action, students applied more query preparatory strategy. In her study, e-mails were rated by the teacher in terms of politeness and abruptness which filled the gap in the literature where the recipients' point of view was always overlooked.

Utilizing electronic questionnaire (e-DCT) for data collection, Pan (2012) examined the pragmalinguistic choices (internal and external modification) and perception of NSs and Chinese learners of English towards the size of the imposition and appropriateness of language use in composing e-mail request to their professors. The result shows that NSs tend to use want statements when they express directness. NNSs (in this context,

Chinese learners of English) make use of indirect strategies slightly more than NSs. Relying more on external modification rather than syntactic devices, Chinese learners, were not as successful as American NSs in minimizing the imposition of the request.

Focusing on four types of e-mail requests (requests for validation, information, feedback and action), Félix-Brasdefer (2012) investigates internal modification in authentic e-mail requests composed by L1 and L2 Spanish university students. This study indicates that NSs employ lexical and syntactic modifiers more frequently than L2 speakers. The author claims that level of imposition of the request has a direct influence on the presence of modifiers. Moreover, the results show that L2 speakers make use of lexical and syntactic modifiers in high imposition requests. Learners' use of these modifiers, Félix-Brasdefer (2012) highlights, is due to their relatively advanced level of sociopragmatic knowledge. He further postulates that the degree of directness or indirectness in student- faculty e-mail communication can determine the level of imposition of the request (ibid:93).

2.2.9   The Necessity of Research on Students' E-mails

The implication of such studies is to bring up the issue that NNSs needs to be taught and even NSs might get some knowledge on how to compose an e-mail in appropriate manner (Baugh, 2011:7). She added that there is a need for research on e-mails sent to a range of teachers rather than just one. She further added that culture, as well as Language ability, may play a key role regarding NNSs inappropriate e-mails (ibid).

This sort of e-mail research affirms that student's cultural background may have impact in their e-mail writing specifically while composing appropriate e-mail requests in their second or foreign language. Having said that, the only way for students to write an e-mail is just by guessing or inferring from other types of communication (Chen, 2006) and again a need for teaching e-mail writing arises here especially for NNSs.

Baugh (2011) also emphasizes that students need to know how to use e-mail appropriately and must acknowledge the impact of e-mail in the academic sphere. In fact when students send e-mail to their supervisors, they may not receive any feedback on the problematic part of their e-mail and they just rely on the way they were taught so. Having exposure to the target language, for instance e-mail communication with NSs of the target language, can affect students' pragmatic ability to compose an apt and polite e-mail request (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012:94). However, Baugh (2011:9) emphasises that "appropriate e-mail writing needs to be taught".

It is believed that there are no predetermined standard e-mail writing rules for Second language learners (Chen, 2006). Second language learners, as Lapp (2000) mentions, are uncertain whether the message they write in their own style can be interpreted and perceived appropriately. Since the way EFL/ESL learners recognize and utilize different kinds of requests is an important area in second language teaching and learning, this study was intended to examine the request strategies Iranian ESL learners develop at university level. Biesenbach-Lucas (2006:101) states that non-native students require more opportunities to become adjusted to developing conventions in student-faculty e-mail exchanges.

 Many e-mails messages have been exchanged among second language learning students and their teachers in several universities all over the world as computer-mediated communication (CMC) and e-learning is augmenting (Murphy and Matas, 2009). Crafting an e-mail in accordance with the norms of the receiving culture is quite important but are foreign students certain about how to use politeness strategies in their e-mails?

Scholars like Murphy and Matas (2009), Walther, (1992, 1997) assert that although e-mail is the most common communication tools between foreign students and their teachers, second language learning students are not trained enough how to use e-mail

effectively which offer no verbal or non-verbal element. This is exacerbated when the students and their supervisors are from different cultural groups since they may not share the same e-mail dialogue style, language and cultural norms. Thus, these students lack the knowledge about the elements that provide effective e-mail interactions. Greater knowledge and understanding of these complex issues can contribute to ESL students (in this case e-mail sender) in developing better strategies for more successful Cross Cultural Communication.

Faculty-student contact can be increased by e-mail resulting in improved student involvement and motivation, since communicating via e-mails will help learners, especially ESL/EFL students, to learn more actively and deeply (Debard and Guidara, 1999). Tao and Boulware (2002) regard e-mail as an opportunity for ESL/ EFL learners to improve their writing skill since it motivates learners and encourages authentic communication. Vonderwell (2003) asserts that e-mails not only give students more opportunities to ask questions of their instructors but also lead to improved communication. Schwienkorst (1998:125) declares that written communication helps ESL/EFL learners to preserve the entire communication if in any case they want to see their own efforts in the target language in the future.

E-mails exchange between students and teachers can be considered as a transition with respect to using foreign language in a real cybernetic context (Gonzales-Bueno, 1998:55). Electronic communication, as Gonzales-Bueno (1998) highlighted, not only gives students opportunity to interact in the foreign language but also would build ESL learners' confidence in their language skills. Therefore, e-mail exchange between students and their supervisors helps them to obtain self-assurance as well as experience using electronic media in the foreign language.

ESL/ EFL learners would have a challenge while communicating through e-mail which is a kind of written discourse and they must learn how to communicate politely and

appropriately (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012:89). According to (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012) one aspect of learner's pragmatic knowledge is the capability to write e-mail request in a second language appropriately and politely.

Factors such as limited number of good textbooks and writing courses, and outdated curriculum and teaching methodology and course materials are the most significant problems that Iranian students have always faced with regarding learning English. Samar, Navidinia, and Mehrani (2010) concluded from their research that most Iranian English students are not competent enough in e-mail communication to be able to use this technology in an appropriate way. They highlighted that, part of this inadequacy stems from their inadequate ability in implementing different strategies for writing more persuasive and influential e-mails.

Therefore, the scope of this study is to focus on investigating Internal and External modifications in Iranian post-graduate students' requests (who are considered Second/ Foreign Language learners) in e-mail sent to their supervisors in a foreign language context, which is University of Malaya. In the following section a brief background about Malaysian is provided to better understand the context of the study.

2.2.10 Malaysian Background

Politeness in Malaysian context is a significant segment for all human interaction, since Malaysians hospitality and warmth towards foreigners are quite well-known worldwide. However, it seems that values of this nature are diminishing rapidly as this is proved by the ongoing campaign "Being Polite is Our Culture" (Hei et al. 2011:14) which is highly promoted across Malaysia.

Having non-confrontational manners added with being humble, tolerant, hospitable are the most remarkable characteristics of the Malays. They are even considered by DeVito (2008) as people who have "high-ambiguity-tolerant culture". Malaysia can be

considered as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society where social interactions can attract scholars to carry out their research there. In such environment various ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese, Indians and others) bring about their behavioural norms as well as their cultures (Kuang, David and Kia, 2013). Some researchers like Fontaine, Richardson and Yeap (2002) declare that these different ethnic groups share some similar values whereas Hofstede (1984) considers all Malaysians culturally similar.

Particular rules of social interaction including rituals have been adopted by the members of the society and community in accordance with politeness in Malaysia. Malaysia is deemed by Hofstede (1984) as a hierarchical society where power and social distance have high value among its people. Indeed, the concept of face in the Malaysian context is the symbol of one's dignity and well-being. It might be due to the fact that hierarchy, culture and values are observed strictly in Malaysia (Hofstede, 1984).

Moreover, Malaysians have a tendency to be more indirect in their face to face interaction to be able to mitigate threats towards the hearer. This idea has been proved by many studies like Manjit Kaur (1998) David and Kuang (1999; 2005), and Kuang and Jaafar (2010). Indeed, Malaysians use indirectness to propose respect towards addressee (Ali, 1995 cited by Hei et al.2011). However, Hei et al. (2011) claim that politeness is a rather "waning value" in Malaysia. In this sense, directness is considered as being straightforward and upfront whereas indirectness is referred to a refined and cultured person (Hei et al., 2011). However, in some Asian context, as contrary to Western context, directness is sometimes perceived as being rude.

Since request is the main focus in this study, it is now pertinent to see Malaysian's attitude towards requests. Requests in Malay culture need to be expressed very courteously in order to prevent any trouble. Traditionally they imposed their request starting with lengthy introduction and use high levels of indirectness dealing with higher power and older people. It is presumed that requests being imposed in Malay

context are mostly for permission, action, and information (Omar, 1996 cited in Maros and Rahim, 2013).

Due to internationalisation of education there is an increase in the number of Iranian students coming to Malaysia. The request Iranian students proposed are under the influence of their thinking, culture, norms and their L1. Therefore, Malaysian academics would benefit from the outcome of the current study by understanding how Iranian students' requests might be influenced by these components. Therefore, there is a need for more investigation regarding speech act realization strategies from the perspective of intercultural communication. It is hoped that the results of the study provide knowledge and understanding of the culture between Iranian students and the Malaysian academics.

2.3   Theoretical Frameworks

This section comprises the theoretical frameworks on which the analysis of this research is based on which include genre analysis, degree of directness as well as internal and external modifications.

In the first place, 14 moves Baugh (2011) recognized in her data which is on students' requests e-mails are provided along with examples.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) proposed a framework for request strategies which is based on Blum- Kulka et al. (1989) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007). This framework described different categories for directness level as well as internal and external modifications.

2.3.1   Genre Analysis

One of the purposes of the current research is to identify moves and move structures manifested in Iranian post-graduate students' academic request e-mails. In this section the framework used to fulfil this purpose is discussed.

Baugh (2011) adopted Ho's (2011) framework (see Table 2.1) which consists of 15 moves, to find out whether it can be applied for student request e-mails as it has a distinctive genre. The author found three moves as redundant for student-faculty e-mail communication. Baugh (2011) criticises few examples Ho (2011) provided from the corpus and recognized them difficult to distinguish between moves where in some cases they were overlapped. As she claimed "Showing Appreciation" and "Acknowledging" may cover each other when students appreciate their teachers.

The first omitted move rarely found in student e-mails to their teachers but mostly appears in business e-mail is "Leaving Contact Information". Second move is "Expressing Feelings/Ideas/Emotion/Wishes" which covers a wide range of textual realizations which leads to vagueness that makes her analysis problematic. In her coding, Baugh (2011) created two new moves as 'Sharing Personal Info' and 'Providing Progress Info' instead of adopting 'Sharing Personal Experience'. The latter one is a chance for students to update their supervisors on their academic progress, whereas the former one is utilized by students to explain a personal situation to the teacher. Together with changes in the move classifications, Baugh (2011) attempts to modify the name of each category to make it more apt for students-faculty e-mail exchanges and comes up with 14 moves in student's e-mail. The following table summarizes moves of students' request e-mails found by Baugh (2011).

Table 2.2: Baugh (2011) Model of Students' Request E-mails Moves

Moves	Explanation	Examples
Addressing [ADR]	The opening of the e-mail + forms of address + greetings + name	"Hello FIRST NAME", "Dear Dr. LAST NAME"
Acknowledging [ACK]	*Thank supervisor for what they have done.*	"Thank you for the article you gave me."
Referencing Earlier Communication [REC]	*Refers to previous e-mail or conversation.*	"Following our conversation on Monday,…"
Providing Background Info [PBI]	*Give information 'around' the request, allowing student to make request more easily.*	"I would like to ask the concept of one of the essay topics for CLASSCODE."
Requesting [REQ]	*Ask for something (main purpose of e-mail)*	"Could you maybe send it to me?"
Elaborating [ELA]	*Give additional qualifying info about request.*	"Is it about the word count or do you want us to submit some parts of the dissertation"
Justifying [JUS]	*Give reasons for making request.*	"...since I do not think that I will be able to come up with a good result until next Wednesday."
Providing Progress Info [PPI]	*Keep teacher abreast of student's current and future academic work.*	"I have been working on my data since last week, checking remaining trials for track loss etc and getting the data into a format that I can analyse."
Phatic Relational [PHR]	*Maintain relationships with the addressee*	"I hope you're feeling better now"

Moves	Explanation	Examples
	(through enquiring about health, holidays, etc.)	
Sharing Personal Info [SPI]	*Explain student's feelings, personal situation.*	"I'm so happy I'm close to tears in a pc lab- sad but true!"
Attending to Recipient's Status [ARS]	*Acknowledge teacher's issues (often realized through apologizing), appeal to teacher's status.*	"I'm sorry to bother you"
Closing Thanks [CLT]	*Show gratitude, end message*	"Thank you in advance"
Closing [CLO]	*End e-mail, show politeness*	"Best wishes", "Warm regards"
Sign Off [SOF]	*Give student's name*	S1 – S14

'Table 2.2, continued' (Adopted from Baugh, 2011)

Baugh (2011) found those 14 moves in her data but finally she proposed a nine-move structure for students to follow when composing e-mails that would be appropriate according to institutional norms and teachers' opinions. Here is the proposed move structure:

Obligatory Moves

1. Addressing (ADR)

2. Providing Background Info (PBI)

3. Request (REQ)

Optional Moves

4. Elaborating (ELA)

5. Justification (JUS)

6. Attending to Recipient's Status (ARS)

7. Closing Thanks (CLT)

Obligatory Moves

8. Closing (CLO)

9. Sign Off (SOF)

In the current study all the 14 moves Baugh (2011) found in her data will be explored in Iranian students' request e-mails to see if they occur. By finalizing the moves and move structure of those e-mails then it can be proceed to see whether the requests imposed are polite or impolite. Therefore, in the next section frameworks applied for this purpose are presented.

2.3.2 Directness Level

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) proposed a framework for request strategies which is based on Blum- Kulka et al. (1989) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007). The directness level of requests may be classified into three types: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). These strategy types are ordered in accordance with the decreasing degree of directness.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) determines nine subcategories for analysing direct strategies. At this level strategies contain requests which are explicitly marked either syntactically like '*imperatives*', or by the help of verbs like '*performatives*', '*want*' and '*need statements*' which indicate desire, wishes, and need of the speaker (writer) towards the addressee. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) added two additional substrategies '*Reminder request*' and '*pre-decided statements*' to this scheme in order to account for such direct requests she found in her data.

Another level of directness is 'Conventionally Indirect' which contains strategies realise the "act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalised in a given language" (Blum-Kulka, 1989:47).

Last level is Non- Conventionally indirect (Hints). Felix-Brasdefer (2012) defines '*Hints*' as "an utterance containing partial reference to the object needed for carrying out the act". In other words, the speaker/writer expresses their intention in an indirect way to get the addressee to do something. The following table summarizes the directness levels. The examples presented below are adopted from Biesenbach-Lucas (2007:67) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011:3211).

Table 2.3: Degree of Directness

Directness Levels	Request strategies	Explanation	Examples
Most Direct	Direct questions	*Asking requests directly with the use of wh-questions and have-you got question (Wong, 2000:76).*	"Did you get my project?", "When do you have time?").
	Elliptical requests	*Just mentioning the desired objective*	"Any news?", "Any comments?"
	Imperatives/ Mood derivable	*Utterances in which the grammatical (syntactic) mood of the verb determines the illocutionary force (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).*	"Please let me know if you have to withdraw me from class.", "Please extend the due date."
	Performatives	*Utterances in which the illocutionary force of the act is explicitly mentioned*	"I would like to ask if . .", "I feel I have to ask for an extension for a week."
	Want statements	*Utterances which state the speaker's/ writer's desire, wishes, and demands that the addressee accomplishes the act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)*	"I want to set up a meeting with you." "I would like your suggestions."
	Need statements	*Utterances which include expression of the need for an action towards the addressee*	"I will need an extension.", "I will need to know. . . ."
	Expectation statements	*An expected action by the addressee pertaining to unperformed obligations and duties*	"I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish typing my work."
Conventionally Indirect	Query Preparatory	*contains strategies which realise the "act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalised in a given language" (Blum-Kulka,*	"Would you mind to take a look and give me some suggestion?"

Directness Levels	Request strategies	Explanation	Examples
		1989;47)	
Non-Conventionally indirect	Hints	*"An utterance containing partial reference to the object needed for carrying out the act." (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012)*	"Attached is a draft of my grammar lesson plan."

'Table 2.3, continued' (Adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)

2.3.3 Internal and External Modification

Internal and external modifications were first introduced in Blum-Kulka (1986) and more thoroughly in Blum-Kulka et al., (1989). Those parts of the request which occur in the head act are called '*internal modification*' whereas utterances preceding or following the head act which are able to mitigate or aggravate the imposition force of a request are called '*external modification*'.

Internal modification can be examined through both '*downgraders*' which may soften the request and '*upgraders*' which may intensify the coerciveness of a request. External modification, which consists of '*supportive*' and '*aggravating*' moves, can indirectly modify the head act which is the illocutionary force. In this regard, Sifianou (1992) posits that a person who wants to propose a request requires employing varieties of internal and external modification as politeness strategies in order to get it honoured.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) proposed a framework for '*internal* and *external modification*' which is presented in the following tables. The examples presented below are adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011).

Table 2.4: Internal Modification: Lexical/phrasal Downgraders

Name	Explanation	Examples
Politeness Marker 'please'	*''An optional element added to a request to bid for cooperative behavior''* *(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:283).*	"<u>*Please*</u> let me know if you...", "<u>*please*</u> e-mail the syllabus of the course?"
Consultative devices	*''expressions by means of which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer directly bidding for cooperation''* *(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:283).*	"would you mind", "do you think…", "is it all right?", "do you think I could. . ."
Downtoners	*''modifiers which are used by a speaker in order to modulate the impact his or her request is likely to have on the hearer''* *(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:284).*	'possibly', 'perhaps', 'just', 'rather', 'maybe', 'by any chance', 'at all'
Understaters/hedges	*''adverbial modifiers by means of which the speaker underrepresents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition''* *(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:283).*	. 'a bit', 'a little', 'sort of', 'a kind of''
Subjectivisers	*''elements in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion vis-a`-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of the request''* *(Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:284).*	'I'm afraid', 'I wonder', 'I think/suppose'
Cajolers	*''conventionalized, addressee-oriented modifiers whose function is to make things clearer for the addressee and invite him/her to*	"You know", "You see. . ."

Name	Explanation	Examples
	metaphorically participate in the speech act'' (Sifianou, 1992:180).	
Appealers	*Addressee-oriented elements occurring in a syntactically final position. They may signal turn-availability and ''are used by the speaker whenever he or she wishes to appeal to his or her hearer's benevolent understanding'' (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:285).*	"Clean the table dear, will you?. . . . . .ok/right?"

'Table 2.4, continued' (Adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)

Table 2.5: Internal Modification: Upgraders

Name	Explanation	Examples
Intensifier	*'Adverbial moodier that stresses specific elements of the request' (Schauer, 2009:91)*	"I <u>*truly/really*</u> need this extension..", "I had <u>*such a*</u> high fever"
Time intensifier	*'employed to emphasise the temporal aspect of the speaker's request' (Schauer, 2009:91)*	'as soon as possible', 'urgently', 'right now'
Overstater	*''Exaggerated utterances that form part of the request and are employed by the speaker to communicate their need of the request being met'' (Schauer, 2009:91)*	"I'm in <u>*desperate*</u> need of material for my essay."

(Adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)

Table 2.6: External Modification: Supportive Moves

Name	Explanation	Examples
Greeting/opening	*'The writer opens the e-mail with a greeting'*	'Hi/Hello/Good morning', "How are you?"
Grounder	*'A clause which can either precede or follow a request and allows the speaker to give reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request.'*	"I would like an assignment extension because I could not deal the typing time."
Disarmer	*A phrase with which 'the speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request' (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:287)*	"I know that this assignment is important but could you. . . .?" "I hope you understand my situation. . ."
Preparator	*The speaker prepares the hearer for the ensuing request.*	*"I really need a favor . . . ."*
Getting a precommitment	*The speaker checks on a potential refusal before performing the request by trying to get the hearer to commit.*	"Could you do me a favor?"
Promise	*The speaker makes a promise to be fulfilled upon completion of the requested act.*	"Could you give me an extension? I promise I'll have it ready by tomorrow."
Imposition minimizer	*'The speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by his request' (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:288).*	"I would like to ask for an extension. Just for a few days."
Apology	*The speaker apologises for posing the request and/or for the*	"I'm very sorry but I need an extension on

Name	Explanation	Examples
	imposition incurred.	this project."
Orientation move	*Opening discourse moves which serve an orientation function but do not necessarily mitigate or aggravate the request in any way*	"You know the seminar paper I'm supposed to be giving on the 29th . . . ." "I have a question about the essay. . . "
Compliment/ sweetener	*'Employed to flatter the interlocutor and to put them into a positive mood' (Schauer, 2009:92)*	"Your opinion counts"
Pre-closings/thanks	To show gratitude towards the addressee in advance for the anticipated help.	"Thanks for your time"
E-mail closing	To end messages politely, '*Closing*' is used at the end of e-mails.	"All the best", "Best wishes", "Best regards"

'Table 2.6., continued' (Adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)

Table 2.7: External Modification: Aggravating Moves

Name	Explanation	Examples
Complaint/criticism	The speaker/writer complains or criticizes the addressee for not doing an action.	"I sent you an e-mail 3 days ago and never replied"
Emphasis on urgency/positive outcome	The speaker/writer tries to put emphasis on the urgency of the request and wants their request to be complied faster	"I need to have the reference letter in three days.", "I will expect your positive reply"

(Adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)

2.4   Conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to the purpose of this study and the theoretical frameworks used. It is highlighted that scant researches have been conducted to explore request e-mails genre in an institutional setting like university. Moreover, this study departs to fill the gap in e-mail communication between supervisees and supervisors as it uses authentic e-mail messages to find out the level of directness and the amount of internal and external modification used in request e-mails and consequently to get supervisors' perception towards them. There have always been a wide range of linguistic options like choice of address, honorifics, lexical [internal and external modification] and syntactical items which contribute to the speaker/writer to approach their addressee in a more polite way (Pan, 2010:58). Therefore, the current research is intended to boost the knowledge of Iranian students' verbal behaviour in status-unequal e-mail communications.

Based on previous research, the processes associated with the design of this study are elaborated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

In chapter two the focal points of this study like genre analysis, politeness/impoliteness, directness/indirectness, as well as internal/external modification have been reviewed. The theoretical frameworks used in this study are also elaborated in the previous chapter. In this chapter the research design and methodology of the study are provided. This chapter is organized as follows: Research design of study is presented in section 3.2. In section 3.3 Focus-group study, Pilot study, and questionnaire utilized in this study are disclosed. Section 3.4 explains about the subjects of the study. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 elaborate on data and the procedure of data collection. Data analysis procedure applied is also explored in 3.7.

3.2   Research Design

The analysis of this study is based on both qualitative and descriptive methods in which concrete numbers of the occurrences are analysed through descriptive analysis. As such the frequency percentage of each category under directness level, internal and external modification will be provided. This procedure will also be used for moves in e-mail data. For the purpose of this study, two types of data, e-mails from Iranian post-graduate supervisees and a questionnaire based on Malaysian supervisors' perception towards these e-mails were collected. The questionnaire was validated through focus-group interview and two pilot studies.

3.2.1 Focus Group Interview

One of the advantages of focus group interview is eliciting multiple views within a shorter period of time compared to individual interviews which tend to obtain individual beliefs and attitudes. In this research, it is advantageous because "the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest", especially as it investigates the degree of consensus on politeness and impoliteness of students' e-mails (Gibbs, 1997).

In order to prepare the questions of the questionnaire based on Malaysian beliefs and ideas, a focus group interview was conducted with six Malaysian lecturers who have experience in teaching at universities or colleges.

To share their ideas from a linguistics point of view, the researcher tried to find lecturers who have a Master degree in English Language or linguistics and have e-mail communication with their students before. They participated in a 45 minute interview mediated in English.

In order to make participants feel free to interact with other members of the group, the researcher tried to have an interactive group setting while the questions were asked. The information was collected through note taking. There were some pre-determined questions to be asked from the participants.

Conducting a focus group interview helped the researcher to explore the perceptions, opinions, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes with regard to politeness/impoliteness as well as directness/ indirectness in the context of Malaysia. Moreover, it provided reflection on the cultural values and beliefs that Malaysian academics have regarding politeness/impoliteness norms, especially in e-mail communication with their students.

Rich information as well as varieties of ideas and opinions were the outcome of focus group interview. It was beneficial in a sense that it helped the researcher to compose the questions and items for the questionnaire better. One of the issues that these lecturers

raised was the use of contracted form as well as misspelling, punctuation, which they felt students are required to be more careful about them. Another point was about the openings and closings of the e-mail which sometimes are left out in students' e-mails. They even highlighted that Malaysian lecturers would prefer indirect request from their students. Issues brought up by these lecturers were considered by the researcher to be a part of the questionnaire.

After conducting the focus group interview, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed based on the focus group interview and the most used strategies regarding directness level, internal and external modifications in the collected e-mail data. Consequently, two pilot studies were conducted to ensure that the proposed questionnaire would fulfill the objectives of the present study. Two pilot studies were undertaken as it was intended to make the questionnaire as reliable as possible.

3.2.2   Pilot Study

In order to make the questionnaire more valid, two pilot studies were carried out with 6 lecturers at the University of Malaya, prior to the distribution of questionnaires. These pilot studies were undertaken to verify the applicability of the questions in the final questionnaire to the investigation of politeness/impoliteness in e-mail exchanges between Malaysian supervisors and Iranian post-graduate supervisees. Indeed, the conducted pilot studies in the current research are considered as a validity step for checking the questionnaire applied for the purpose of this study.

In the first pilot study three lecturers from Faculty of Languages and Linguistics were asked to rate the level of politeness/impoliteness reflected with regards to the typical format of Iranian post-graduate e-mails messages. By doing the first pilot study (see Appendix A) it was found that some of the items in the questionnaire had to be revised since they were to some extent vague. Moreover, it was noticed that questions 17-21

were very difficult to understand for Malaysian supervisors as examples were provided in the footnote. Therefore, in the second pilot study these examples were merged within the questions. Second pilot study was also conducted with 3 other lecturers from the same university. After conducting the second pilot study (see Appendix B) it was found that questions related to external modifications in the first part should be more simplified.

By conducting these pilot studies, it was noticed that the word 'impolite' in the questions made the questionnaire not understandable for the supervisors. This was because applying a negative verb in questions along with the word 'impolite' made the whole sentence double negative and not understandable. The same thing happened for the last part regarding the directness level where the word 'impolite' was changed to 'polite'.

The pilot study assisted in crystallizing the sort of questions to be asked in the final questionnaire. It helped in a way to organize the questionnaire in proper perspective, by allowing the researcher to rearrange and decide on the items and questions used in the questionnaire in order of appropriateness and extent of their application, in order to achieve optimum results. The goal of the pilot studies was to test the questionnaire since the present study is the first study to elicit supervisors' perceptions towards politeness/impoliteness of students' request e-mails through questionnaire. From the pilot studies it became clear that some minor amendments and modifications needed to be done on the items in order to make the items clear and relevant.

3.2.3   Supervisors' Questionnaire

The main focus of this study was politeness and impoliteness. Marti (2006) claims that when indirectness is the main concern there should be an association with politeness and it is essential to investigate whether these two concepts are related.

As discussed in chapter one, one of the objectives of this study is to get the supervisors' perceptions regarding politeness and impoliteness of students' e-mails. A questionnaire (including 20 questions) was devised for this purpose which came out of different procedures like focus group interview and two pilot studies in order to be reliable and valid enough. In the current study 20 different supervisors were asked to answer the questionnaire (see Appendix C) which is based on students' e-mails as it would definitely depict a broader picture of how Malaysian supervisors perceive these e-mails as polite or impolite.

3.3   Subjects

Subjects of this study (both supervisors and supervisees) were chosen from the University of Malaya as this university is a good representation of Malaysian universities. Another reason that makes University of Malaya a perfect site for this research is that both local and international students study there. Since all supervisors and supervisees in this study are non-native speakers of English the findings would shed new light on politeness in e-mails written in English in terms of cultural differences between non-native English supervisors and supervisees.

Supervisees

Iranian post-graduate students from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Malaya were chosen in order to have homogenous participants in this study. Among others, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics was selected as students in this faculty reach a level of linguistic awareness which help them to make less grammatical mistake. The students were at the same level of English proficiency since the minimum requirement for pursuing Higher Education is having a band 7 IELTS certificate. There were only 32 Iranian students who started doing their dissertation at the time of data collection. Unfortunately, 8 of them never replied back and four

students declined to share their e-mails as they thought their e-mails are personal. 20 Iranian post-graduate students finally sent their e-mails to the researcher. These e-mails were previously sent to their supervisors.

Supervisors

The primary focus of this study is to find out how Malaysian supervisors perceive e-mails from Iranian students. Therefore, supervisors who were Malaysian were considered for the purpose of this study and those who have different nationalities were not included. These supervisors were all non-native speakers of English.

20 supervisors from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at University of Malaya were asked to answer the questionnaires which are based on students' e-mails. This is one of the strengths of the current study as 20 Malaysian supervisors were involved to depict a broader picture of how Malaysian supervisors perceive students' request e-mails as polite or impolite. The supervisors have supervised several students before and are quite familiar with diverse computer-mediated communication technologies. It was ensured that respondents to the questionnaire were not the same supervisors who had been the subjects of pilot study.

3.4   Data

This study used a corpus of Iranian supervisees' e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors; thus they represented the writers 'doing' their role as supervisee, constructing their addressees as supervisors, and constructing the relationship between these two (Davies, Merrison and Goddard, 2007:40). Therefore, this study is based on a compilation of e-mails sent by Iranian post-graduate students, who study at Faculty of Language and Linguistics, to their supervisors at University of Malaya. A total number of 128 e-mails were compiled for this study which is a good representation of common moves and

politeness and impoliteness strategies and almost the same amount of data was used in other studies by scholars such as Davies, Merrison and Goddard, 2007 (100 e-mails); Ho, 2011 (89 e-mails) ; Baugh, 2011 (80 e-mails). In some studies (Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996, Bloch 2002; Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth, 2000, 2002; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012) the data was sent to one teacher-researcher whereas in the current study different supervisors were the e-mails' addressee.

From the e-mails that were collected only those which contained requests for action, information, permission, and feedback were selected for the analysis (adopted and modified from Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). All the examples presented in this study are intact and no changes have been done regarding the grammatical mistakes, contracted forms and misspelling.

3.5   Data Collection

Authentic e-mail messages have yet to receive the appropriate attention in literature so far and usually researchers have obtained their data through role play or discourse completion test (DCT) (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007:62). The data for the present study composed of authentic interactions without the researcher's involvement. The procedure for data collection of this study overcomes the limitation of elicited data collection where informants may not actually say what they would say in a real situation (Marti, 2006).

The e-mail data for the purpose of this study was collected using the same strategy Chen (2001) and Baugh (2011) proposed in which Iranian post-graduate students were asked to select and forward up to 10 e-mails they had sent to their supervisors previously. E-mail data were collected by e-mail as it is presumed to be more convenient both for researcher and students. First of all, an e-mail (see Appendix D) was sent to 32 Iranian

students, studying in Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Malaya, regarding the purpose of the study and their consent. Students were not informed that this study is looking at politeness/impoliteness in e-mail as it might tempt them to send the polite(r) ones. Within two semesters the e-mail data were collected. Unfortunately, from 32 students, 8 of them never replied back and four students declined to share their e-mails as they thought their e-mails are personal. In overall, 20 of Iranian post-graduate students agreed to participate in this study. In terms of the ethical issue, students were required to return the letter of consent by e-mail. After they agreed to send their e-mails an e-mail was sent to them in order to give them guidelines on how to send them (See Appendix E). They were also assured that their personal information would not be revealed.

Each student was asked to send up to 10 e-mails which contained requests. Upon receiving the e-mails, they were checked by the researcher to see if they can fit the corpus of this study: they should have at least one request and include no confidential information. Those e-mails which did not have any requests were omitted. Those e-mails which contained requests for action, information, permission, and feedback were selected for the analysis (adopted and modified from Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). In the next phase, all the e-mails were anonymized, as a generic code was assigned for the students like (S1, S2, and so on).

Another source of data was supervisors' questionnaire. For this purpose, first, an e-mail was sent to 39 supervisors to introduce the researcher, explain the objectives of the study briefly and get an appointment (see Appendix F). Of the 39 supervisors who were contacted, 26 supervisors agreed to participate in this study. 6 supervisors were chosen for the pilot study. Once the supervisors approved, the researcher met them to fill in the questionnaire. A letter of consent was attached to the questionnaire in order to get their written consent (See Appendix G). They were asked to rate each question on a 5-point

scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) to see to what extent they perceive students' request e-mails as polite/ impolite (See Appendix C). The questions of the questionnaire are all based on the data obtained. As the supervisors answered the questions, clarification was provided if needed. The nationality of the students was not revealed to avoid any subjective judgment.

3.6   Data Analysis Procedure

This section deals with the way data is analysed according to the frameworks described in chapter two.

3.6.1   Genre Analysis

This study seeks to analyse Iranian post-graduate students' request e-mails through a genre analysis based on the "moves" and "steps" schematic structure model. This study intends to follow the moves adopted from Baugh (2011) (see Table 2.2) since her research was also on student-professor e-mail interaction in university. However, there are some changes applied regarding name of each category to make it more apt for supervisees-supervisors e-mail exchanges (See Table 3.1). Therefore, this research wants to identify the generic structure that is employed by Iranian post-graduate students as manifested in their e-mails communication with their supervisors.

In the first place, moves and move structure of e-mail data were found based on Baugh's (2011) framework. The frequency distribution of each move through whole e-mails was calculated to find out the most used moves in request e-mails.

Table 3.1: Relabelled Moves Adopted From Baugh (2011).

addressing using correct form	apologizing for the imposition
phatic relational	requesting
acknowledging previous e-mails	elaborating on the requests
referencing previous communication	justifying the requests
providing progress info	closing thanks
sharing personal info	closing
providing background info before making requests	sign off

In order to check whether the genre analysis of data is thoroughly accomplished, in a Research Consultation Session in Research Management and Innovation Complex at the University of Malaya on 14th February 2014 data was verified by Prof. Vijay Bhatia. He is an Adjunct Professor (Department of Linguistics) at Macquarie University, Australia, and also at the University of Malay, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He has more than a hundred publications, which include journal articles, books chapters, edited volumes and individually written books. Two of his books, 'Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings' and 'Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-based View', are widely used in genre theory and practice. Moves and steps found in the e-mail data were justified by him. The four macro moves within which have different steps suggested in this study were also verified by Prof. Vijay Bhatia.

3.6.2 Degree of Directness

In order to answer the second research question Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework described in chapter two (see Table 2.3) is used. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) proposed a model for request strategies and later on Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) and

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) revised it to be apt for their e-mail data which contain request. This study used the latest one which is Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework.

The main illocutionary force of any utterance is always conveyed by head act. Moreover, the head act is the core of the request sequence, which is able to determine the level of directness and can be modified by external and internal modification. Therefore, the request head acts of e-mails messages were classified based on the directness levels: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (hints). The frequency distribution of each category is identified to see whether their requests are direct or indirect. In the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) used a strategy called '*Obligation Statement*' which has not been used for the purpose of this study since in a status-unequal requests e-mail in university, it is unlikely that students employ a type of request which states explicitly the obligation of the hearer to carry out the act (Pan, 2010).

3.6.3   Internal and External Modifications

In the third phase, internal and external modifications (adopted from Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011) are then identified within each request head acts. Internal modifications are examined through both '*downgraders*' which may soften the request and '*upgraders*' which may intensify the coerciveness of a request in the e-requests collected. Internal modification, unlike external modification, is used to mitigate the imposition of the request and influence the utterance used for realizing the act.

External modification, which consists of '*supportive*' and '*aggravating*' moves, are also added to the analysis of the request head act as they indirectly modify the head act which is the illocutionary force. As an additional act external modifiers affects the

context in which it is applied. Thus, the frequency distribution of internal modification and external modification through whole e-mails was calculated.

In the final step, the 5-point Likert scale questionnaire based on supervisors' perception was analysed.

It should be noted that, no grammatical and punctuation mistakes or spelling errors were omitted or corrected so that the exact way Iranian post-graduate students compose their request e-mails would be transmitted.

The research design of the study, data collection and analysis procedures were elaborated in this chapter. In the two following chapters the results of the study will be explained. Chapter four dedicates to the analysis of moves and move structure of e-mails whereas chapter five deals with the analysis of directness level, and the use of internal and external modification within these moves.

CHAPTER 4

GENRE ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the current study is presented in two separate chapters in order to best serve the purpose of this study. Chapter four deals with move analysis of the e-mail data whereas chapter five discloses the request strategies based on directness level, internal and external modification. The results of the supervisors' questionnaire are also elaborated in chapter five.

This chapter proceeds to provide results obtained through the move analysis of data. The analysis is based on the first objective of the current research which is to identify the moves and move structure in Iranian post-graduate students' academic request e-mails to their supervisors. Moves suggested in Baugh (2011) (see Table 2.2) were used for this study as she proposed them based on the analysis of the students-professors e-mail communication.

