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A Study of Email Communication by EFL Learners: A Pragmatics Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present report is a self-investigation conformed by 6 students of Linguistics and English Literature, considering major pragmatic aspects. This study presents an exploratory nature, being a self-study with the objective of describing the changes and characteristics of email communication by EFL learners through a pragmatic perspective. The study considered speech acts and politeness in 82 emails written in English between the beginning of 2017 and mid of 2021, being 4.5 years of data. In order to achieve a successful analysis, the data was converted into numbers that represented certain changes between the strategies that students used when writing their emails. The analysis was divided into four major aspects to consider: Head Acts, the Modifiers presented in the structure, the Politeness degree of the emails, and how these were changing through time. In terms of Head Acts, it was concluded that representatives and directives were the most employed; in addition, we concluded that the structure of emails presented most of the time was simple, a phenomenon that could be related to the type of speech act present in the email and insecurities of students when writing in English. When speaking of politeness orientation, we concluded that there is a balance between the three politeness instances studied, with the exception of the year 2021, which demonstrated a higher tendency to negative politeness. Finally, there were changes through these categories which led us to conclude that certain scenarios and situations -such as context, lack of instruction and experience- made the writing of students change through time. This makes us believe that there should be more involvement of teachers and the academic program itself in the email writing process, as well as in the implementation of instances where students have the possibility to develop their pragmatic competences.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning how to communicate in a second language (L2) is not an easy task. It involves time, dedication, and preparation not only in the language itself but also within the available mediums of communication and the communicative scenarios that students face. In a broad sense, communicating in a L2 is a complex task that requires knowledge and abilities in Vocabulary, Grammar, Syntax, Pragmatics, etc. Nevertheless, with the evolution of technology, new ways of communicating have developed beyond merely speaking. For example, writing changed forever the way in which people communicate with each other, and since the 80´s a new medium of written communication has appeared, which is email communication. According to Matrix Information and Directory "827 million people in the world were using email as of January 2000" (Lan, 2000, p. 23).

A useful perspective to further explore the functions email communication is presented in the following quote by Lan:

"[The] Internet has made email a place for everything, from formal documents to single-sentence greetings, and the functions of multi-recipiency and attachment make it a vehicle of such informative, requestive and directive texts as reports, newsletters and announcements. On the other hand, the speed, efficiency, privacy and relaxation have made email a dialogue device: people 'talk' by email"

(Lan, 2000, p. 23)

As it is mentioned above, email communication appeared as an innovation to communicate virtually between people proliferated by the worldwide spread of internet, an instrument to overcome the limitations of distance and time and that has evolved during the last years and taken more importance in every aspect of human interactions, such as work, business, schools, and universities. Although this evolution seems to be natural for all of us, every medium of communication has its own rules and structures, and apparently so does email communication.

Nowadays, the whole world is facing a critical time with the pandemic, where human contact has had to be reduced due to the danger that the virus represents. In this scenario, as the world needed to continue, virtual communication became essential in a variety of situations. In relation to this, it is email communication (among other forms of virtual communication) that has replaced face to face interaction. In the case of our investigation, students' interactions with teachers changed, as the virtual context replaced them through digital platforms.

Following this line, students face different means of communication and the pragmatic components that they involve, which entails strategies of politeness, the employment of certain speech acts or the structure that the email takes, elements that could be judged, even if there is no previous instruction. Students may know how to interact in symmetrical and asymmetrical contexts as they are constantly dealing with communicative situations, such as talking, informing or requesting to a teacher, and so on. Nevertheless, the contextual aspect of communication in relation to the language used, body language, tone, and many other features are eliminated as the medium turns virtual, where perhaps our initial communicative intention or the tone used is not the intended one.

Therefore, our condition as students of Linguistics and English Literature allowed us to consider linguistic characteristics to identify what could occur through our time as students of Universidad de Chile, specifically in terms of pragmatic competences. As it is, the investigation was carried out by 6 people ad portas to become former students of the mentioned degree. The sample was made of a corpus of emails written by the investigators themselves, considering those written in English, being analyzed through pragmatic competence's basis, considering speech acts and politeness strategies used by them.