4.2 Generic Structure of Request E-mails

In this part the move and move structure of students' e-mails will be discussed. Baugh's (2011) framework described in section 2.3.1 consists of 14 moves to categorize students' request e-mails to their professors. Following Baugh's (2011) framework, it is necessary to calculate the frequency with which those 14 moves occurred in the data, and also determine the order in which they usually occurred. Moves used by Baugh (2011) were relabelled to best serve the data. Thus, Figure 4.1 illustrates the percentage

of total e-mails that used each move. These moves are presented according to the most common move ordering in the e-mails.
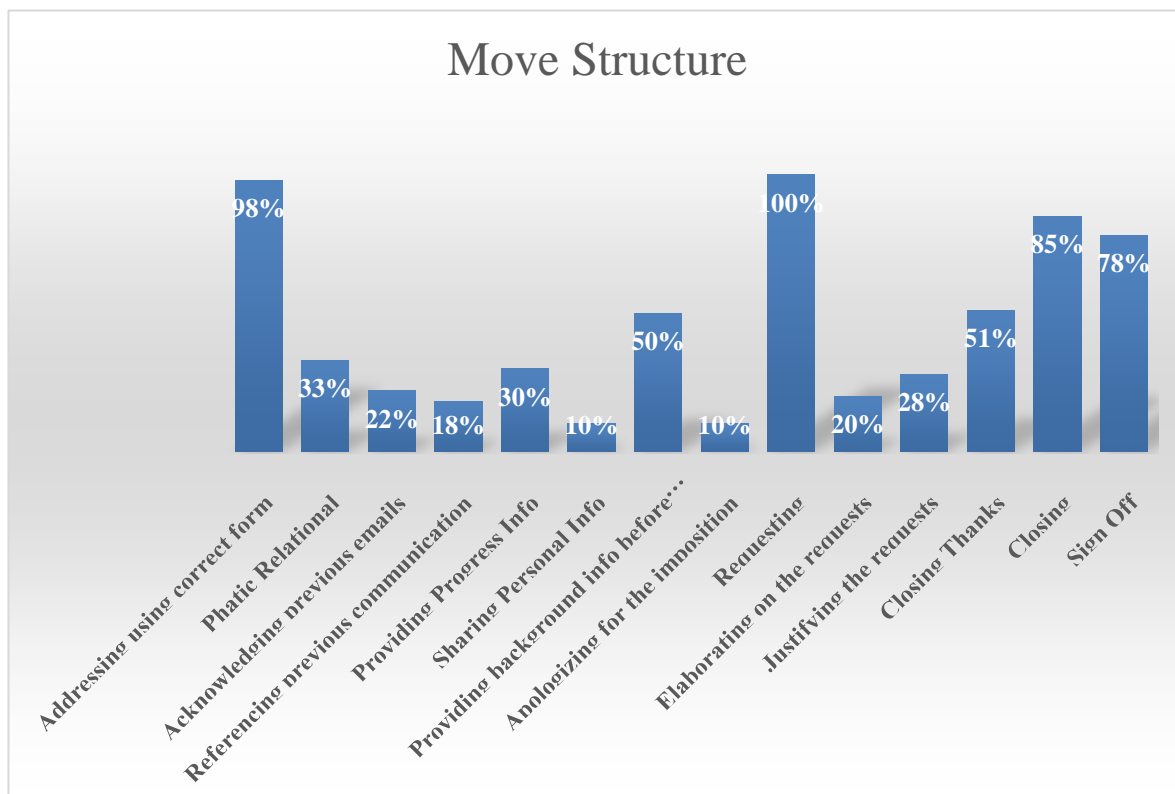

Figure 4.1: Percentage of the occurred moves

The data in the current study manifested all 14 types of generic elements presented by Baugh (2011). Besides '*requesting*' move which is the main aspect of request e-mails, other obligatory moves, like '*Addressing*' (98%), '*Closing*' (85%), and '*Sign Off*' (78%) occurred prevalently in the data. These percentages mean that in whole data (98%) of e-mails have '*Addressing*' move and just (2%) did not contain this move. Another two moves which were slightly less common than above mentioned moves are '*Closing Thanks*' (51%) and '*Providing background info before making requests*' (50%).

 Although '*Elaborating on the requests*' and '*Justifying the requests*' are two other moves that provide more information about the request move, their presence is not really noticeable in the current data. '*Sharing Personal Info*' (10%) and '*Apologizing for the imposition*' (10%) were the least frequent moves. '*Acknowledging previous e-*

mails' (22%) was not also very prevalent as probably there was no prior help to acknowledge.

The following six moves were found to be obligatory as they were present in all data with the most frequency. Therefore, the frequency of each move and their order in students' e-mails proposes the following moves as the most common one in academic request e-mails:

1. *Addressing*

2. *Providing background info before making requests*

3. *Requesting*

4. *Closing Thanks*

5. *Closing*

6. *Sign Off*

Although these six moves are perceived to be the most or perhaps the obligatory one, other optional moves which are less common might play an important role in the genre. '*Phatic Relational*', '*Acknowledging previous e-mails*', '*Providing Progress Info*', '*Elaborating on the requests*', and '*Justifying the requests*' can be considered as an optional move when they are necessary. Moreover, it should be noted that the following three moves were infrequently utilised across the data and were too rare for inclusion.

- *Referencing previous communication* (18%)

- *Sharing Personal Info* (10%)

- *Apologizing for the imposition* (10%)

This study wants to suggest that a request e-mail can be divided into four macro moves within which have different steps.

These 4 Moves are as follows:

Move 1: Opening

Move 2: Orientation

Move 3: Requesting

Move 4: Ending

These four moves define and structure the features of request e-mails. Move 2 and 3 are concerned with the content of the message whereas move 1 and 4 are considered as a frame for them (Dos Santos, 2002). Following Louhaila and Kankaanranta (2008), Kerkeb (2013) also labelled the opening and the ending moves as 'framing moves' since they help to the layout of the genre.

Therefore, the analysis of the data made it possible to describe this genre by the pattern shown in the following table. It merits pointing out that not all steps always appear in all request e-mails.

Table 4.1: Moves and Steps in Iranian Students' Request E-mails.

Moves		Steps	
Move 1	Opening	Step 1	Addressing using Correct Form
		Step 2	Phatic Relational
		Step 3	Acknowledging Previous E-mails
Move 2	Orientation	Step 1	Referencing Previous Communication
		Step 2	Providing Progress Info
		Step 3	Sharing Personal Info
		Step 4	Providing Background info Before Making Requests
Move 3	Requesting	Step 1	Apologizing for the Imposition
		Step 2	Requesting
		Step 3	Elaborating on the Requests
		Step 4	Justifying the Requests
Move 4	Ending	Step 1	Closing thanks
		Step 2	Closing
		Step 3	Sign off

As displayed in Table 4.1 under each Move, there are some steps which are obligatory or optional. The mandatory ones are suggested to be included in any request e-mails to a supervisor while the optional ones depend on the context and purpose of the writer or according to communicative motivation as Dos Santos (2002) asserted.

Among suggested obligatory moves, the first one (Opening) starts the e-mail by addressing the recipient and building up the relation. Move 2 (Orientation) usually provides new information paving the way for next move which is requesting. In move 3 (Requesting), the real content of the message is generated and it discloses the purpose behind the communication. The last move (Move 4: Ending) highlights the end of the e-mail in which the senders sign off and provide their names to the addressee. All the

steps classified under the last move are the obligatory ones since they were displayed with high frequency in most of the e-mails.

Each step found in this study will be defined and exemplified in details below.

MOVE 1: Opening

This move was realized by means of three steps (Addressing using correct form, Phatic Relational, and Acknowledging previous e-mails). The first one is obligatory whereas the rest are optional.

Step 1: *Addressing using correct form [ADR]*

'*Addressing using correct form*' is the first mandatory step found in this study. This step usually consists of opening of the e-mail, forms of address, greetings, and the sender's name (e.g. "Hi Dr. F.N (First Name)", "hello dear dr F.N"). 98% of the e-mails contain this step and just two e-mails ignored it.

Step 2: *Phatic Relational [PHR]*

Bloch (2002) accentuates that not necessarily we intend to use real information in e-mail or face to face interaction and sometimes we just want to maintain our relationships with the addressee by using '*Phatic Relational*'. '*Phatic Relational'* gives this chance to supervisees to boost their personal communication with their supervisors, though the existence of established hierarchy. This step is often realized through enquiring about health, holidays, etc. Some examples of this step are provided below:

- "hope you are keeping well"

- "hope all is fine with u."

- "I hope you are feeling better now."

The analysis of the data revealed that 33% of e-mails contained this step. However, there were some e-mails which they have more than one '*Phatic Relational*' like the following extract.

> **Example 1**:
>
> Dear Professor F.N [ADR],
>
> ***How are you ?* [PHR]** ***I hope you are enjoying your trip*. [PHR]** actually i decided to do the data collection while you are away……

Step 3: *Acknowledging previous e-mails [ACK]*

This step occurs when supervisees want to thank supervisors for what they have done before which oftentimes comes right after two previous steps (e.g. "Thank you for your nice e-mail and the good news.", "Thank you for the comments"). Only 22% of e-mails included '*Acknowledging previous e-mails*'. The following extract represents the use of this step within the context.

> **Example 2**:
>
> Dear professor, [ADR]
>
> Hope you are quite well [PHR] and ***thanks for your overall support*. [ACK]** Honestly, to inform you, the post graduate office of our university ….

'*Phatic relational*' and '*acknowledging previous e-mails*' tended to come directly after first step '*addressing using correct form*'.

MOVE 2: ORIENTATION

After commencing an e-mail by '*opening*' move, in the second move supervisees try to pave the way towards their requests through use of the following steps. As it was mentioned previously, not all steps always appear in one request e-mail.

Step 1: *Referencing Previous Communication [RPC]*

'*Referencing Previous Communication*' helps supervisees to refer to previous e-mails or conversations and may or may not have a direct relevance to the present e-mail. In the whole data the presence of '*Referencing Previous Communication*' was not very prevalent and only 18% of e-mails included this step which put it in the last least used steps. The following extract is from the data which included this step.

Example 3:

Hi Dr. F.N [ADR]

I have revised based on the comments. **[RPC]** There are two parts-highlighted in red-which need your immediate attention. [REQ] One is about your …

Example 4:

Dear Prof. F.N, [ADR]

I hope this finds you well. [PHR] *I'm afraid that my previous email is overlooked as you mentioned earlier that you are busy*. **[RPC]** Can you please have a look on the minor corrections that I have made [REQ] and let me know if I can bring the form for your approval signature? [REQ]

Step 2: *Providing Progress Info [PPI]*

Rather than sharing personal information this step is more towards academic information where the supervisees want to inform their supervisors of what they had done or would do (Baugh, 2011). As it was mentioned earlier, e-mails collected for this study are from supervisees who started doing their dissertation. Therefore, in order to keep their supervisors abreast of their academic work they used this step in their request e-mails. As it is shown in Figure 4.1, '*Providing Progress Info*' was found in 30% of Iranian students' e-mails. However, the frequency of moves indicates that 65 instances

of this step have been occurred in the whole data which reveal that some e-mails had more than one PPI. The way '*Providing Progress Info*' used in the data is illustrated below.

Example 5:

Dear Prof.Dr. F.N + L.N, [ADR]

I've revised my questionnaire **[PPI],** but I'm trying to decide whether to change he to he/she and him to him/her or not (situations 1, 5, and 7). [PBI] I would be grateful if you would kindly give me your precious comments. [REQ] Thanks for your time and consideration. [CLT]

Example 6:

Dear Professor F.N, [ADR]

How are you? [PHR] I am back. [SPI] *I have read some articles and books on ….* **[PPI]** I came to some research questions [PBI] while I really need some help which way to go.[REQ]

Step 3: *Sharing Personal Info [SPI]*

In this step supervisees make use of words pertaining to feeling and emotion to describe a personal situation to their supervisors. This step was one of the least occurred one since it only appeared in 10% of e-mails. Therefore, it might not be considered as a prevalent step and not suitable for request e-mail genre.

Example 7:

…. *As I am pregnant and have to submit soon to go back to my country* **[SPI]**, could you please kindly sign that form for me to submit it? [REQ]…..

Example 8:

…. Moreover, I need your signature on a letter [REQ] that I have written for the finance section to reimburse a part of money that I have paid for this semester [PBI] *as I'm finishing earlier and I'm financially stretched now* **[SPI]**. Please kindly let me meet you for the signature as soon as today or tomorrow if possible [REQ]….

Step 4: *Providing Background Info before making requests [PBI]*

The central function of this step is to set the scene and provide addressee with information about the request. By applying this step, the recipient will comprehend the request much easier (Mann et al., 1992). Therefore, it prepares the addressee for further development of the topic while allowing students to make request more easily. Dos Santos (2002) accentuates that this move is in line with the social attitude of talking about something interlocutors share beforehand, in order to prepare the ground to introduce the new information which is request in the case of request e-mails in the current research.

The analysis of data discloses that Iranian students have a great propensity to provide background before imposing the request. As it is shown in Figure 4.1, half of the request e-mails (50%) have '*Providing Background Info before making requests*' step.

Example 9:

Hi Dr. F.N [ADR]

Thank you for the comments.[ACK] *However, I am not able to locate the part related to equity* **[PBI].** Pls highlight it in the revised text if possible. [REQ]

Example 10:

Dear Prof. Dr. F.N, [ADR]

Thank you very much for the file. [ACK] *I am confused regarding the way I should write the literature review.***[PBI]** Would you please give me an example of how should it be written. [REQ]

Thank you for everything.[CLT]

MOVE 3: REQUESTING

This move is the most important part of a request e-mail which usually comprises the reason and justification behind the request and the request itself. This move encompasses four steps which are elaborated below.

Step 1: *Apologizing for the imposition [API]*

When supervisees do not want to infringe on their supervisors' time they employ this step in their request e-mails. This step raises the issue of unequal power relationship of supervisors and supervisees and it can be realized through acknowledging supervisors' issues (often realized through apologizing) or appealing to supervisors' status. Similar to *'Referencing previous communication'* and *'Sharing Personal Info'*, *'Apologizing for the imposition'* was occurred in few e-mails (10%) in the data which makes it as an unnecessary step for e-mail genre. Three examples from data are presented below:

Example 11:

…..*i know u r busy so i really dont wanna bother u* **[API]** ,if u give me ur feedback then i try to do it again. [REQ]….

Example 12:

> ...... ***I know you are too busy*** **[API]** , <u>but if you kindly consider this request, I will</u>
> <u>appreciate it [REQ]</u>. ....

Example 13:

Sorry if i'm asking twice **[API]** <u>. Could you send me the submitted draft of our paper</u>
<u>[REQ],</u> so I ....

Step 2: *Requesting [REQ]*

'*Requesting*' is the main step of students request e-mails where they ask something from
their supervisors. Therefore, all the e-mails (100%) in the study contained this step and
even some of the e-mails included more than one request. Some of the examples of
'*Requesting*' step are underlined in the above extracts.

Step 3: *Elaborating [ELA]*

After imposing the request, supervisees try to give additional qualifying information
about the request to get the positive feedback towards the request. Although it was
supposed to see more '*Elaborating*' step in the data just 20% of e-mails comprised it.
Due to its rare occurrence in the data, '*Elaborating*' is considered as an optional step in
this genre.

Example 14:

....Would it be possible to borrow the recorder any time soon?<u> [REQ]</u> ***I just need it for***
two days. **[ELA]** ......

Step 4: *Justifying [JUS]*

Like '*Elaborating*', '*Justifying*' also comes directly after '*Requesting*' and provides
reasons behind the request. In contrast with Baugh's (2011) study, the presence of these
two steps is not very noticeable as just in 28% of e-mails '*Justifying*' occurred.

Example 15:
Dear Prof. F.N. [ADR]
Will you send me the paper [REQ*]. I seem to have lost it in my stuff, or maybe I have deleted it, as I can't find it* **[JUS].**

Example 16:
…   By the way, I have checked my progress report and I noticed that it has not been evaluated.[PBI] I would really appreciate if you evaluate it [REQ] *since I am not able to register for the next semester.* **[JUS].** Thanks a lot.[CLT]

Example 17:
… I was looking forward of asking for an appointment [REQ] *so that I could explain about   my   proposal   on   the   aforementioned   topic*   **[JUS].**   …

MOVE 4: ENDING

   Step 1: *Closing Thanks [CLT]*

As the e-mails analysed for the purpose of this study comprise of requests; therefore, it is expected to see a '*Closing Thanks*' at the end of the message in order to show gratitude towards the addressee in advance for the anticipated help (Ho, 2011).

Applying this step in 51% of e-mails shows that Iranian students have a tendency to express gratitude to their supervisors (e.g. "Thank you for everything", "Thank you very much in advance", "I really appreciate your time and consideration.").

   Step 2: *Closing [CLO]*

In order to end their messages politely, supervisees use '*Closing*' at the bottom of their e-mails. '*Closing*' occurred in 85% of e-mails (e.g., "Best wishes" "Warm regards").

Step 3: *Sign Off [SOF]*

The last step which appears right after '*Closing*' move indicates the name of the e-mail sender. Iranian students provide their names in 78% of the e-mails which is the fourth most occurred step in this study.

Presenting the various moves and steps found in the data and their explanations, it is now pertinent to provide some extracts which will exemplify them within the context. Therefore, examples below illustrate the schematic structure of the e-mail messages where the moves and steps occurred.

Example 1

Move 1	STEP 1	[ADR]	Dear Prof. F.N,
Move 2	STEP 4	[PBI]	The attached is chapter one of my dissertation.
Move 3	STEP 1	[REQ]	Please kindly have a look at it and let me know if I have to add or change any part.
Move 4	STEP 1	[CLT]	Thanks a lot.
	STEP 2	[CLO]	Yours sincerely,
	STEP 3	[SOf]	F.N

Example 2

Move 1	STEP 1	[ADR]	Dear Prof. F.N,
	STEP 2	[PHR]	Hope this email finds you in good health.
Move 2			
Move 3	STEP 2	[REQ]	The attached is the revised version of my proposal based on the comments of the panel.
	STEP 3	[ELA]	I have highlighted them in yellow for your convenience.

	STEP 2	[REQ]	Moreover, I was wondering whether I can see you to ask about the analysis of my data.
Move 4	STEP 1	[CLT]	Thanks a lot for your time and consideration.
	STEP 2	[CLO]	Warm regards,
	STEP 3	[SOf]	F.N [SOf]

Example 3

Move 1	STEP 1	[ADR]	Dear Prof. DR. F.N + L.N
Move 2	STEP 2	[PPI]	Please be informed that I've registered for the first semester.
Move 3	STEP 2	[REQ]	I would be grateful if you would kindly let me know when you might be available to meet
	STEP 3	[ELA]	(any day but Wednesday).
Move 4	STEP 1	[CLT]	I really appreciate your time and consideration
	STEP 2	[CLO]	Warm regards,
	STEP 3	[SOf]	F.N + L.N

It should be highlighted that, the results of genre analysis in the current study may not be generalized to all students e-mails as the focus of this study is on request e-mails and further studies can explore other e-mail genres.

It is worth mentioning that the genre analysis of this study was verified by Prof. Vijay Bhatia in a Research Consultation Session in Research Management and Innovation Complex at University of Malaya on 14th February 2014. Moves and steps found in the

e-mail data were justified by him. The four macro moves within which have different steps suggested in this study were also verified by Prof. Vijay Bhatia.

The way Iranian students formulate requests when writing e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors was discussed so far and next chapter will elaborate whether these requests in these moves are direct or indirect and whether they are modified with internal and external modifications. It will be followed by the analysis of Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire regarding their perception towards these requests e-mails.

CHAPTER 5

REQUEST STRATEGIES ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data analysis illustrates whether the requests within these moves are direct or indirect and to see if they are modified by internal and external modifications. In the first place, there will be a classification of request head acts based on the directness levels: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (hints). Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) proposed a model for request strategies and later on Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) revised it to be apt for their e-mail data which contained request. In order to classify the strategy type of the request head acts Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework is used.

In the second phase, internal and external modifications used to modify the impact of requests in each e-mail were identified and discussed. The internal modification and external modification were coded according to Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). However, some modifications have been done to fit the data.

In the final section, the data obtained from Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire regarding politeness and impoliteness of students' request e-mails will be illustrated.

5.2 Directness Level

The main illocutionary force of any utterances is always conveyed by head act. Moreover, the head act is the core of the request sequence, which is able to determine level of directness and is able to stand alone without the presence of internal and external modification. In the current research full e-mails sent by supervisees to their supervisors were explored and not just a speech act itself, therefore there were some

situations where multiple requests were appeared in one single message (Pan, 2012) and subjects formulated two or more requests (e.g. requests for action, and information).

To illustrate, in the following e-mail, a supervisee employed firstly *'Hints'* to get the supervisor's feedback about his proposal and then by means of *'Query Preparatory'* asked to have an appointment to discuss about analysis of his data. Accordingly, both requests were coded and analysed for this message.