This report was divided into seven divisions, beginning with a Theoretical Framework that introduces the terms and definitions used in our investigation: Pragmatics, Speech acts, Politeness, Pragmatic competence, and Communicative competence. This section is followed by a Literature Review section where we examine relevant studies from various authors regarding Pragmatics and L2 learning, Speech acts, Politeness, email communication, pragmatics and English learners. After that comes the Methodology section, where general objectives and specific objectives are presented alongside the research questions. This section also has a characterization of the participants of this work, as well as the approach we take. Methodology section finishes presenting the type of study, also there is a description of the sample and context belonging to this investigation. The following section is Analytical framework. In this section of the study, we explain the process that we carry out in order to develop the analysis applied to the corpus of emails. The work continues with the Results section in which we present the charts and graphics that contain the information collected from the analyses of the corpus. Following the Results section comes the Discussion, where we analyze the obtained results in relation to the research questions, and the content provided in both Theoretical Framework and Literature review. Our investigation ends with the Conclusion section in which we summarize the essential points of our work as well as reassuring the relevance of the research. It also contains the limitations, implications and further research where we provide the issues, complications and the main thoughts we have when looking forward to the future concerning the topic addressed in the investigation.

MOTIVATION

As we mentioned before, the current pandemic context in which students are involved has made email communication to pass from being an important tool to a necessity as online media are the only media for interacting all over the world. Of course, universities are not exempted from what is happening nowadays with Covid-19 and the necessity of isolation. Hence, what we usually communicate through face-to-face interactions now is mediated by tools such as the Zoom classroom, and what is the focus of our research, emails. In the past we have used email communication with our professors at the university but now we are paying special attention to it. In face-to-face communication the context is clearer, and if not, it is usually resettled fast by changing the tone, reading the movements made while talking, decoding a gaze or the actual meaning of the set of things going on, we know the pragmatic implications. However, email communication seems to have its own rules.

The lack of email communication instruction motivated us to carry out this investigation. Particularly in this case, this type of communication between students and professors portrays a hierarchical relationship. The context of interaction is known by the interlocutors and the individual pragmalinguistic competence of every student may make a difference.

In the same line, and after the revision of the official documents that guide the contents of the program and to present the contents to the students, we realized that we were expected to produce different types of written discourses, but not emails. We learnt how to produce oral and written discourse, in normal imaginary scenarios (daily life scenarios) and academic environments that pursue the ambition of communicating effectively. In this context, we believe that email communication would involve both, daily communication and more academic settings. However, in the programs and during our years at the University of Chile, we have not had instruction in email writing.

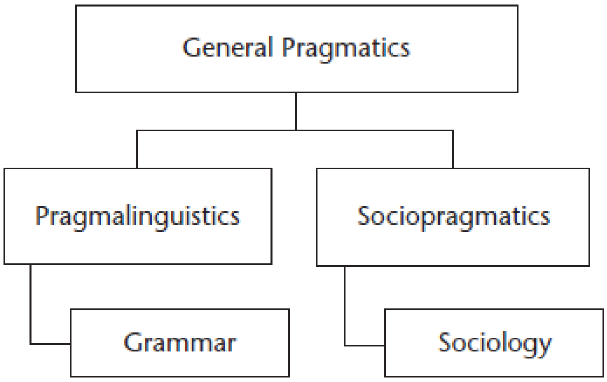
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this investigation aims to describe the theoretical constructs in which we based our work, specifically Pragmatics, Speech Acts and Politeness. Even though the Pragmatics field is vast and covers many phenomena, such as implicatures, speech acts, relevance, maxims of conversation, and nonverbal communication, we focused on the aspects that are relevant to our investigation, such as general pragmatics, sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics, speech acts and politeness.

1.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is conceived by Leech as "the study of linguistic communication in terms of conversational principles" (1993, p. 11). Pragmatics involves the study of the use of language during communication, especially the relationship between the sentences, the situations, and the context in which they are used and how these sentences are influenced by the given situation and how the intentions of the speaker (S) or hearer (H) can intervene in the understanding of utterances.

According to Leech, pragmatics can be approached by making the following distinction: General pragmatics, or "the general conditions of the communicative use of language"; Sociopragmatics, or the "more specific 'local' conditions on language use"; and Pragmalinguistics, or "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983, pp. 10-11, in Culpeper et al., 2011, p. 4). General pragmatics is similar to the definition of pragmatics presented above. This distinction is illustrated by by Culpeper et al. (2018, p. 30) in the following diagram:



(Fig. 1)

Conceiving pragmatics in terms of these two sub areas, one more socially oriented and the other more linguistically oriented. has shaped the nature of the study of pragmatics in general (Culpeper, 2011; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983) and, as is the case in this study, research on the pragmatics of language learning and language learners in particular (Culpeper et al., 2018; Taguchi and Roever, 2017). Below we explain in more detail the distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.

1.1.1. Sociopragmatics and Pragmalinguistics

According to Leech (1983), the term Sociopragmatics refers to the Ss ability to use and interpret speech acts appropriately according to social norms, so this concept is closely connected with society and culture. In relation with that, Culpeper (2011) mentions that sociopragmatics refers to the interaction between language and culture. He highlights the fact that it is in studies of cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics that the term Sociopragmatics is more frequently encountered. Culpeper (2011) points out Leech's reference to "specific" local conditions. With this in mind, it is possible to define Sociopragmatics as that area of study that concerns itself with any aspect of the social context that is specific to the pragmatic meanings of particular language use. The word "particular" is necessary here in order to distinguish

Sociopragmatics from what Leech sees as the general role of pragmatics. An example of this discipline is the perception of socio-cultural elements in a conversation, such as the correct use of idioms, salutations, etc. of a specific context of a certain language; e.g., the use of “hi” or “good morning” when meeting somebody with certain closeness, or if it is an authority.

Culpeper (2011) provides another definition for Sociopragmatics, where it says that Sociopragmatics concerns itself with any interaction between specific aspects of social context and particular language use that leads to pragmatic meanings. Its central focus is on language use in its situational context, and how those situational contexts engender norms which participants engage or exploit for pragmatic purposes (in the production of speech acts, in the expression of politeness, for interactional purposes, etc.).

Pragmalinguistics, on the other hand, “is applied to the study of the more linguistic and grammatical end of pragmatics” (Culpeper et al., 2018, p. 4). According to Marmaridou (2011), it is thought that pragmalinguistics is born as the pragmatic segment of both grammar and verbal activity of a specific social interaction. These features consider the resources in a given language that a S can use for the expression of a specific pragmatic meaning or a specific communicative intention. An example of Pragmalinguistics is the perception of ideal grammar items of a certain language and its usage in a utterance, like the use of active and passive voice, where the object of an active verbs transforms into the subject of the passive verb, e.g.: the active “Mary helped the boy”, versus “The boy was helped by Mary”.

The value regarding this dichotomy is that it helps to understand the different elements included in pragmatics and how they can be present, influencing on different levels depending on the communicative instance that is taking place. In relation to this idea, Leech (2014) suggests that the

Pragmalinguistic/Sociopragmatic distinction is a matter of orientiation's differentiation. While one refers to how the linguistic resources of a language express pragmatic meanings, the other refers to both social and cultural norms that guide interactions in a certain society. Regarding this relationship between Sociopragmatics and Pragmalinguistics, Marmaridou (2011) argues that the issue is focusing on one while placing the other in the background. It is certainly not straightforward to draw a line between them, and this has important consequences for methods in L2 pragmatics. For example, it is mentioned by Culpeper et al. (2018) that "Hearers are less often considered, and there is no sense that some meanings are worked out jointly between Ss and hearers – which is particularly important to L2 pragmatics" (p. 30). This phenomenon is related directly to how pragmatic failure works, which is explained in section 1.3.