Example 18:

Dear Prof. F.N,

Hope this email finds you in good health. ***The attached is the revised version of my proposal based on the comments of the panel***. *[Hints]* I have highlighted them in yellow for your convenience. Moreover, ***I was wondering whether I can see you to ask about the analysis of my data.*** **[Query Preparatory]** Thanks a lot for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

F.N

In another e-mail a supervisee first made use of *'Query Preparatory'* to ask for an appointment and proposed her second request by use of *'Need statements'* to get the consent of her supervisor to sign the three month notice form.

Example 19:

Dear Prof. F.N,

 I hope you have a nice weekend so far. ***I was wondering if we can meet on Tuesday to discuss about my work.*** **[Query Preparatory]**   ***I also need you to kindly sign the three months notice.*** **[Need statements]** I am confident enough to commit to the submission.

 Thank you.

In the current research, all the three kinds of head act realizations, direct, conventionally indirect, and non- conventionally indirect (hints), discussed in chapter three (See 3.2.2) were found in the data. The result of the data revealed that students have greater tendency towards direct strategies (71%) followed by conventionally indirect (52%) and non- conventionally indirect (hints) (16%).

The distribution of the three levels of directness is presented in Figure 5.15.1 below. This classification shows the request head acts ordered in accordance with the decreasing degree of directness.
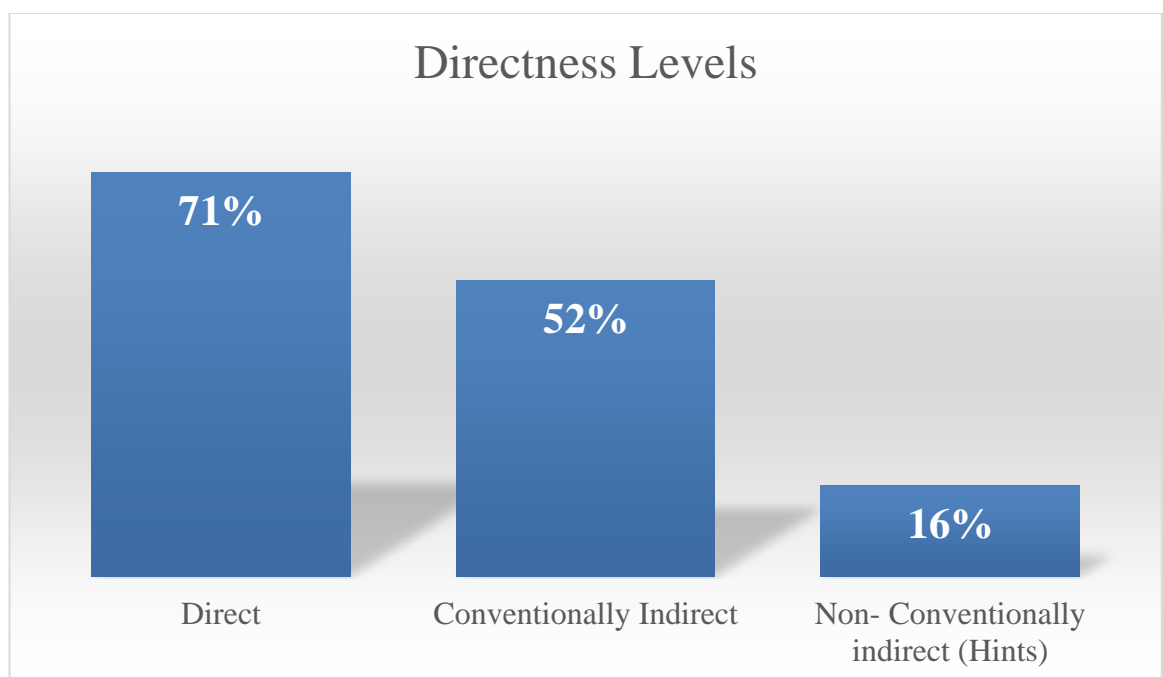
Figure 5.1: Percentage of levels of directness

More details about the subcategories of these three levels are explained below.

Direct Strategies:

There are eight subcategories under direct strategies and the results indicate that '*Direct questions*' (30%) and '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' (23%) were the most favoured one. These are followed by '*Expectation statements*' (16%), '*Need statements*' (10%), '*Want statements*' (9%), and '*Performatives*' (4%). However, '*Reminder request*' (3%) and '*Elliptical requests*' (2%) were used infrequently by Iranian students. As it can be seen, among these eight direct strategies, '*Direct questions*' (30%) were particularly more common among Iranian post-graduate students. Figure 5.2 summarises the findings regarding the percentage of the distribution of the direct strategy choices of Iranian students.
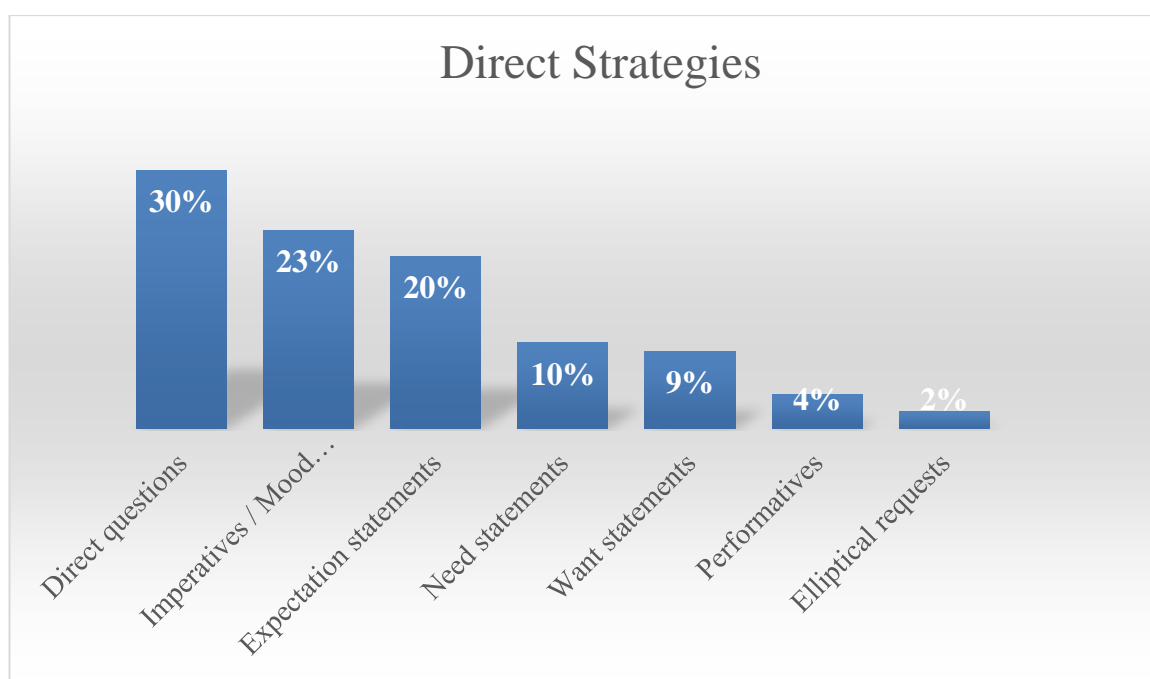
Figure 5.2: Percentage of Direct strategies

More details about these categories are manifested below.

Direct questions

By means of wh-questions or Yes/No questions, the speaker/writer poses direct questions to the addressee regarding actions to be taken or information needed (Wang, 2011) (e.g. *"did you receive our published letter in the PDF format", "Do you have any suggestion for me?"*).

30% of e-mails written by Iranian students contained *'direct questions'* which is the most used direct strategy in the directness level. The examples below illustrate the use of *'direct questions'* in the e-mail data.

Example 20.

Dear prof. F.N.

Good time to you. I did all the corrections you asked me to make and printed my thesis. *when can I come to your office to get your signature?* **[Direct questions]** *can I come tomorrow?* **[Direct questions]** If so, please let me know. Thank you very much.

Example 21.

Dear Dr. F.N.

I've prepared my proposal. *When can I come and see you***? [Direct questions]**

Thank you so much

Example 22.

…… My left indention is 2. *Should I change it?* **[Direct questions]** *Did you ask me to change it or I'm misunderstood?* **[Direct questions]**

Elliptical requests

'*Elliptical requests*' are a kind of request in which the desired object is mentioned in it. The results indicate that Iranian students are not fond of this type of request as it only occurred two times (2%) in the whole data which are exemplified below.

Example 23:

Dear Madam F.N

How are you Madam? *Any news from Prof. F.N yet?* **[Elliptical requests]**

Thank you

Yours Sincerely

Example 24:

Dear Dr. F.N

I have been doing some readings since we met last. I also started writing chapter 5 (discussion). I have written a couple of pages mostly on /s/. I would like you to have a look at it please and give me your feedback. Meanwhile, I'll continue with chapter 5. Btw, *any feedback on chapter 4?* **[Elliptical requests]**

Happy holidays and best regards

F.N

Imperatives / Mood derivable

'*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' consists of utterances in which the grammatical (syntactic) mood of the verb determines illocutionary force (e.g., "Pls confirm if the files has landed safely.", "plz c the article in the attachment."). Holoch (2009) refers the use of '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' to the situation in which there is a low degree of

social distance between the interactants as well as a high degree of the addressee's obligation or when the speaker/writer has more authority over the addressee. In a context like university, particularly in supervisors-supervisees communication, it is hard to confront come across such situations. However, even though the supervisors as (addressees) have more power but in the corpus 23% of the e-mails found to contain *'Imperatives / Mood derivable'*, which is the third most used strategy by Iranian students. Iranian students might have been aware of these differences since they used 'please' which is a politeness marker to minimize the cost imposed on the addressee since employing imperative "maximizes cost upon the requestee" Quraishi (2009:17). Here are some examples:

Example 25:

Hi Dr. F.N

I have revised based on the comments. There are two parts-highlighted in red- which need your immediate attention .One is about your experience about textbook evaluation. Additionally**, *pls specify the page number for ….. [Imperatives / Mood derivable].* If** I need to do any further changes *pls do let me know***. [Imperatives / Mood derivable]**

All the best

F.N

Example 26:

Dear Dr. ….,

I have provided some slides on …….. model for my presentation. ***Please provide me with your fruitful comments*. [Imperatives / Mood derivable]**

Sincerely,

Example 27:

Dear Prof.Dr. F.N + L.N,

Please find attached my interview questions **[Imperatives / Mood derivable]** and

kindly advice me on them. **[Imperatives / Mood derivable]**

Warm regards,

F.N

Performatives

When in an utterance the illocutionary force of the act is explicitly mentioned, it is considered as '*Performatives'*. Trosborg (1995:203) defines '*Performatives'* as those utterances which include "a performative verb conveying requestive intent" (e.g., "so i wanted to know if its possible to meet u before i go back or not?").

Only few subjects used '*Performatives'* as 4% of e-mails contained this strategy. The e-mails below are examples of this strategy in the corpus:

Example 28:

Dear Dr.

I am writing this email to ask for your convenient time to meet up. **[Performatives]**

 I wonder if you could give me some time next week.

Thank you

Kind regards

Example 29:

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope this finds you well. ***Just wanted to check if you have time tomorrow or sometime soon to check my corrections.*** **[Performatives]** The corrections are not too much and I hope it wont take so much of your time :)

Hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest regards,

F.N.

Example 30:

Dear Prof. F.N,

The office asked me to fill a checklist which shows which of the examiner's corrections I have applied and which I haven't and it needs your signature too. ***Just wanted to check if can have another appointment time with you anytime soon to get your signature*** **[Performatives]** or would it be too much if I aske you to scan and send the paper once I sent it to you? please let me know which one is more convenient for you.

Thank you.

Warmest regards,

F.N.

Want statements:

Want statements are utterances which express the speaker/writer's desire that the request be granted Krulatz (2012). Perhaps, they wanted to be more explicit while expressing their wishes and wants in their requests (Pan, 2010, 2012). (e.g. "I want to request you to check my last draft", "I would like you to have a look at it").

The results show that only 9% of e-mails included '*Want Statements*'. Here are some examples from the corpus:

Example 31:

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope this finds you well. I was wondering if you could find time to have a look at my chapter two. Moreover, ***I wish to get an appointment time to discuss some issues on my chapter three.*** **[Want statements]**

Thank you very much

Warmest regards,

F.N

Example 32:

Dear Dr. F.N,

Hi. ***I just want to know that how did you find my proposal?*** **[Want statements]** To be honest I am worried about it. In fact, I am not sure about the framework that I am going to apply. I would be grateful if we can have session to discuss about it. If you do not mind we may meet up tomorrow after the class.

Yours sincerely,

F.N

Example 33:

Hi and good time to you dear Prof. F.N.

I know that you are too busy and have spent your time for my thesis (even when your time was packed). ***But I want to request you to check my last draft*** **[Want statements]**

so that I can submit and participate in the coming convocation (in September 2011). if not, i have to stay for the next year convocation (in September 2012). that is very kind of you to help me in this regard.

Regards.

Need statements

Utterances which include expression of the need for an action towards the addressee are called *'Need statements'* (e.g. "I need few appointment times with you", "I need your signature on a letter"). The amount of used *'Need statements'* (10%) by Iranian students was almost same as 'Want *Statements'*.

Example 34:

Dear Prof. F.N.

I attached my new (hope to be last 😊) proposal. the changed part are marked by yellow marker to be distinguished.

I need to have your signature in the presentation form. **[Need statements]** Are you in your office tomorrow? If so, when? and if not, again, when?

thanks.

Example 35:

Hi dear Dr. F.N

My first draft is ready. *I need your helpful guides and comments.***[Need statements]**

I will try to be in your office on time. 20 Nov. at 3:30 p.m

Thank you

Example 36:

Dear Prof. F.N.

As I'm getting into my 4th sem. I have to defend my proposal. ***I need your urgent comment on my proposal***, **[Need statements]** so I'm sending it with the hope that you will be able to pass your comments on it by June.

Thank you very much

Regards

F.N. + L.N.

Expectation statements

An expected action by the addressee pertaining to unperformed obligations and duties is referred as *'Expectation statements'*. The action requested is perceived to be under hearer's duties and speaker's rights. *'Expectation statements'* occurred in 20% of e-mails which are the fourth most direct strategies. Examples of this strategy are as follows:

Example 37:

Dear Dr F.N

 Hi and good day

 hope u r good. firstly thank u for ur mail. i prepared first draf of my proposal and wanted to know ur idea about that. could u pls do this favour and read my proposal? please check it and kindly give ur comments accordingly. ***Hope you spend your precious time on reading my proposal.*** **[Expectation statements]**

thx and regards

F.N

Example 38:

Dear Prof F.N + L.N,

I am writing to inform you that the first paper is ready now. I would be glad if you could have a look at it and let me know about any potential problems. If you are positive about it, I will send you the second one. Please find the attached file (paper one) in two formats (Word and PDF). Thank you so much for your support and encouragement.

I eagerly look forward to hearing from you soon. **[Expectation statements]**

Warm regards,

F.N + L.N

Example 39:

Dear Prof. F.N,

Hi, I hope you've had a nice day so far.

I was just wondering if you have received my paper for gemaonline. *I am waiting for your comments to submit it as soon as possible.***[Expectation statements]**

Thank you in advance

Salam, F.N

Conventionally Indirect

Conventionally Indirect contains strategies which realise the "act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalised in a given

language" (Blum-Kulka, 1989:47). Utterances containing reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. possibility, willingness, ability) as conventionalised in any specific language (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:18) are considered as '*Query Preparatory*' (e.g. "would you mind helping me to get this book?"). Among the three levels of directness '*Conventionally Indirect*' strategies (52 %.) are the second most used by Iranian students. This might be due to the fact that just in the '*Query Preparatory*' the balance of clarity and indirectness can be fully achieved as discussed by Blum-Kulka (1987). It can be justified by the fact that when a requester has a fear of loss of face or when they anticipate that the compliance of the request is low they tend to employ more conventionally indirect requests. The extracts below exemplify how this strategy is used within the context.

Example 40:

Dear Prof. Dr. F.N,

 Thank you very much for the file. I am confused regarding the way I should write the literature review.

Would you please give me an example of how should it be written. **[Query Preparatory]**

 Thank you for everything.

 Sincerely Yours,

Example 41:

Dear Dr.

I am writing this email to ask for your convenient time to meet up. *I wonder if you could give me some time next week.***[Query Preparatory]**

Thank you
Kind regards

Example 42:
Dear Prof Dr. F.N + L.N,
I would be grateful if you would kindly make an appointment regarding my proposal defense. **[Query Preparatory]** Thanks for your time and consideration.
warm regards,
F.N

Non- Conventionally indirect (Hints)

This type of strategy is an open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that can be identified through '*Mild'* and '*Strong hints'*. Statements which make no reference to the desired act but are able to be inferred by the context are '*Mild hints'* and utterances which make partial reference to the act or may indicate reason or support for the desired act are labelled as '*Strong hints'*. These strategies are not conventionalised in the language and hence require more interpretation for the addressee to perceive the speaker's requestive intent. (e.g. "Attached is my proposal", "I have sent you my chapter 3 in this email attachment."). Following Felix-Brasdefer (2012), in this research '*Mild* and *Strong Hints'* are considered as one category namely *'Hints'* which is "an utterance containing partial reference to the object needed for carrying out the act". In other words, the speaker (writer) expresses their intention in an indirect way to get the addressee to do something. Only (16%) of e-mails contained '*Hints'* which is the least utilized strategies among Iranian students. The examples of this type of strategy are presented below.

Example 43:

Dear Dr.

I made the necessary changes to my proposal. ***Please find attached the new proposal.***

[Hints]

Regards

Example 44:

Dear Prof. F.N,

Hope this email finds you in good health. ***The attached is the revised version of my proposal based on the comments of the panel.*** **[Hints]** I have highlighted them in yellow for your convenience. Moreover, I was wondering whether I can see you to ask about the analysis of my data. Thanks a lot for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

F.N

Example 45:

Dear Prof. F.N.

I attached my new (hope to be last 😊) proposal. **[Hints]** the changed part are marked by yellow marker to be distinguished.

I need to have your signature in the presentation form. Are you in your office tomorrow? If so, when? and if not, again, when?

thanks.

This section analysed the e-mail data based on the level of directness. In overall, the results shows that Iranian post-graduate students have a propensity to use '*Direct strategies*' while composing request e-mails. However, '*Query Preparatory*' found to be the most used strategy in directness level. As it was discussed above the main illocutionary force of any utterances is always conveyed by head act. Indeed, the head act is the core of the request sequence, which is able to determine level of directness. It worth mentioning that based on the results of the analysis all the substrategies under directness level occurred in Move 3 (requesting move) and specifically step 2 (requesting). Therefore, students need to be very cautious about this move as their main purpose of the e-mail is carried out by this move and they should make it as polite as possible.

Having discussed the strategies Iranian students used to compose their requests, the next section focuses on internal and external modifications employed by Iranian students to modify their requests.

5.3   Request Modification

This part of the analysis seeks to determine what kind of internal and external modifiers students employ to mitigate or aggravate their requests (Lazarescu, 2013). Félix-Brasdefer (2012) assured that a request head act is considered as an obligatory component since it helps to determine the act. He further added that internal and external modifications which precede or come after the main request are optional. Indeed, Pan (2012) stressed that it is very unconventional that bare requests are imposed without any refinements in real life communication. Having said that, the present study makes an attempt to examine the presence or absence of both internal and external modifications in supervisees' request e-mails to their supervisors. The analysis of data revealed high amount of downgraders both in internal and external modification. It

merits pointing out that some instances of aggravating moves have been found in the data which might be considered impolite at university context. More details about these two modifiers are demonstrated below.