1.1.2. Pragmatic failure

The notions of Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics are also helpful because they can give us the context to interpret possible problems in communication, both in an L1 and when learners use their L2. From a pragmatics perspective, these problems in communication are usually called failures. These pragmatic failures can be the result of Ss using linguistic resources that are not appropriate to the situation. These can be divided in two categories: Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic failures. On one hand, Pragmalinguistic failures, in the case of L2 learners, occur when the pragmatics present behind an utterance (the language used) is different from what a native Ss would assign to it. On the other hand, Sociopragmatic failures happen when the Ss unknowingly uses his L1 speaking rules and culture, influencing the communication for the H as they would possess a different perception of what makes appropriate linguistic behavior. Culpeper et al. (2018) presents some examples of both Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics failure situations, which are presented below:

"[Conversation with an Italian in English]

Jonathan: It's sad it turned out that way.

Italian friend: In fact."

Ex. (1) (Culpeper et al., 2018, p. 31)

According to Culpeper et al. (2018) analysis, in the example of Pragmalinguistic failure shown before, the Italian word *infatti* presents similarities with the English 'in fact', both presenting similar roots. Nevertheless, these words imply a false cognate, where English 'in fact' implies that a qualification to what has just been said follows. The authors stated as a final result, that "in fact is all that is said - there is, oddly, no following qualification". (Culpeper et al., 2018, p. 31).

The next example is also presented by Culpeper et al. (2018), and it evidences a Sociopragmatic failure:

"*Example of pragmatic failure from the TV show "The Big Bang Theory"*

Raj: Hold on, Sheldon, is there ketchup on that table?

Sheldon: [looks at the table] Yes, there is. Here's a fun fact, ketchup started as a general term for sauce, typically made of mushrooms or fish brine with herbs and spices. Popular early main ingredients included: blueberry, anchovies, oyster, kidney bean, and grape.

Raj: No, that's okay. I'll get it."

Ex. (2) (Culpeper et al., 2018, p. 31)

What the authors wanted to demonstrate with this example of the TV show "The Big Bang Theory" is how the H -that is, Sheldon- fails at getting the message of the request of Raj. While Raj uses an indirect request to ask for ketchup, Sheldon fails in terms of implicature, not inferring what Raj wanted.

1.2. Speech acts

The concept of speech acts was first used by L.J. Austin in his book "How to Do Things with Words". According to Thomas (1995), Austin perceived that we just do not say things, but also do things. That is, "making statements" and "performing actions", respectively. In other words, these utterances are made by the emisor of the message in order to perform their intention, taking into account how the receptor of it is affected. These can be categorized into three types: 1. Locutionary acts, where the emisor is producing sounds that embodies both sense and reference, 2. Illocutionary acts, meant to carry out the uttered sentence under both specific context and circumstances, and 3. Perlocutionary acts, which works on how the listener is going to be affected by the utterance produced.

Therefore, speech acts present their own structure, consisting of three main elements extracted from theory. The first and most important one would be the HA, which captures the essence of the speech act itself, this being the main utterance able to stand by itself, or its illocutionary force. On the other hand, we have the modification, which is optional and is mostly used to mitigate or intensify the force of the speech act itself.

According to Faerch and Kasper in Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), when we dive into modification, we will find two different categories: Internal modifications, that "are achieved through devices within the same 'Head act'" (p. 7); and the External modifications, which are localized "not within the 'Head act' but within its immediate context" (p. 7). It is important to mention that these modifications do not affect the level of directness of the Speech Act, nor its propositional content (p. 7).

1.2.1. Speech Acts categories

It is stated by Saeed (1997) that J.R Searle was the responsible for the categorization of the Speech Acts in the following categories:

1) Representatives, which commit the S to the truth of the expressed proposition (such as informing, asserting or concluding);

2) Directives, which are attempts by the S to get the addressee to do something (such as requesting or questioning);

3) Commissives, which commit the S to some future course of action (such as promising, threatening or offering);

4) Expressives, which express a psychological state (such as thanking, apologizing, welcoming or congratulating); and

5) Declarations, which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extralinguistic institutions (such as excommunicating, declaring war, christening, marrying or firing from employment).