5.3.1 Analysis of Internal Modifications

Internal modification, unlike external modification, is used to mitigate the imposition of the request and influences the utterance used for realizing the act. Internal modifiers are being used to internally soften the force of the imposed request.

In this study, internal modification was examined through both downgraders which may soften the request and upgraders which may intensify the coerciveness of a request in the e-requests collected.

89% of the request e-mails contained internal modification. Below a more careful analysis of internal modification is presented.

Lexical/phrasal downgraders

Downgraders are defined as linguistic means whose presence might reduce the impact of a request (Krulatz, 2012). Figure 5.3 summarizes the analysis of internal modification of request e-mails through lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders. As it is shown, *Politeness Marker 'please', 'Downtoners', 'Time intensifier',* and *'Subjectivisers'* were favoured by Iranian students. However *'Appealers'*, *'Overstater'*, and '*Cajolers'* were used infrequently.
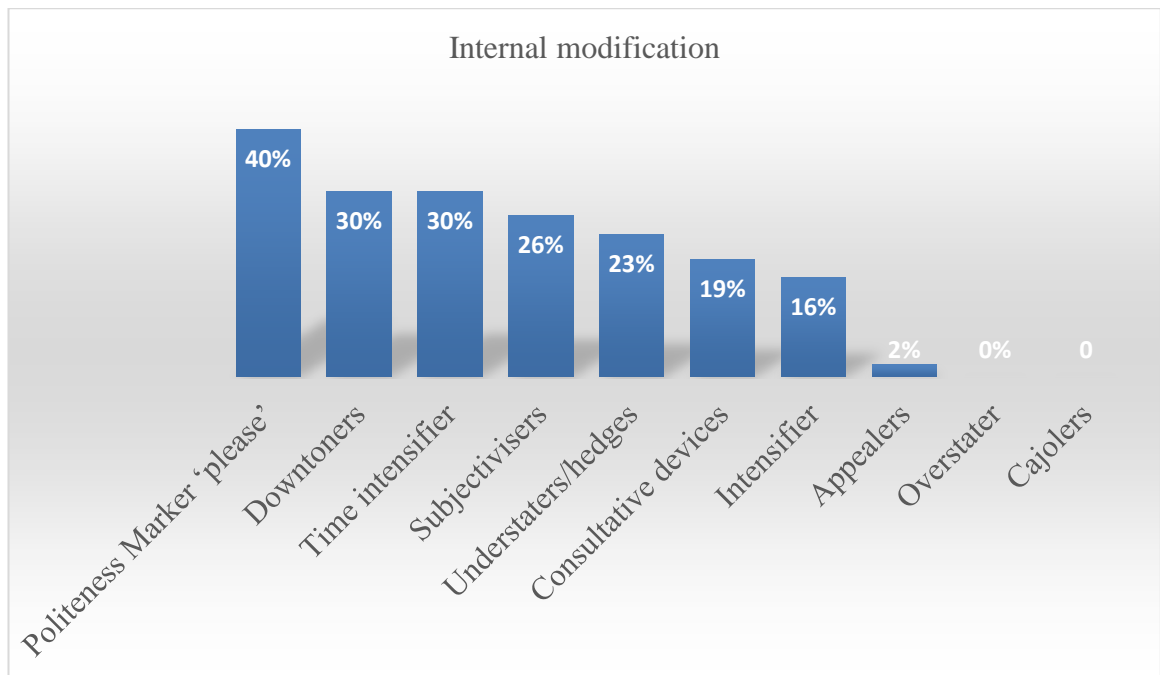
Figure 5.3: Percentage of Internal modifications

Politeness marker 'please'

Faerch and Kasper (1989) expressed two functions for politeness markers, one displaying the illocutionary force and the other softening the request in a more explicit way. *Politeness marker 'please'* found to be the most frequent internal modification (40%) among Iranian students. This high amount usage of Politeness marker 'please' might be due to impact of their L1 way of performing a request since Iranian employ please in most of their requests.

Examples below display the use of this modifier.

- *"**Please** let me know of any problems you might see in the slides."*
- *"**Please** find attached the new proposal."*
- *"**Please** kindly find the first cover page and the abstract in the attached document."*

Consultative devices

By employing '*consultative devices*' the speaker (writer) intends to involve the addressee and bid for their cooperation (Ogiermann, 2009:202). In other words, they

modify the illocutionary force of the request by consulting the addressee's idea. Only 19% of the e-mails contain this modifier. The low frequency of '*consultative devices*' shows that Iranian students are not aware of the fact that using this kind of internal modification might help them to have a more polite e-mail. The following examples display the use of '*consultative devices*' in e-mail data.

- "***If possible*** , Pls sign the form as of Thursday"

- "As the number of male participants in my study is very small, ***is it ok if*** I discard male participants in my study?"

- "***Is it enough*** to consider gender, culture, and language in my study or I have to view other variables like power, social distance, and social dominance ? "

- "***would it be too much*** if I aske you to scan and send the paper once I sent it to you? "

- "***Would you mind*** appoint a time for an individual meeting these days?"

Downtoners

Modifiers which are propositional and sentential (Holoch, 2009:39) and are utilized by a speaker/writer to diminish and modulate the impact of their request, are called '*Downtoners*'. Iranian students seem to have displayed a strong reliance on the use of '*Downtoners*' (30%) since this modifier is the second most used one. Here are some of the examples:

- "I ***just*** want you remind you are signing my notice for submission."

- "I would also be grateful if you would ***possibly*** provide me with any article regarding analysis of interview data."

- "Please ***kindly*** let me know when I can meet you."

- "Please, ***possibly*** look at the new material attached to this email and if any correction do me a favour."

Understaters/hedges

Adverbial modifiers the speaker (writer) uses to minimize or underrepresent the state of affairs in the request imposed are called '*Understaters/hedges*' (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989:283). The results of the current study show that students use '*Understaters/hedges*' in just 23% of e-mails. Here are some of the examples:

- "As I have to submit my thesis by the end of April to be able to be graduated by October I need *few* appointment times with you."

- "The corrections are not *too much* and I hope it wont take *so much* of your time"

- "It will be ur favour if explain *a little bit* what u exactly want me to add."

- "I was also wondering if I could borrow the recorder for *a couple of days*."

Subjectivisers

Elements which help the speaker (writer) to express explicitly their subjective opinion in regard to "the state of affairs referred to in the proposition" are named '*Subjectivisers*'. Assertive force of the imposed request can be reduced by use of '*Subjectivisers*' which explicitly indicate the speaker/writer's subjective opinion (Pan, 2010). As indicated in Figure 5.3, 26% of e-mails contained '*Subjectivisers*'. Some examples of this internal modifier are presented below.

- *"I wonder* if you could give me some time to meet up"

- *"I think* your confirmation is also needed."

- *"I think* I need two more months to finish writing my thesis."

- *"I wonder* if you can find time to review each chapter in a day with me."

Cajolers

'*Cajolers*' are linguistics expressions, which are "conventionalized and addressee-oriented", (Sifianou, 1992:180) and can contribute to the speaker/writer to make things clear for the addressee and to attract their attention. No example of this strategy is found

in the data which indicates that this type of modifier might occur more in conversation rather than in a written text like e-mails.

Appealers

'Appealers' are other addressee-oriented phrases which attempt to appeal to the addressee's understanding and seek consent from them. These modifiers usually occur in a syntactically final position of a sentence. Just 2% of e-mails contain *'Appealers'* since they normally occurs in the final part of a sentence and seek to "signal turn availability" (Blum- Kulka et al., 1989:285). Followings are some instances of *'Appealers'* in the data.

- "If not, I think (but no sure) the issue of my degree will be postponed for one year. ***Am I right?***"

- "I have to order them both online through inter-library loan but it takes like 1 week or so to let me know if they are available and also if any payment involved. ***Is that ok?***"

- "After meeting Dr. F.N + L.N, Dept.'s acting HOD, he said he could help out with the research from time to time if I had some difficulties, and that I could put his name in the form, one of the investigators. ***Will that be alright?***"

Internal modification: Upgraders

In some e-mails Iranian students employed intensifiers/upgraders to intensify the urgency and coerciveness of their requests. In fact, finding revealed that 38% of e-mails contained internal upgraders which is high as confirmed by Lazarescu (2013) for a status-unequal relationship like supervisor-supervisee one since they might be considered as impolite. The data reflected a strong preference for *'Time intensifier'* (30%) as it was the third most used internal modification. Some examples of internal upgraders are shown below:

Intensifier

16% of e-mails contained '*intensifiers'*.

"I ***really*** appreciate if you advise me."

"I do ***really*** need your help."

"I do ***really*** appreciate if you let me know whether I should apply more changes or no."

Time intensifier

- 30% of e-mails contained '*Time intensifier*' which is the second most used internal modification. Some of the examples of this intensifier are provided below:

- "Can you please send me your biographical data ***ASAP***?"

- "There are two parts-highlighted in red- which need your ***immediate*** attention."

- "Looking forwrds to hearning your useful comments ***soon***."

- "Please kindly let me meet you for the signature ***as soon as today or tomorrow*** if possible"

- "Just wanted to check if can have another appointment time with you ***anytime soon*** to get your signature."

Overstater

Utterances employed by the speaker (writer) in an exaggerated manner to convey the need of their request being imposed (e.g. "I'm in *desperate* need of material for my essay."). None of the e-mails had overstater.

The results of the current study indicate that internal modifications usually occurred in Move 3 (requesting move), specifically step 2 (requesting), in order to mitigate the imposition of the request and to internally soften the force of the imposed request. It means that the more students use internal modification within their requesting moves the more appropriate it might be perceived by their supervisors.

5.3.2 Analysis of External Modifications

External modification, which is the use of additional act, helps the speaker/ writer to modify the illocutionary force indirectly as they influence the context they are manifested in not the imposed request act. This type of modification can precede or come after the head act (Pan, 2010). Similar to internal modification, external modification can either mitigate or emphasize the force of the request (Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Pan, 2012). External modification suggested by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) was adopted for the purpose of this study. In the analysis of external modification three new categories (*Salutation*, *Appreciation statements*, *Optimism*) were added to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework as they occurred in the current study.

However, since in this study both supervisor and supervisee knew each other and had e-mail communication with each other before; therefore, '*Self introduction*' is omitted in the data analysis. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) used '*Self introduction*' category since the writer introduces himself/herself.

Among these modifiers, 'E-mail closing' (85%) followed by 'Salutation' (80%) were the most prevalent among Iranian students. Apart from these two modifiers, 'Pre-closings/thanks' were the most used external modification (51%).

Only 8% of e-mails included aggravating moves like '*Complaint/criticism*' and '*Emphasis on urgency/positive outcome*'.

Figure 5.4 reflects the findings regarding the distribution of the external modification Iranian students used.
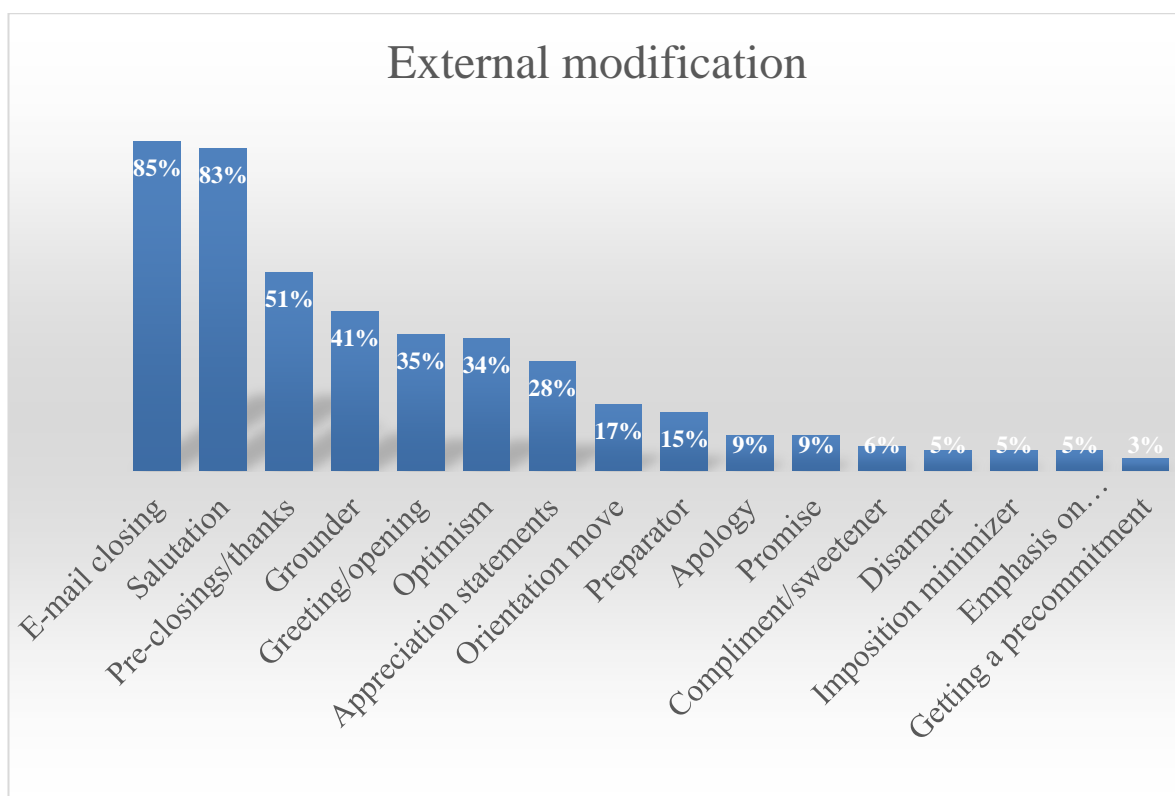
Figure 5.4: Percentage of External modifications

Salutation

The first category added to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework is '*Salutation*'. '*Salutation*' is the use of '*Dear + Correct forms of address*'. This modifier always occurred in Move 1 (opening) and specifically step 1 (addressing using correct form). In the current study, the data reflected a strong preference for bare '*Salutation*' (e.g., 'Dear + Dr. + F.N.', 'Dear + Prof.') as 80% of e-mails included it and just 5% of e-mails did not contain any '*Salutation*'. There were some e-mails (13%) where Iranian students combined greeting expressions with salutation (e.g. "Hello + dear + dr + F.N", "Hi and good time to you + dear + Prof. + F.N"). Moreover, the analysis indicates that a diversified range of '*Salutation*' was used by Iranian students. There were few instances (2%) where e-mails contained inappropriate forms of address (e.g., "Prof." and "Dr. + F.N"). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) stressed that '*Title +F.N.*' is considered as a grammatically unacceptable construction in English.

Greeting/opening

The writer starts the e-mail with a greeting. This external modifier always occurred in Move 1 (Opening) and specifically step 1 (addressing using correct form). Although 'Greeting' is normally found in the conversation but 35% of Iranian students' e-mails were started by a 'Greeting' (e.g., "hello", "Hi, How are you?", "Hi and good day").

There was one example in the data which seems quite odd in the academic e-mails. One of the students used ("hello dear dr F.N 🌹") in her e-mail as a greeting. The relation between the supervisor and supervisee seems to be very close that the supervisee expressed her feeling in this way. However, it is the addressee's (supervisor's) percption whether to consider it as polite or impolite.

Grounder

'Grounder' is referred as an indispensable part of a request which provides explanations and justifications in order to probably get the addressee's positive response (Brown and Levinson 1978:133). In this study 'Grounder' occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) and specifically within step 3 (Elaborating on the requests) and 4 (Justifying the requests).

In this study 'Grounder' (41%) is the third most used supportive moves by Iranian students. The following examples will illustrate the use of this modifier within a sentence.

- "***As I am pregnant and have to submit soon to go back to my country***, could you please kindly sign that form for me to submit it?"

- "***As the number of male participants in my study is very small***, is it ok if I discard male participants in my study?"

- "***As I have to submit my thesis by the end of April to be able to be graduated by October*** I need few appointment times with you."

- "Please let me know by sms ***because I do not have access to internet tonight.***"

Disarmer

'Disarmers' are phrases which indicate speakers' awareness and concern that the request could be an imposition towards addressees (Sifianou, 1999:187). In fact, the speaker/writer tries to prevent any possibility of a refusal from addressee by employing *'Disarmers'*. This modifier usually occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) and specifically within step 1 (Apologizing for the imposition). Finding 5% *'Disarmers'* in the data revealed that this modifier was one of the external modifiers used very sparingly. Here are some of the examples:

- "***i know u r busy so i really dont wanna bother u*** ,if u give me ur feedback then i try to do it again."

- "***I know that you are too busy*** and have spent your time for my thesis."

Preparator

The speaker/ writer prepares addressee for the ensuing a request by using *'preparators'* before the head act. The results of the current study indicate that *'preparators'* usually occurred in Move 3 (requesting move), specifically step 2 (requesting). *'Preparators'* were found in 15% of e-mail data. The examples are as follows:

- "***I wonder*** what the necessary paperwork is"

- "***I wonder*** if you could give me some time to meet up"

- "***I was just wondering*** if you have received my paper for gemaonline"

- "***I was looking forward of asking*** for an appointment so that I could explain about my proposal on the aforementioned topic."

Getting a precommitment

By using utterances to obtain a precommital, the speaker/ writer attempts to get the addressee to commit, before performing the request. This modifier tends to happen in Move 3 (requesting move), and specifically step 2 (requesting). A slight tendency can

be observed for the subjects in this study to use *'getting a precommitment'* (3%) when writing request e-mail to their supervisors. Some examples are provided below:

- "***just wanted to check*** if you have time tomorrow or sometime soon to check my corrections"

- "***if you do a favour to me*** and ..."

Promise

Boosting the likelihood of the addressee's compliance with the speaker's/ writer's request, the requester makes a promise to be fulfilled upon accomplishment of the requested act. This modifier usually occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) and particularly under step 3 (Elaborating on the requests) and 4 (Justifying the requests). By providing apology and promise, as Pan (2010) claimed, students try to soften the impositive force of the request. As displayed in Figure 5.4 just 9% of e-mails contained *'promise'*.

- "***I will do whatever correction necessary before submission***"

- "***I will do that asap before she sign the form***"

- "***I will send you the second one***."

Imposition minimizer

The speaker/ writer makes an effort to reduce imposition placed upon the addressee by their request action through using *'imposition minimizer'*. Step 3 (Elaborating on the requests) under Move 3 (Requesting) is the place where *'imposition minimizer'* occurred. This modifier only occurred in 5% of e-mails.

- "I need ***few*** appointment times"

- "The corrections are ***not too much***"

- "I was also wondering if I could borrow the recorder ***for a couple of days***."

Apology

Pan (2012:148) presumes *'apology'* as "supplementary strategies when learners felt the request act was not adequately modified to extend a level of politeness that they expected". She further added that *'apology'* conveys "a sense of humbleness, respect, and deference" towards the recipients (ibid:149). In order to minimize the imposed requests students extend apology along with their requests. Similar to *'Disarmers'*, *'apology'* usually occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) and specifically within step 1 (Apologizing for the imposition). Within the current data only 9% of the e-mails contained *'apology'*. The way students extend their apologies are demonstrated in the following examples.

"***sorry for disturbing u again***"

"***I hope that you accept my apologies***"

"***let me apologize as i feel i disturbed u a lot***"

Orientation Moves

Pan (2010, 2012) describes '*Discourse Orientation Moves*' as opening utterance of the message where they attempt to illustrate the direction of the speech, in order to retrieve the shared background knowledge for both interlocutors. '*Discourse Orientation Moves*' occurred in Move 2 (Orientation) and specifically under step 4 (providing background info before making requests). The results of the study revealed that students used this modifier only in 17% of the e-mails. Some instances of this modifier are exemplified below:

- "***I have a question regarding the transcripts***"

- "***There are some points and questions …***"

- "***I have one more question*** for my registration since I have not defended my proposal …"

- "***another point is that*** I asked …"

Compliment/ sweetener

By using '*compliment/ sweetener*' students would express things in a positive way and even to flatter in an exaggerated way, in order to soften their requests and boost the chance of successful realization of the request. It might even, as discussed by Pan (2012), create solidarity and intimacy with the addressee. '*Compliment/ sweetener*' usually occurred in Move 2 (Orientation) and under step 3 (Sharing Personal Info). '*Compliment/ sweetener*' was among those external modifiers which attracted less attention (6%) in the data. Some examples are provided below:

- "i want u to know ***im very lucky that u accepted me***"

- "***i really enjoy working with u***."

- "Hope you spend ***your precious time*** on reading my proposal."

Optimism

Another category which was added to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework is '*Optimism*'. It minimizes the distance between the writer/speaker and the addressee and it is more towards the idea of sharing common goals (Uptown and Conner, 2001). The use of optimism can be identified through the use of expressions like "look forward to…" and "hope" (e.g. "I hope you feel better") or when the writer/speaker wishes the addressee wellness and happiness (e.g. "Wish a nice weekend for you and your family").

'*Optimism*' (34%) was treated as a popular external modifier by the majority of Iranian students in the study. It merits pointing out that '*Optimism*' either appears at the very beginning of an e-mail, in Move 1 (Opening) and specifically under step 2 (Phatic Relational) or at the end of e-mails but under step 2 (requesting) of move 3 (requesting) . Examples of this kind are presented below:

- "***Hope you and your dear family are quite safe and sound.***"

- "***Hope this email finds you in good health.***"

- "***I hope you've had a nice day so far.***"

- "***Wish a nice weekend for you and your family***"

- "***Looking forwrds to hearning your useful comments soon.***"

- "Thank you very much and ***have a good day ahead.***"

Appreciation statements

'*Appreciation statements*' is another category which was added to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework under external modification. By this modifier the requester expresses thanks and gratitude to the addressee for an act that has been done before. Quraishi (2009) stated that '*Appreciation statements*' can help the writer to attend to the time and trouble of the addressee as they are of great importance in a polite and effective letter (in this case e-mail). '*Appreciation statements*' occurred in move 1 (Opening) and under step 3 (Acknowledging previous e-mails). The analysis of the data indicates that 28% of e-mails contained '*Appreciation statements*'. Here are some of the examples from the corpus:

"***Thanks you for your useful comments***"

"***firstly thank u for ur mail***"

"***Thank you very much for the file.***"

"***I really appreciate your time and consideration***."

"***I really appreciate your invaluable comments***."

"***Thanks for your kind consideration and your overall support.***"

Pre-closings/thanks

All the e-mails collected for the purpose of this research were request e-mails and one might think that showing thanks is a must for the requestor when asking for a request (Pan, 2010). '*Pre-closings/thanks*' always occurred in the last move (Ending) and particularly under step 1 (Closing thanks). After *'E-mail closing'* and *'Salutation'* which were the most predominated external modifications in the data, a strong preference towards '*Pre-closings/thanks*' (51%) has been detected from Iranian students' e-mails. The followings are the examples from the data:

-   "***Thank you very much in advance.***"

-   "***Thanks for your time and consideration.***"

-   "***Thanks a million in advance***"

-   "***Thank you for your kind attention***"

E-mail closing

This external modification always occurred in the last move (Ending) and particularly under step 2 (Closing). As illustrated in Figure 5.4 '*E-mail closing*' (85%) was treated as the most popular external modification in all Iranian students' e-mails. A wide range of '*E-mail closing*' has been reflected in the data. In fact, the closings used by Iranian students were much more varied than salutations. Some instances are shown below:

"All the best", "Best wishes", "Best regards", "My warm regards", and "Sincerely Yours"

Another observation is that the most common closings used by Iranian students were '*Regards*' (16%) and '*Best regards*' (16%). However, 16% of the e-mails did not have any '*closing*'.

Formal Writing:

Following Akkaya (2002), it was thought that considering variables like grammatical, punctuation mistakes, spelling errors and contracted form in students' e-mails would affect the way their supervisors perceive an e-mail as polite or impolite. Quraishi (2009) pointed out that the existence of these kinds of mistakes in a letter makes it less valid and appropriate rather than affect the meaning. Akkaya (2002) presumed that the high amount of these variables in an e-mail indicate that "students were treating e-mail as a casual medium of interaction".

Grammatical mistakes: the analysis of the data revealed that 17% of e-mails contained a grammatical mistake. Some of the examples of grammatical mistakes found in the data are as follows:

- Pls confirm if the **<u>files has landed</u>** safely.

- **<u>Thanks</u>** you for your useful comments

- Please find attached my interview questions and kindly **<u>advice</u>** me on them.

- I also need you to kindly sign the three **<u>months</u>** notice.

Punctuation mistakes: In this study, punctuation mistakes were examined through sentence markers (e.g. periods, question and exclamation marks, commas, semicolons, and colons). 45% of e-mails had at least one punctuation mistake.

- Best wishes **[absent comma]**

- By the way **[absent comma]** did you receive our published letter in the PDF format. **[Wrong punctuation]**

- I wonder if you could give me some time to meet up **[absent period]**

- Thank you so much in advance, **[Wrong punctuation]**

- Hi and good day **[absent of exclamation]**

Spelling errors: All types of misspellings were included in the analysis. Although students in this study were post-graduate students but still there were some instances of spelling errors. 14% of e-mails had at least one spelling error.

- I have attached my chapter 3 and 5 **separately**

- **forwrds** to **hearning** your useful comments soon.

- I have **recieved** the file with corrections before

- i need to send the **refferee** letter for

- Wishing you a **prosperus** stay in

- I'm **doutful** whether we confirmed to meet

Contracted form: it is assumed that '*Contracted form*' usually occur in oral discourse or in less formal written discourse. In this study any kind of '*Contracted form*' (e.g., contracted auxiliaries or model verbs) was considered. The analysis of the data discloses that 39% of e-mails included at least one instance of '*Contracted form*'. Some of the '*Contracted forms*' are exemplified below.

- **Pls** sign the form as of Thursday

- **plz c** the article in the attachment the one

- could **u pls** do this favour

- **I'm** really sorry again as i disturbed **u** and made **u** worried

- **Btw**, any feedback on chapter 4?

Akkaya (2002) asserts that instead of treating e-mail interaction as a formal written discourse, the overuse of '*Contracted form*' in an e-mail would indicate that students treated it as less formal oral discourse.

This section analysed the way Iranian post-graduate students modified their request e-mails to their supervisors with internal and external modification. To sum up, within

internal modifications, *Politeness Marker 'please'*, 'Downtoners', and 'Time intensifier' were found to be the most favoured one among Iranian post-graduate students.

In terms of external modifications 'Salutation' and 'E-mail closing' were the most used modifiers in the data followed by 'Pre-closings/thanks' as the third most used ones . It merits pointing out that Iranian students embellished their requests with a range of internal and external modifications in order to reduce the imposition of the request.

5.3.3 Questionnaire Analysis

In this section, the data obtained from Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire regarding politeness and impoliteness of students' request e-mails will be provided. This questionnaire consists of 20 questions and the first part of it is based on the most preferred external and internal modifications by Iranian post-graduate students. The last section of the supervisors' questionnaire is devoted to the strategies based on level of directness and formal writing. It is worth mentioning that not all the items under internal and external modifications categories and directness level were being asked from supervisors and just those which were more prevalent in Iranian students' e-mails were employed in the questionnaire.

Level of Directness

Within the questionnaire all three 'Directness levels' (direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect) were rated by Malaysian supervisors.

Direct Strategies

Among 7 categories under 'Direct Strategies' only 'Direct questions', 'Imperatives / Mood derivable', 'Expectation statements' which were the most prevalent strategies used by Iranian students were evaluated by Malaysian supervisors.

Direct questions

'Direct questions' is the most used direct strategy in the directness level as 30% of e-mails written by Iranian students contained this strategy. However the analysis of the supervisors' questionnaire revealed that 45% of them considered *'direct questions'* as impolite. This fact might show that Iranian students are not aware of the fact that this type of strategy is not appropriate in the academic context.

Imperatives / Mood derivable

Under directness level, the third most used strategy by Iranian students is *'Imperatives / Mood derivable'.* Although the supervisors as (addressees) have more power but in the corpus 23% of the e-mails found to contain found to contain this strategy. An intriguing result was found from the supervisors' questionnaire in which 85% of the supervisors perceive *'Imperatives / Mood derivable'* as an impolite strategy. Even the use of 'please' as a politeness marker while employing imperative did not minimize the cost imposed on the addressee (supervisors).

Expectation statements

The fourth most used direct strategies are *'Expectation statements'* which occurred in 20% of students' e-mails. Although *'Expectation statements' are* among direct strategies, 60% of the supervisors agreed that *'Expectation statements'* are a polite strategy.

Conventionally Indirect

Among the three levels of directness *'Conventionally Indirect'* strategies (52 %.) were the second most used by Iranian students. It merits pointing out that 90% of supervisors accentuated that they consider this strategy as a polite one. Therefore, this finding proves the fact that Iranian students employ *'Query Preparatory'* to make their imposed request to their supervisors as much polite as possible.

Non- Conventionally indirect (Hints)

Only (16%) of e-mails contained '*Hints*' which is the least utilized strategies among Iranian students. Pan (2010) highlighted that due to the professional and institutional context of the university the use of '*Hints*' would not be suitable. It might be due to the fact that supervisors are in a higher social status and being imposed by words with no reference to the actual request may not be appropriate. However, the results of Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire contrast with what Pan (2010) claims. It is interesting that though Iranian students impose request not very explicitly by means of '*Hints*' and in an indirect way but 55% of the supervisors recognized this strategy as polite.

In overall, 90% of Malaysian supervisors perceived '*Query Preparatory*' as polite which shows that Iranian students accommodate with Malaysian norm of politeness. '*Direct questions*' and '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' which were the most used strategies after '*Query Preparatory*' which are not favoured by Malaysian supervisors as 85% of them considered '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' as impolite and 45% regarded '*Direct questions*' as not polite. Therefore, the results of this study conform with the findings of previous research (Manjit Kaur, 1998; David and Kuang, 1999, 2005; Kuang and Jawakhir, 2010) which states that Malaysians have a tendency towards indirectness rather than directness. It was also revealed that the more indirect the requests are the more polite they are perceived by Malaysian supervisors.

Internal Modifications

Among internal modifications *Politeness Marker 'please', 'Downtoners', 'Time intensifier',* and *'Subjectivisers'* were favoured the most by Iranian students.

Lexical/phrasal downgraders

Politeness marker 'please'

The results of the supervisors' questionnaire also prove that Malaysian supervisors preferred this kind of internal modification as all of them perceive it as a polite strategy with 50% agree and 50% strongly agree.

Consultative devices

Only 19% of the e-mails contain this modifier. Although few e-mails contain this internal modification, all Malaysian supervisors (70% agree and 30% strongly agree) perceived '*consultative devices*' as polite.

Downtoners

'*Downtoners*' (30%) seems to be one of the internal modifications which Iranian students displayed a strong reliance on it. Like the other previous internal modifications, Malaysian supervisors recognized '*Downtoners*' as polite with 85% agreeing and 15% remaining neutral.

Understaters/hedges

Iranian students used '*Understaters/hedges*' in just 23% of e-mails. Interestingly, results of the supervisors' questionnaire suggest that 40% of Malaysian supervisors are neutral about the politeness and impoliteness of '*Understaters/hedges*' and the other 60% perceive it as polite if students use it in a request e-mail.

Subjectivisers

26% of e-mails contained '*Subjectivisers*' and the results of Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire about this modifier was almost the same as '*Understaters/hedges*' where 65% of Malaysian supervisors considered it as polite and 35% as neutral.

Internal modification: Upgraders

Time intensifier

'*Time intensifier*' was the only internal modification in which 15% of the Malaysian supervisors perceive it as impolite. However, the overall results indicate that '*Time intensifier*' is considered polite from Malaysian supervisors' perspective as 75% of them choose polite. The remaining 10% was neutral.

External modifications

Salutation

80% of e-mails included '*Salutation*' which shows a strong preference of Iranian students towards this modifier. The results of the supervisors' questionnaire highly prove that Malaysian supervisors (95%) perceive '*salutation*' (specifically Dear + correct forms of the address) as polite. As Figure 5.4 indicates Iranian students accommodate to Malaysian norms of politeness by using high amount of '*salutation*'.

Greeting/opening

35% of Iranian students' e-mails were started by a '*Greeting*'. 85% of the supervisors declare that if a supervisee uses '*Greeting/opening*' in their requests, they would consider it as polite. 10% of the supervisors disagreed and perceived using '*Greeting/opening*' as impolite.

Grounder

'*Grounder*' (41%) is the third most used supportive move by Iranian students. The data from the supervisors' questionnaire also is in line with this trend since Malaysian supervisors (80%) considered '*Grounder*' as polite in a request e-mail from their students.

Optimism

'*Optimism*' (34%) was treated as a popular external modifier by the majority of Iranian students in the study. According to the results of the supervisors' questionnaire there was an inconsistency among the supervisors' answers regarding '*Optimism*'. 60% of them considered using '*Optimism*' as polite while 10% regarded it as impolite. The rest of the supervisors (30%) went for neutral.

Appreciation statements

The analysis of the data indicates that 28% of e-mails contained '*Appreciation statements*'. Malaysian supervisors had a positive propensity towards '*Appreciation statements*' as all of them comprehend this external modification as polite.

Pre-closings/thanks

A strong preference towards '*Pre-closings/thanks*' (51%) has been detected from Iranian students' e-mails. It is worth mentioning that up to 90% of supervisors accentuated that they perceive '*Pre-closings/thanks*' as polite and as it is displayed in Figure 5.4 this external modification is used in 51% of Iranian students' e-mails which shows that they accommodate well with Malaysian norms of politeness very well.

E-mail closing

'*E-mail closing*' (85%) was treated as the most popular external modification in all Iranian students' e-mails. Unlike '*Salutation*' and 'Greetings', only 65% of the Malaysian supervisors agreed that '*closing*' is polite and 35% of them considered it as neutral. It seems that Malaysian supervisors are more willing to see '*Salutation*' and '*Greetings*' in a request e-mails from their students rather than '*closing*'.

The attitude of Malaysian supervisors towards occurrence of '*grammatical*', '*punctuation mistakes*' and '*spelling errors*' was fascinating since 65% of them

disagreed that these variables are impolite. However, still 15% of the supervisors did not recognize the use of these variables as polite.

The analysis of the data discloses that 39% of e-mails included at least one instance of 'Contracted form'. Interestingly, the analysis of Malaysian supervisors' questionnaire revealed that there was not a unity among their ideas regarding to what extent they perceive 'Contracted form' as polite or impolite. 30% of them announced that they would consider 'Contracted form' as impolite while 35% disagree. The rest (35%) did not really care whether it is polite or impolite.

In overall, among these three modifiers, *Politeness Marker 'please'* most pleased Malaysian supervisors, as all of them perceived use of it as polite. Interestingly, 15% of Malaysian supervisors considered use of '*Time intensifier*' as impolite though. The analysis of the questionnaire indicates that although all the Malaysian supervisors perceived '*Consultative devices*' as polite just 19% of e-mails contained this modifier.

Malaysian supervisors (95%) perceived '*Salutation*' as polite, whereas in '*E-mail closing*' 65% of Malaysian supervisors considered it as polite. However, 35% of them were neutral pertaining to '*E-mail closing*'. Another finding is that 90% of Malaysian supervisors perceived use of '*Pre-closings/thanks*' as polite in a request e-mail.

The distribution of the answers in the questionnaire is presented in Appendix H. The politeness/impoliteness analysis of this study was verified by a specialist informant who is a Ph.D. holder, graduated from University of Malaya and is an expert in the field of politeness/impoliteness. The last chapter provides a summary of the findings, limitations of the study, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1   Introduction

This final chapter of the study presents the discussion of the findings which is preceded by objectives and followed by the implications of the study as well as direction for future research.

The increasing concern over how to communicate without friction, has led the study of linguistic politeness to be applied in the real world to have a smooth interaction. A substantial amount of attention has been paid to politeness and impoliteness within varieties of languages and cultures through empirical studies and theoretical models, however academic e-mails have yet to receive the proper attention. Pan (2012) asserts that whatever strategy students use to compose an e-mail would shape their identities. This idea is also proved by Chen (2006) as she urged students to learn how to employ appropriate discourse forms and linguistic strategies to construct their desirable identities.

The present study was conducted to examine how Iranian post-graduate students make requests in an e-mail communication with their Malaysian supervisors. Hoermann (2013) claims that in order to help students comprehend the concept of power and distance in supervisee-supervisor communication, it would be helpful if we think about e-mail communication from the genre theory perspective. He further adds that a student who embodies generic conventions of the e-mail genre when writing to professors [supervisors] will be viewed as a "competent communicator". As such, the first objective of the study was to disclose the dominant moves and steps that organized messages in the majority of the students' requests e-mailsdata. Secondly, level of

directness of these requests within these moves were analysed to see whether they are direct or indirect. In the third phase, how students modified their requests within these moves by use of internal and external modification was investigated. Finally, this research tried to find out how polite or impolite Malaysian supervisors perceive these requests as they receive them from Iranian post-graduate students. The following isthe discussion of the findings based on each research question proposed.

6.2   Discussion

Research Question 1: What moves are used by Iranian post-graduate students in their request e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

The data in the current study manifested all 14 types of generic elements presented by Baugh (2011). The result of the study is in line with Baugh (2011) in which '*Addressing*' (98%), '*Closing*' (85%), and '*Sign Off*' (78%) were the most used moves in the data. '*Closing Thanks*' (51%) and '*Providing background info before making requests*' (50%) were the two other prevalent moves. Baugh (2011) elaborated that the high occurrence of '*Providing background info before making requests*' could be due to the fact that it "allows the student to increase the efficiency of the e-mail by providing a fuller picture of the request." She further added that the amount of information provided by this move can "hamper the clarity and succinctness of the request".

In contrast with Baugh's (2011) study, '*Phatic relational*' (33%) had a very high presence in the data. This finding is in line with Bloch's (2002) and Biesenbach-Lucas's (2005) studies as they found that NNSs' e-mail interaction with faculty is full of '*Phatic relational*'.

As it was indicated in Chapter four, six following moves were found to be obligatory as they were present in all data with the most frequency. Baugh (2011) had found the same order of moves except '*Closing Thanks*' which were very prevalent in the current study.

1. *Addressing*

2. *Providing background info before making requests*

3. *Requesting*

4. *Closing Thanks*

5. *Closing*

6. *Sign Off*

However, this study suggests that in supervisees' request e-mails these moves can be merged and stand on 4 main moves (Opening, Orientation, Requesting, Ending) within which has some obligatory and optional steps (See Chapter 4, Table 4.1).