(J.R Searle, 1976, cited in Saeed, 1997, p. 237)

In order to determine these categories, Searle combined different criteria: the **illocutionary point**, being the purpose of the act; the "**fit**" with the world, being the relationship between language and the world, e.g.: Thus, Ss using representatives, such as assertions, which are seeking to get their words to match the world. Meanwhile, users of directives (such as requests or orders), are seeking to change the world so that it matches their worlds. Additionally, the criterion of the **psychological state** of the S, related to the direct state of mind, e.g.: how "It's raining" reflects belief, while thanking or apologies are a reflection of how the S reacts to the events. Then, there is the **content** of the act, related to the propositional content itself, e.g.: one way of viewing the difference between a promise and a threat is in terms of whether the future event is beneficial or harmful to the addressee (Saeed, 1997).

1.2.2. Direct and indirect speech acts

According to Thomas (1995), Indirectness can be interpreted as "how a hearer works out what a S means by the words he or she utters" (p. 119). This means that Indirectness can occur when there exists a discrepancy between both expressed and implied meaning. In terms of how much it costs the use of Indirectness when speaking, it is stated that its costly and risky, due to the principle of size: the more words and the longer time that the S uses in producing their utterance, the longer H is going to take process the intended meaning of utterance itself. In contrast, it is considered risky since it increases the possibility of misunderstanding the utterance.

Even though Indirectness can be perceived in different manners thanks to the multicultural properties of languages, Thomas (1995) stated three main factors to understand the usage of indirectness: **1) Power (P),** 2**) Distance (D), and 3) Ranking of Imposition (R)** (p. 169). Examples of Directness' level can be: a. "I'm really hungry", using direct speech acts; in comparison with "Would you like to eat something?", contrasting as indirect speech acts; or the realization of a speech act through another speech act, e.g.: "can you tell me the time?", where the question seems to be about ability, but actually being a request of information. Moreover, these can be further analyzed when the factors mentioned before are applied. These can be further analyzed in This is going to be further explained later in section 3.3 (FTAs) face-threatening acts(s).

1.3. Politeness

For the definition of politeness, it is worth mentioning that several theories and approaches have been proposed. Thomas (1995) first explained the difference between politeness and deference, where she mentioned that when the use of a particular form is obligatory in a specific situation, it is not relevant for pragmatics. However, when the S has the choice or is trying to bring a change by testing the norms, then, it becomes pragmatically relevant. Brown and Levinson (1987) described politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon, which is interpreted as a strategy or strategies implemented by a S to achieve a diverse range of goals, such as promoting or maintaining harmonious relations.

In Fraser's point of view (1990) politeness are socio-cultural norms or rules that determine people's behavior depending on the context. The approach used for this work is based on the ideas of Brown & Levinson, in that sense, Locher & Watts (2005) added that:

"The Brown and Levinson theory... provides a breadth of insights into human behavior which no other theory has yet offered and it has served as a touchstone for researchers who felt the need to go beyond it… It is clearly in a class of its own in terms of its comprehensiveness, operationalizability, thoroughness and level of argumentation."

(pp. 9-10)

Brown & Levinson's theory is based on the self, the perception that a subject has about his/her pairs plays a fundamental role regarding their theory since it is connected with social interactions, particularly, in how Ss employ a set of tools that allow him to avoid damaging the image of the H, as well as fulfilling his/her desires. To fully understand their conception of politeness, it is required to explain various concepts, which are defined in the following sections.

1.3.1. Positive and negative politeness

There are three main strategies of politeness described by Brown & Levinson (1987). The first one is “positive politeness”, the expression of solidarity; the second one is “negative politeness”, the expression of restraint; and, finally, “off-record” (politeness), which is the avoidance of unequivocal impositions. These strategies are determined by the relationship between the S and the addressee and the possible offensiveness of the message content. Positive and negative politeness make sense in relation to the concept of face.