This research explored the way Iranian post-graduate students organize their request e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors through the lens of Genre Analysis. Kerkeb (2013) highlighted that a move based analysis is advantageous for novice writers of a specific genre (for example, request e-mails) and added that along with general writing skills, additional specific strategies are necessary in writing for particular purposes.

Research Question 2: What level of directness do Iranian post-graduate students use within the moves of in their requests e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

The results of the study indicate that that Iranian students, as non-native speakers, used more direct strategies in their status-unequal requests to their supervisors which is in line with Chang and Hsu's (1998) and Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) findings where

students followed the same trends when writing e-mails to their professors. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) claimed that majority of the request e-mails in her study were phrased using a direct strategy and more specifically, a direct question. Similar to the current study, Felix-Brasdefer (2012) found a great preference for '*direct questions*' when writing a request to a professor which he considered it as appropriate especially in asking for verification.

Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) have found that speakers of English, French, Hebrew, and Spanish resorted to conventional indirectness. In a similar study, Biesenbach-Locus (2007) focusing on academic requests in authentic e-mails, indicates that non-native speakers (with Asian background) have resorted to direct strategies less than NS students. Therefore, as opposed to Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) and Biesenbach-Locus (2007), it seems that Iranian students (as non-native speakers) try to make requests with the use of direct strategies which is in the same way as native speakers do.

Moreover, the results of the study resonate with previous studies (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995; Woodfield 2008; and Hendriks, 2010; and Pan 2012) in which *'Query Preparatory'* has been recognized as the most striking strategies preferred by non-native English speakers (in this case Iranian Students).

In another study, Félix-Brasdefer (2012) accentuates that the predominated direct requests prevalent in his study were not indicative of lack of politeness and perceived to be appropriate in the institutional context he collected his data. In fact, he emphasizes that in an institutional context like a university students are eligible to ask for information and feedback and in return their supervisors are committed to respond to that request. However, the findings of the current study contradict with Félix-Brasdefer (2012) as Malaysian supervisors perceived direct requests as impolite.

Pan (2010) based on her study claims that students tend to be indirect regardless of their cultural background. In her study NS students preferred to employ more direct strategies than non-native speakers' students. The findings of the current study seem do not resonate with Pan's (2010) study since direct strategies have been recognized as the most pronounced strategies used by Iranian students. In contrast to Pan's (2010) findings, Iranian students have the propensity to use more direct strategy (71%) rather than indirect strategy (52%).

As it was described in Chapter four, among eight direct strategies, '*Direct questions*' (30%) were particularly more common among Iranian post-graduate students. This result is in line with Economidou- Kogetsidis's (2011) and Felix-Brasdefer's (2012) findings where they found a preference for direct requests, specifically through '*Imperatives*'.

As the results demonstrate, '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*', is the third most used strategy by Iranian students. This is in line with Ogiermann's (2009) result where it was demonstrated that imperatives were common among NNSs. The most typical imperative structure employed by students was 'please + imperative' which is similar to the result of Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) study.

Moreover, the results show that only 9% of e-mails included '*Want Statements*' which is in contrast with Chang and Hsu's (1998) findings where they found that Chinese learners (as NNSs) have a tendency to use more '*Want Statements*' in their e-mails. Similar to the current study, they explored academic request in e-mail messages. However, the underuse of '*Want Statements*' in the current study is in line with the result of Pan's (2012) study where she found the same preference.

It is worth mentioning that all these directness level strategies occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) which highlights the importance of this move in students' request e-mails.

Research Question 3: What internal and external modifications are used by Iranian post-graduate students within the moves of request e-mails to their Malaysian supervisors?

The overall findings of the current study demonstrate that Iranian students incline to employ external modification which shows that they are aware of the fact that while writing to a person with higher power and status an e-mail request should be modified by external modification.

A more strong reliance on external modification, comparing to internal modification, has been found in the data. The same trend has been noticed in other studies (e.g. Biesenbach, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Pan, 2012; Lazarescu, 2013). Lazarescu (2013) referred the high presence of internal and external modification to a desirable degree of indirectness in an unequal status communication such as [supervisors-supervisees] one.

89% of the request e-mails contain internal modification which is in line with Lazarescu's (2013) study where their NNSs displayed a strong reliance on the use of internal modification. However, this finding is different from previous research, which found that NNSs tend to underuse internal modification (Biesenbach, 2007; Hendriks 2008; Woodfield 2008; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009, 2011). Lazarescu's (2013) referred this high reliance on the use of internal modification to the pragmatic awareness of the students since they acknowledge a higher degree of imposition in the requests to their supervisors who are in a higher position at university.

Similar to previous studies (e.g. Hendrik, 2008; Woodfield, 2008; Pan, 2010, Felix-Brasdefer, 2012) where learners of English had a preference for using politeness markers, Iranian students show the same trend. Like Lazarescu's (2013) study *Politeness marker 'please'* was found to be the most frequent internal modification (40%) among Iranian students. This is the same with German learners of English in

House and Kasper's (1989) study where they showed strong preference towards Politeness marker 'please' due to impact of their L1.

Another significant finding which is in line with Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) and Lazarescu's (2013) studies, is that this politeness marker is always followed by an imperative (please + imperative). However, Felix-Brasdefer (2012) highlighted that even if an imperative sentence is modified with 'please' it is still considered as an inappropriate native-like construction in an academic context.

In contrast with Felix-Brasdefer's (2012) study where he found '*Understaters/hedges*' as a predominant internal modifier, the results of the current study show that students use '*Understaters/hedges*' in just 23% of e-mails.

'*Appealers*' and '*Cajolers*' were unmarked modifiers on account of zero occurrence or very low frequency in the data. '*Cajolers*' were thoroughly missing in the current study and none of the participants in the study used them. The same findings have been found in Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2008, 2011) and Pan's (2010, 2012) studies. '*Appealers*' and '*Cajolers*' are considered as important interpersonal markers (Trosborg, 1995) which are more prevalent in conversational situation rather than written context like e-mails.

Analysing the data indicates that all the e-mails have at least one external modification which Lazarescu (2013) perceives it as a tendency towards indirectness. However, Pan (2012) ascribed learner's use of external modification to their lack of confidence which might be on account of their linguistic proficiency or their role as an international student.

Similar to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) and contrary to Lazarescu's (2013) findings just few (8%) aggravators were found in the data which might have a negative impact on the addressee.

Similar to directness level strategies, internal modifications also mostly occurred in Move 3 (Requesting) which once again emphasizes the importance of this move in students' request e-mails.

Regarding external modification, '*E-mail closing*' (85%) was the most popular modifer in all Iranian students' e-mails. This finding contrasts with Waldvogel's (2007) study where she found that '*E-mail closing*' and '*salutation*' were used infrequently in e-mails in educational organisation.

The findings of the research suggest that '*Salutation*' had an overall representation of over 80% while '*closings*' were even more frequent, appearing in 85% of all e-mails. This finding revealed that Iranian students have the propensity to compose polite and appropriate messages since Bunz and Campbell (2002:10) presumed that '*Salutation*' and '*Closings*' are politeness cues since they are able to "convey an increased level of respect and formality". Therefore those e-mails that lack these kinds of structural elements are perceived to be abrupt.

As opposed to the previous studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain. 1986; Faerch and Kasper, 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Pan 2010, 2012 and Felix-Brasdefer, 2007, 2012) which found *'Grounder'* as the most used external modifier in the data, here in this study *'Grounder'* (41%) is the third most used supportive moves by Iranian students. The present study corresponded with the findings in Trosborg (1995), Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003), and Pan (2012) with regard to *'imposition minimizer'* use as they found few stances of this modifier in their studies as well.

The analysis of the data revealed that most of the external modifications occurred within Move 1 (Opening) and Move 3 (Requesting) which declare that Iranian students tried to pave their ways for their requests through Move 1 (Opening) and consequently minimizing its force by using external modification in the main move which is Move 3 (Requesting).

The results of the study revealed that Iranian post-graduate students have more tendency towards using External modifications rather than internal modifications. Hendriks (2010) highlighted that underuse of request modification might affect the perception of the addressees as they regard the sender as less agreeable. Félix-Brasdefer (2012) also accentuates that an absence or infrequent use of internal and external modifications in request e-mails may result in an abrupt request in an academic context like university.

Research Question 4: How polite or impolite do Malaysian supervisors perceive these requests?

This study is in line with Eelen's (2001) and Kádár's (2011) studies in which they argue that when politeness is under investigation in a context, not only examining how speakers apply linguistic politeness is important but also the way hearers interpret them should be taken into account. The current study was intended to find out the perception and assumption that Malaysian supervisors hold with regard to politeness practice using data from natural students' e-mails and questionnaire. This kind of analysis as stressed by Kádár (2011) is a "reflection on the cultural values and beliefs that people have regarding politeness norms".

Within three levels of directness '*Direct strategies*' (71%) found to be the most used one by Iranian students which are not their supervisors' favour as most of them considered '*Direct strategies*', particularly '*Direct questions*' and '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*' as impolite. It can be deducted that Iranian students should be more cautious towards using '*Direct questions*' and '*Imperatives / Mood derivable*'.

However, within substrategies of these three levels 'Query Preparatory' was the most prevalent one (52%) which 90% of supervisors perceived it as polite. The findings of this study highlight the fact that Malaysian supervisors have a propensity towards indirectness as they perceive as more polite.

'*Consultative devices*' and Politeness Marker '*please*' were the two internal modifications which all the supervisors perceived them as polite. '*Salutation*', '*Grounder*', and '*Appreciation statements*' were among the most polite external modifications from Malaysian supervisors' perspective. The results also indicate that Malaysian supervisors mostly regard the presence of internal and external modifications in an e-mail as polite.

In overall students made use of internal and external modification but if they apply more of these modifiers it would make their request more appropriate. It can be concluded that although Iranian post-graduate students may try to write polite messages to their Malaysian supervisors, they may still "run the risk of producing requests likely to violate social appropriateness in the target language [and culture] " (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009:104). Therefore, students must be aware of the strategies which would help them to master appropriate e-mail writing.

6.3   Implications of the Study

This research contributes to the growing body of research on Genre analysis and Politeness/impoliteness research. The findings drawn from this study raise awareness of the obstacles that non-native speakers might face in getting the knowledge about composing a polite request e-mail (Pan, 2010).

The genre analysis of students' e-mail in this research may serve as a tool to analyse the use of English in supervisee-supervisor e-mail communication and its results might be used in linguistic and pedagogical problems for foreign students whom English is not their first language. Kerkeb (2013) accentuates that generic knowledge allows students to comprehend the "functioning of the English language in complex world of 'institutionalised' communication". Moreover, it helps students to pay attention to the

situation, purpose, and the context cultural differences as they writing a particular text (for instance request e-mail)

Studies on pedagogical intervention have repetitively highlighted the merit of instruction to learners (especially NNS students) in various domains of pragmatics and intercultural communication. Along with other studies (Koike and Pearson 2005; Rose 2005; Félix-Brasdefer 2008, 2012), the current study puts emphasises on the need for raising learners' awareness towards use of internal and external modification as well as appropriate level of directness within the moves while composing request in their e-mails to their supervisors. However, this kind of instruction may not be plausible unless language teachers and educators be aware of this gap in order to help students to make more appropriate and polite e-mails based on the pragmatics of the target language (Krulatz, 2012).

Hoermann (2013) presumed that students may have no prior instruction and called for formal instruction for students, in order to receive the necessary guidance they might need to be prepared for e-communication exchanges with the addressees (in this case supervisors) who are from different cultures and expectation.

Following Najeeb et al. (2012), this study proposes universities to offer e-mail writing classes or workshops for students, (especially for NNS students) before starting their studies. By this type of preparation students will get the necessary knowledge and skills to write more appropriate e-mails to their lecturers or supervisors. In this way they might be familiar with the norms of the politeness in the new culture.

6.4   Suggestions for Further Research

Below are some ideas for future investigation of e-mail communication between students and their supervisors.

First, as all e-mails are from supervisees to their supervisors in a higher level education in a university context, it is perceived that the relationship between them should be strictly academic. However, supervisees are in a long course of interaction with their supervisors while writing their dissertations. Thus, it should be highlighted that the level of familiarity and consequently distance between them might be subject to change during the negotiation of the e-mail exchanges (Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). In this case a longitudinal study would be able to explore to what extent familiarity and distance between students and their supervisors can be altered within a longer period.

Second, a new study could undertake a comparative analysis of different students with different nationalities and cultures as this study just focuses on Iranian students.

Third, as it was highlighted in Chapter one, university professors have been criticizing students, specifically from disciplines like sciences and engineering on account of lack of e-mail communication proficiency (Hoermann, 2013). Perhaps it would be interesting if the same research is done in other faculties to see the differences and shortcomings.

Moreover, it is worth saying that a larger corpus definitely strengthens the results and can be addressed in further research. This type of research can also be done by considering gender which would allow for broader generalisations regarding how female and male would be different while composing request e-mails.

Finally, Hoermann (2013) claims that sender's less tendency towards formal writing might be due to use of a smaller compact device, like an iPhone as it might affect how quick one can write an e-mail. It would be interesting to see if this variable can affect the way students compose e-mails as it influences the politeness and impoliteness aspect of the e-mail.

6.5   Conclusion

This chapter elaborated the findings of the study based on the four proposed research questions. The implication of the study and suggestions for further research were also highlighted in this section. It is hoped that findings of this study and those of future research would effectively contribute towards a better supervisor-supervisee communication.

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SUPPLEMENTARY

PUBLICATION

Hallajian, A. and David, M. K. (Forthcoming) "Hello and good day to you dear dr..." Greetings and Closings in Supervisors- Supervisees Email Exchanges. International Conference on Knowledge-Innovation-Excellence: Synergy in Language Research and Practice (SoLLs.INTEC.13), Kuala Lumpur, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, July 2-3, 2013 (Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

Hallajian, A. and David, M. K. 2013. Gender and Im/politeness in Computer Mediated Communication. Forthcoming paper at 3rd International Conference, Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice (ALAPP 2013): Collaborating across Disciplinary and Professional Boundaries, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, December 12-14.

Hallajian, A. and David, M. K. 2013. Focusing on the Professional Relationship between Supervisees and Supervisors- an Analysis of Requests. Forthcoming paper at the 17th English in Southeast Asia Conference (ESEA 2013), Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, December 5-7.

Hallajian, A. and Attar, M. M. 2013. Politeness/impoliteness in email: A study of Iranian Students' email requests to Malaysian Supervisors. Paper presented at the 4th FLL International Postgraduate Conference: Expanding Research in Languages and Linguistics in Asia, Kuala Lumpur, University of Malaya, April 11-12.

Hallajian, A. and David, M. K. 2013. "Hello and good day to you dear dr..." Greetings and Closings in Supervisors- Supervisees Email Exchanges. Paper presented at International Conference on Knowledge-Innovation-Excellence: Synergy in Language Research and Practice (SoLLs.INTEC.13), Kuala Lumpur, University Kebangsaan Malaysia, July 2-3

APPENDIX A

First Pilot Study

This questionnaire consists of 21 questions regarding Supervisors' perception towards students' email where they are making request. It would be appreciated if you rate each question on a 5-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Your completion of this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

	Strongly Disagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neither (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
1. If a supervisee does not use the **address form** (e.g. "Prof. + Dr + F.N") properly, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. If a supervisee does not initiate an email with a **Greetings/ opening** (e.g. "hello", "Hi, How are you?", "Good Night professor F.N"), I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. If a supervisee does not use **Pre-closing/ Thanks** (e.g. "Thank you very much in advance", "Thanks for your kind cooperation") before they end their email, I would consider that email as impolite	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. If a supervisee does not end an email with a **closing** (e.g. "All the best", "Best wishes"), I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. If a supervisee initially asks for a request and then provides **reasons, explanations or justifications** for their request, I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. If a supervisee initially provides **reasons, explanations or justifications** and then asks for a request, I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. If a supervisee does not use **appreciation statements** (e.g. "Thanks you for your useful comments"), in an email, I would consider that email as more impolite than others.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. If a supervisee puts emphasis on the urgency of the supervisor responding to the request by using **Time Intensifiers** (e.g. "soon", "as soon as today or tomorrow") in an email, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. If a supervisee **complains or criticises** me as their supervisor in an email, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. If a supervisee has **grammatical, punctuation mistakes and spelling errors** in their emails, I would consider such emails as impolite	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. If a supervisee uses **contracted form** (e.g. "ur idea", "Could u Pls") in their emails, I would consider such emails as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. If a supervisee uses **compliment/ Sweetener statements** (e.g. "hope u r in good health" "i want u to know I m very lucky that u accepted me") in an email, I would consider that email as more **polite** than others.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If a supervisee uses any of the following modifications in their requests, I would consider that email as *__polite__*.					
13. **Politeness Marker** 'please'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
14. **Downtoners** (e.g. 'possibly', 'perhaps', 'just', 'rather', 'maybe', 'by any chance', 'at all')	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
15. **Subjectivisers** (e.g. 'I'm afraid', 'I wonder', 'I think/suppose)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
16. **Understaters/hedges** (e.g. 'a bit', 'a little', 'sort of', 'a kind of')	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

17. I think requests which use **Expectation statements**[*] are impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
18. I think requests which use **Direct questions**[*] are impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
19. I think requests which use **Query Preparatory**[*] are impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
20. I think requests which use **Hints**[*] are impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
21. I think requests which use **Imperatives**[*] are impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Expectation statements (e.g. "I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish typing my work." "i hope i can work with u again")

Direct questions (e.g. "When do you have time?" "did you receive our published letter in the PDF format", "when can I see you")

Query Preparatory (e.g. **"**Would you mind to take a look and give me some suggestion?" "would you mind helping me to get this book?")

Hints (e.g. "Attached is my proposal", "I have sent you my chapter 3 in this email attachment.")

Imperatives (e.g. 'Sign the form as of Thursday', 'Specify the page number for…')

APPENDIX B

Second pilot study

This questionnaire consists of 22 questions regarding Supervisors' perception towards students' email where they are making request. It would be appreciated if you rate each question on a 5-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Your completion of this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

	Strongly isagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neither (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
1. If a supervisee does not use the **address form** (e.g. "Prof. + Dr + F.N") properly, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. If a supervisee does not initiate an email with a **Greetings/ opening** (e.g. "hello", "Hi, How are you?", "Good Night professor F.N"), I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. If a supervisee does not use **Pre-closing/ Thanks** (e.g. "Thank you very much in advance", "Thanks for your kind cooperation") before they end their email, I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. If a supervisee does not end an email with a **closing** (e.g. "All the best", "Best wishes"), I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. If a supervisee **initially asks for a request** and **then provides reasons, explanations or justifications** for their request, I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. If a supervisee initially provides **reasons, explanations or justifications** and **then asks for a request**, I would consider that email as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. If a supervisee does not use **appreciation statements** (e.g. "Thanks you for your useful comments"), in an email, I would consider that email as more impolite than others.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. If a supervisee puts emphasis on the urgency of the supervisor responding to the request by using **Time Intensifiers** (e.g. "soon", "as soon as today or tomorrow") in an email, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. If a supervisee **complains or criticises** me as their supervisor in an email, I would consider it as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. If a supervisee has **grammatical, punctuation mistakes and spelling errors** in their emails, I would consider such emails as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. If a supervisee uses **contracted form** (e.g. "ur idea", "Could u Pls") in their emails, I would consider such emails as impolite.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. If a supervisee uses **Optimism** (e.g. "hope u r in good health", "Looking forward to hearing from you") in an email, I would consider that email as more ***polite*** than others.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If a supervisee uses any of the following modifications in their requests, I would consider that email as ***polite***.					
13. **Politeness Marker** 'please'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
14. **Downtoners** (e.g. 'possibly', 'perhaps', 'just', 'rather', 'maybe', 'by any chance', 'at all')	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

15. **Subjectivisers** (e.g. 'I'm afraid', 'I wonder', 'I think/suppose')	○	○	○	○	○
16. **Consultative devices** (e.g. "is it ok if I discard ...", "Do you think that")	○	○	○	○	○
17. **Understaters/hedges** (e.g. 'a bit', 'a little', 'sort of', 'a kind of')	○	○	○	○	○

I think requests which use the following structures, I would consider that request as **<u>impolite.</u>**

18. **Expectation statements** (e.g. "I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish typing my work.", "i hope i can work with u again")	○	○	○	○	○
19. **Direct questions** (e.g. "When do you have time?", "did you receive our published letter in the PDF format", "when can I see you")	○	○	○	○	○
20. **Query Preparatory** (e.g. "Would you mind to take a look and give me some suggestion?", "would you mind helping me to get this book?")	○	○	○	○	○
21. **Hints** (e.g. "Attached is my proposal", "I have sent you my chapter 3 in this email attachment.")	○	○	○	○	○
22. **Imperatives** (e.g. "Sign the form as of Thursday", "Specify the page number for…")	○	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX C

Final Supervisors' Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 20 questions regarding Supervisors' perception towards students' email where they are making request. It would be appreciated if you rate each question on a 5-point scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). Your completion of this questionnaire is highly appreciated.