1.3.2. Face

Brown & Levinson (1987) offer a variety of approaches to the “face” concept. From a cultural perspective, they contemplate an abstract model which contains two specific desires attributed by the interactants between them. One is the desire to be free, which is bonded with the negative face; the other is the desire to be approved, which is bonded with the positive face. The notion exemplified with desires is a pillar for a universal conception of face. It is also necessary to be aware of the influence of culture regarding the elaboration of the concept on a particular society.

Brown & Levinson (1987) mention that their notion of face is derived from Goffman (1967) and from the English folk term that links face up with humiliation, embarrassment, or simply “losing face”. In other words, face is a concept that is emotionally based. It can be lost, maintained, or improved in actual interactions. The cooperation of people in maintaining face within an interaction is the base of the mutual vulnerability of face. The authors offer a perspective where face is treated as a basic good, which every member knows that their pairs desire. In general, it is in the interest of every member to satisfy this good, creating a “give and take" relationship, where members fulfill their desires mutually.

Yule (1996) offers an approach based on face wants, where he mentions that in daily life people usually behave as if their expectations regarding their public self-image, or their face wants, will be respected. He adds that if a person says something that results in a threat to another individual's expectations about the self-image, this threat receives the name of face threatening act. Additionally, when a person feels that their face is being threatened, the S can say something to decrease this threat. This action is called a face-saving act.

Thomas (1995) highlights the influence of Brown & Levinson ideas within the politeness studies. He provides a definition of face which goes in the same direction that the ideas mentioned above, in his definition, face is understood as every individual's feeling of self-worth or self-image; this image can be harmed, maintained or improved by interaction with others. Additionally, he mentions that face has two aspects, “positive” and “negative”, the first one related with the desire to be liked by others, and the second one related with the desire to be free to act.

Thomas (1995) also reassures the importance of Erving Goffman who was the one establishing the “face” concept. His definition of face is provided in order to understand the base of the concept, who always was defined by a self-image and social approach. Thomas grants the definition of Goffman in the following lines:

"Goffman himself (1967, p. 5) defined face as: '(...) the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes — albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself'".

1.3.2.1 Positive and Negative Face

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), a positive face can be defined as the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. To fully understand this definition, it is necessary to explain the idea of the desires regarding the members of a communicative instance. The authors state that there is a reduction of the public person image to a want that the person wants to be desirable to some others. The most appreciable aspect of an individual's personality in interaction is what the individual requires of other interactions, and this desire can result in approval, admiration, ratification, among others. It is necessary, then, to represent this desire as the want to have self´s goals thought of as desirable. The special sense of "wanting" developed by the authors allows us to understand the concept of positive face as is defined by them.

The authors provided an example that helps to fully understand the ideas previously developed, which is presented with the following lines, "Mrs B is a fervent 62 gardener. Much of her time and effort are expended on her roses. She is proud of her roses, and she likes others to admire them. She is gratified when visitors say 'What lovely roses; I wish ours looked like that! How do you do it?', implying that they want just what she has wanted and achieved". There are plenty of aspects that are required to have in mind, such as the interpretation of others about what is desirable for a S, which is the key for achieving an accurate definition for positive face since the wants that a member wants others to find desirable in himself should have been already satisfied. In other words, they are past desires represented in current achievements or possessions, where they could also vary between material and non-material things.

Yule (1996) provides a brief explanation of the positive face idea, where he maintains that the positive face of a person is the need to be accepted, including to be liked by others, to be treated as part of the same group, and to know that his or her wants are shared by others. In other words, a positive face can be understood as the desire of being connected.

On the other hand, Brown & Levinson (1987) define negative face as the want of every “competent adult member” that his actions can be unimpeded by others. They highlight that in contrast to positive face, negative face has a derivative politeness of non-imposition, hence it is familiar with the formal politeness, where the notion “politeness” immediately calls.