	Strongly Disagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neither (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
If a supervisee uses any of the following external modifications in their requests, I would consider it as *polite*.					
1. **Salutation (Dear + Correct forms of address)** (e.g. "Dear Prof. + Dr + F.N", "Dear Dr. F.N")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
2. **Greetings/ opening** (e.g. "hello", "Hi, How are you?", "Good Night professor F.N")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. **Pre-closing/ Thanks** (e.g. "Thank you very much in advance", "Thanks for your kind cooperation", "Thanks for your time and consideration.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. **Closing** (e.g. "All the best", "Best wishes")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. **Optimism** (e.g. "hope u r in good health", "Looking forward to hearing from you", "Hope this email finds you in good health.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. **Appreciation statements** (e.g. "Thanks you for your useful comments", "Thank you for your informative guidelines.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. **Grounder** (e.g. "I am confused regarding the way I should write the literature review.", "I have some difficulties in analyzing my data.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If a supervisee uses any of the following internal modifications in their requests, I would consider it as *polite*.					
8. **Politeness Marker 'please'**	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. **Consultative devices** (e.g. "is it ok if I discard ...", "Do you think that")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. **Downtoners** (e.g. 'possibly', 'perhaps', 'just', 'rather', 'maybe', 'by any chance', 'at all')	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
11. **Understaters/hedges** (e.g. 'a bit', 'a little', 'sort of', 'a kind of')	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
12. **Subjectivisers** (e.g. 'I'm afraid', 'I wonder', 'I think/suppose)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
13. **Time Intensifiers** (e.g. " Please kindly let me meet you for the signature *as soon as today* or *tomorrow*" Just wanted to check if can have another appointment time with you *anytime soon*)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
If a supervisee uses any of the following structures in their requests, I would consider that request as *polite*					

14. **Imperatives** (e.g. "Sign the form as of Thursday", "Specify the page number for…")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
15. **Expectation statements** (e.g. "I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish typing my work.", "Hope you spend your precious time on reading my proposal.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
16. **Direct questions** (e.g. "When do you have time?", "did you receive our published letter in the PDF format", "when can I see you")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
17. **Query Preparatory** (e.g. "Would you mind to take a look and give me some suggestion?", "would you mind helping me to get this book?")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
18. **Hints** (e.g. "Attached is my proposal", "I have sent you my chapter 3 in this email attachment.")	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
19. If a supervisee has **grammatical, punctuation mistakes and spelling errors** in their emails, I would consider such emails as *__impolite__*.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
20. If a supervisee uses **contracted form** (e.g. "ur idea", "Could u Pls") in their emails, I would consider such emails as *__impolite__*.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

APPENDIX D

Letter of Permission to Participants

Ali Hallajian   Date:

Master student

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics,

University of Malaya

Ref: Permission to use e-mail

Dear (name of participants),

My name is Ali Hallajian and I am currently doing my Master at Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya. I am currently conducting a research on the perception of the supervisors towards their students' e-mails. Hereby, I am writing to ask your permission to use your e-mails that you have sent to your supervisors before. With your permission, I would appreciate being able to use your e-mails to gather data for my study. I would like to assure you that no personal information would be revealed and your name will be anonymous.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to a favourable response. If this request meets with your approval, please sign, date and send it via email to me. Thank you for your help and prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Ali Hallajian

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

_____   Date _____

(Addressee's name)

APPENDIX E

Guideline Letter to Participants

Dear Students' name,

Hi. My name is Ali Hallajian. I am currently doing my Master (MESL) at University of Malaya. In my thesis, I am investigating students' e-mails to their supervisors. So I would appreciate if you could send me your e-mails that you have sent to your supervisors previously (Just your supervisors not your previous lecturers). You do not have to send your supervisor's emails to me. I would like to ensure you that your name will be removed from the data and the content of the emails will be kept confidentially. Please kindly send me your up to 10 e-mails. You may follow the following guidelines for your convenience:

You may just send your emails that you sent to your supervisors (not your supervisor's email)

You can copy all the emails in one Microsoft Word file or you may send them one by one to me. (Please Do Not remove the openings (e.g. Dear Dr,…) and closings (Best regards, …) of the emails.)

Please kindly send me up to 10 emails.

Here is my email ali.hallajian@yahoo.com or ali.hallajian@siswa.um.edu.my. Thanks in advance for your kind help. Wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely,

Ali Hallajian

APPENDIX F

E-mail to Supervisors

Request for having an appointment

Dear Supervisors' Name,

I am Ali Hallajian. I am a Master student in our faculty under supervision of Prof. First Name + Last Name. I am conducting a research regarding supervisors' perception towards students' email where they are making request. I was wondering whether I can have an appointment with you in order to have your perception as one of the supervisors in our faculty. The questionnaire will just take 5 to10 mins of your time. I am looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Ali

APPENDIX G

Supervisors' Letter of Consent

Dear respected supervisor,

My name is Ali Hallajian (TGB090048). I am doing my Master under supervision of Prof. First Name + Last Name in Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at University of Malaya. I am doing a research on supervisor-supervisee e-mail communication to see how supervisors perceive supervisees' email as polite or impolite. For the purpose of this research a questionnaire has been designed and cordially I would like to ask you to participate in my research. I would like to assure you that your identity as a participant will remain confidential, and your name will never be publicly associated with the data you provide in the questionnaire of my study. Individual participants will not be identified and all emails will be anonymized with supervisors given a generic code (Sv1, Sv2, etc.). If this request meets with your approval and you would like to participate in this study, please sign and date.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation or about my study, please feel free to contact me at (0176800149, ali.hallajian@yahoo.com),

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Ali Hallajian

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

_____   Date _____
(Supervisor's name)

APPENDIX H

Results of Supervisors' Questionnaire

	Strongly Disagree (5)	Disagree (4)	Neither (3)	Agree (2)	Strongly Agree (1)
If a supervisee uses any of the following external modifications in their requests, I would consider it as *polite*.					
1. **Salutation (Dear + Correct forms of address)**			5% (N=1)	45% (N=9)	50% (N=10)
2. **Greetings/ opening**		10% (N=2)	5% (N=1)	45% (N=9)	40% (N=8)
3. **Pre-closing/ Thanks**			10% (N=2)	35% (N=7)	55% (N=11)
4. **Closing**			35% (N=7)	45% (N=9)	20% (N=4)
5. **Optimism**		10% (N=2)	30% (N=6)	35% (N=7)	25% (N=5)
6. **Appreciation statements**				60% (N=12)	40% (N=8)
7. **Grounder**			20% (N=4)	60% (N=12)	20% (N=4)
If a supervisee uses any of the following internal modifications in their requests, I would consider it as *polite*.					
8. **Politeness Marker 'please'**				50% (N=10)	50% (N=10)
9. **Consultative devices**				70% (N=14)	30% (N=6)

10. **Downtoners**			15% (N=3)	60% (N=12)	25% (N=5)
11. **Understaters/hedges**			40% (N=8)	50% (N=10)	10% (N=2)
12. **Subjectivisers**			35% (N=7)	55% (N=11)	10% (N=2)
13. **Time Intensifiers**	5% (N=1)	10% (N=2)	10% (N=2)	65% (N=13)	10% (N=2)

If a supervisee uses any of the following structures in their requests, I would consider that request as *__polite__*.

14. **Imperatives**	45% (N=9)	40% (N=8)	10% (N=2)	5% (N=1)	
15. **Expectation statements**		10% (N=2)	30% (N=6)	60% (N=12)	
16. **Direct questions**	10% (N=2)	35% (N=7)	25% (N=5)	30% (N=6)	
17. **Query Preparatory**		10% (N=2)		75% (N=15)	15% (N=3)
18. **Hints**		10% (N=2)	35% (N=7)	55% (N=11)	
19. If a supervisee has **grammatical, punctuation mistakes and spelling errors** in their emails, I would consider such emails as *__impolite__*.	20% (N=4)	45% (N=9)	20% (N=4)	10% (N=2)	5% (N=1)
20. If a supervisee uses **contracted form** (e.g. "ur idea", "Could u Pls") in their emails, I would consider such emails as *__impolite__*.		35% (N=7)	35% (N=7)	20% (N=4)	10% (N=2)

APPENDIX I

Samples of Students' E-mail

Hi Dr. F.N

i managed to log in with the password you gave me. Thank you very much. If possible , Pls sign the form as of Thursday. I am here on a tour package and cannot stay more than one week. Really apologize for any convenience caused by my request.

Best wishes

F.N

Dear Dr. F.N,

 I have had no news from you lately and hope you are keeping well.I think I need tow more months to finish writing my thesis.I wonder what the necessary paperwork is.

All the best

My warm regards,

F.N

Dear Prof. Dr. F.N,

 Attached is my proposal. I will sms you to get an appointment tomorrow morning.

 Thank you very much for everything.

 Sincerely Yours,

Dear Prof. Dr. F.N,

 Thank you very much for the file. I am confused regarding the way I should write the literature review.

Would you please give me an example of how should it be written.

 Thank you for everything.

 Sincerely Yours,

Dear Dr

I just want you remind you are signing my notice for submission. In case I fail to submit three months before January I will have to pay the next semester's fee. Moreover, I have some difficulties in analyzing my data. I wonder if you could give me some time to meet up

Thanks for your kind cooperation

Dear Dr.

I made the necessary changes to my proposal. Please find attached the new proposal.

Regards

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope this finds you well.I was wondering if you could find time to have a look at my chapter two.Moreover,I wish to get an appointment time to discuss some issues on my chapter three.

Thank you very much

Warmest regards,

F.N

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope this finds you well.The attachment is my chapter 4 and 5.I made the changes that you asked me.Can you please go through it and let me know if I can submit now?

Thank you.

Warmest regards,

F.N

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope this finds you well.Just wanted to check if you have time tomorrow or sometime soon to check my corrections.The corrections are not too much and I hope it wont take so much of your time :)

Hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest regards,

Nick Name

Dear Prof. F.N,

The office asked me to fill a checklist which shows which of the examiner's corrections I have applied and which I haven't and it needs your signature too.Just wanted to check if can have another appointment time with you anytime soon to get your signature or would it be too much if I aske you to scan and send the paper once I sent it to you?

please let me know which one is more convenient for you.

Thank you.

Warmest regards,

F.N

Dear Prof.Dr. F.N + L.N,

Please find attached my interview questions and kindly advice me on them.

Warm regards,

F.N

Dear Prof. F.N,

Hi, I hope you've had a nice day so far.

I was just wondering if you have received my paper for gemaonline. I am waiting for

your comments to submit it as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance

Salam,

F.N

Dear Prof. F.N,

I hope you have a nice weekend so far. I was wondering if we can meet on Tuesday to discuss about my work. I also need you to kindly sign the three months notice. I am confident enough to commit to the submission.

Thank you.

Salam,

Dear Dr. F.N;

  hi, I'm doutful whether we confirmed to meet tomorrow or another day? I think I misundrstood the date of next meeting because I noted 18th instead of 8th of March. If you don't mind my husband and I would like to see you tomorrow morning. pleas let me know if it is possible. thanks in advance.

best regards
F.N

Dear Dr. F.N,

Hi. I just want to know that how did you find my proposal? To be honest I am worried about it. In fact, I am not sure about the framework that I am going to apply. I would be grateful if we can have session to discuss about it. If you do not mind we may meet up tomorrow after the class.

Yours sincerely,

F.N

Dear Prof. F.N.

I attached my new (hope to be last 😊) proposal. the changed part are marked by yellow marker to be distinguished.

I need to have your signature in the presentation form. Are you in your office tomorrow? If so, when? and if not, again, when?

thanks.

Dear Dr. F.N

I 've prepared my proposal. When can I come and see you?

Thank you so much

Dear Dr. F.N

I went to the postgraduate office and filled the application form for dissertation. They told that the form should be signed by your supervisor ; Dr. Azlin. I 'll be glad if inform me what time I can come to see you. My abstract is attached too . I hope you will receive the email. I am looking forward to receive your advice. Is the next step to

prepare my proposal ?

Thank you so much

Dear Madam F.N

How are you Madam? Any news from Prof. F.N yet ?

Thank you

Yours Sincerely

Prof.

Sorry if i'm asking twice. Could you send me the submitted draft of our paper, so I may check if my affiliation is correct. And I didn't get which journal you eventually submitted. As I'm updating my CV, I need that information.

Thanks

Sample of Analysis of Students' E-mail

LEVEL OF DIRECTNESS

Dear Dr. F.N (First Name) Thanks you for your useful comments. *Can u take a quick look at this new slide* [**Query Preparatory**].*Please let me know* [**Imperatives / Mood derivable**] of any problems you might see in the slides.*I would be more than glad to have your take on that*. [**Query Preparatory**] *Looking forwrds to hearning your useful comments soon*. [**Expectation statements**] Best wishes
Dear Prof. Dr. F.N, I went to see Mr. F.N regarding the audio recorder but he was not there. I will go to look for him again. *Would you kindly send me the name of the device you were talking about?* [**Query Preparatory**] Thank you very much. *Attached is the corrected proposal file with some changes in methodology*.[**Hints**] Sincerely Yours,
Dear Dr. *I am writing this email to ask for your convenient time to meet up.* [**Performatives**] *I wonder if you could give me some time next week.* [**Query Preparatory**] Thank you Kind regards
Dear Prof. F.N, I hope this finds you well. *Just wanted to check if you have time tomorrow or sometime soon to check my corrections.* [**Performatives**] The corrections are not too much and I hope it wont take so much of your time :) *Hope to hear from you soon.* [**Expectation statements**] Warmest regards, Nick Name
Dear Dr F.N

Hi and good day

hope u r good. firstly thank u for ur mail. i prepared first draf of my proposal and *wanted to know ur idea about that*.[**Want statements**] *could u pls do this favour and read my proposal?* [**Query Preparatory**] *please check it and kindly give ur comments accordingly.* [**Imperatives / Mood derivable**] *Hope you spend your precious time on reading my proposal*.[**Expectation statements**]

thx and regards

F.N

INTERNAL MODIFICATION

Hello Dr. F.N.

Today I Resubmitted the 3 month notice on line...*I think* [**Subjectivisers**] your confirmation is also needed.

I don't know why but at the end it was written in red "You can not submit your thesis".
Do you think [**Consultative devices**] if there is any problem? *Please* [***Politeness Marker 'please'***] let me know if you received the resubmitted

form?

Best Regards

F.N.

Hi

Can you *please* [**Politeness Marker 'please'**] send me your biographical data *ASAP* [***Time intensifier***]?

Thanks

F.N

Dear Dr. F.N;

hi, I'm *doutful* [**Subjectivisers**] whether we confirmed to meet tomorrow or another

day? *I think* [**Subjectivisers**] I misundrstood the date of next meeting because I noted

18th instead of 8th of March. *If you don't mind* [**Consultative devices**] my husband and

I would like to see you tomorrow morning. *Please* [**Politeness Marker 'please'**] let me

know *if it is possible* [**Consultative devices**]. thanks in advance.

best regards

F.N

Dear Dr F.N

I'm listening to my data and trying to analyze them but *I think* [**Subjectivisers**] I'd better record a couple of my students again. A couple recordings contain too much noise and I feel that they are really not suitable for the dissertation. I can record the students and have them rated pretty fast - in matter of [**Understaters/hedges** *a few*] days[**Time intensifier**]. *Would it be possible* [**Consultative devices**] to borrow the recorder any time *soon* [**Time intensifier**]? I *just* [**Downtoners**] need it for *two days* [**Time intensifier**].

Regards

Dear Prof. F.N,

Hi, I hope you've had a nice day so far.

I was *just* [**Downtoners**] wondering [**Subjectivisers**] if you have received my paper for gemaonline. I am waiting for your comments to submit it *as soon as possible* [**Time intensifier**].

Thank you in advance

Salam,

F.N

EXTERNAL MODIFICATION

Dear prof. F.N, [**Salutation**]

I hope you had a nice weekend [**Optimism**]. *I was wondering* [**Preparator**] when we can meet this week *to discuss about finalizing chapters 4 and 5*. [**Grounder**] *I look forwsrd to seeing you*. [**Optimism**]

salam, [E-**mail closing**]

F.N

Dear Dr. F.N:[Salutation]

Hi [**Greeting/opening**], *hope you enjoyed your trip to XX* [**Optimism**]. *I was wondering* [**Preparator**] whether I can meet you this Friday or not. By the way, *since I*

am working [**Grounder**] I would appreciate if you give me time around 4:00 pm.
Thanks in advance [**Pre-closings/thanks**].

Sincerely [**E-mail closing**]

F.N

Hi Dr. F.N [**Greeting/opening**]

i managed to log in with the password you gave me. *Thank you very much*
[**Appreciation statements**]. If possible , Pls sign the form as of Thursday. I am here on
a tour package and cannot stay more than one week [**Grounder**]. *Really apologize for
any convenience caused by my request* [**Apology**].
Best wishes [**E-mail closing**]
F.N

Dear Dr. [**Sautation**]

As the number of male participants in my study is very small,[**Grounder**] is it ok if I
discard male participants in my study? specially *because gender is not one of my RQs*
[**Grounder**].

Looking forward to you [**Optimism**]

Thanks [**Pre-closings/thanks**]

Hello dear dr F.N [**Greeting/opening**]

sorry for disturbing u again. [**Apology**] *i forgot to ask u another thing*. [Orientation
move] *i hope u wont scream when u see my E-mails everyday*.[**Disarmer**] *i know u r
very busy* [**Disarmer**] and u have so many things to do but coz of im here and cant talk
with u, i m afraid i do sth wrong about my dissertation.

 u said that …… sth else?

 thank u so much [**Appreciation statements**] and i want u to know *im very lucky that u
accepted me and guide me* [**Compliment/sweetener**]. *im very thankful and appreciate
ur attention.* [**Appreciation statements**]
regards [**E-mail closing**]
F.N