Negative politeness is usually employed to partially satisfy H´s negative face, particularly his want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination. Since negative face is based on the freedom of the individual, the negative politeness resources used in order to address the negative face of the person are essentially avoidance-based, and their realizations consist in making sure that the S recognizes and respects the addressee´s negative face wants and will not interfere with his freedom of action.

To illustrate negative face concept more clearly, it is worthy to put an example where S is not respecting the negative face of H. The authors evidence this act with the following situation, "Therefore to say ‘Would you please mind not walking on the grass’ where the context makes it clear that S is not respecting H’s negative face”.

Throughout the text, it is possible to appreciate that the individual's freedom and the strategy of maintaining their actions unimpeded are the basis of a negative face. The authors also provide an example where S satisfies the negative face of H, the utterance, “Do not worry about me” functions adequately in order to portray how negative face works.

Yule (1996) reassures the concept of negative face provided by Brown & Levinson, in his work he defines negative face as the need to be independent, to have freedom, and not being imposed by others, he adds that a face-saving act addressed to the negative face of the individual will tend to show deference, emphasis to the importance of the other´s time or concerns as well as an apology for imposition or interruption.

1.3.3. (FTAs) face-threatening act(s)

Thomas (1995) used for the description of face-threatening acts (FTAs) the definition of Brown and Levinson, some illocutionary acts are likely to damage or threaten another person’s face. An illocutionary act can possibly damage the H’s positive or negative face, and even damage the S’s own positive or negative face. The strategies used will be chosen depending on the parameters of power (P), distance (D), and rating of imposition (R). These elements combined determine the general “weightiness” of the FTA which successively influences the strategy used.

On the one hand, the performance of FTA with redress in positive politeness was explained by Thomas (1995) based on Brown and Levinson’s theory, when Ss orient themselves towards their individual’s positive face. They implement positive politeness to achieve the desire to be liked and approved.

There is a list made by Brown and Levinson in which fifteen positive politeness strategies are given, illustrated in different languages.

On the other hand, performing an FTA with redress in negative politeness, is oriented towards the H’s negative face, which is connected to the H's desire not to be impeded or put upon, letting them free to act as they choose. The manifestation of negative politeness is by the use of conventional politeness markers, deference markers, minimizing imposition, etc. Brown and Levinson created a list as well, with ten negative politeness strategies in which examples in English are easy to find in a formal context.

1.3.3.1 Power, distance and ranking of imposition

Brown & Levinson (1987) argue that the assessment of the seriousness of an FTA involves the following factors in, perhaps, all cultures. In the first place, the “social distance” (D); in the second place, the relative “power” (P); and in the third place, the “ranking of imposition” (R).

They clarify that the interest here is in the extent that actors think it is mutual knowledge between them regarding the particular values of D, P, and R. Thus, there is not a sociological view of actual power, distance or ranking, rather the focus is on the mutually assumption of these concepts by the Ss.

The authors offer a formula to calculate the weightiness of an FTA, they literally state:

“FTA is calculated thus: Wx =D(S,H) + P(H,S) + Rx where Wx is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA x, D(S,H) is the value that measures the social distance between S and H, P(H,S) is a measure of the power that H has over S, and Rx is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA x is rated an imposition in that culture. We assume that each of these values can be measured on a scale of 1 to n, where n is some small number. Our formula assumes that the function that assigns a value to Wx on the basis of the three social parameters does so on a simple summative basis."

(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 76)

Brown & Levinson highlight that this formula works surprisingly well, but it is necessary to be aware that more complex composition of values may be involved. Overall, the function captures the fact that the three dimensions (P, D, and R) collaborate to the seriousness of a FTA, and as a result it determines the level of politeness with which, other things being equal, an FTA will be communicated.

The authors conceive "social distance" (D) as a symmetric social dimension of similarity or difference where S and H stand for the purpose of this particular act. Mostly, it is based on an assessment of the frequency of interaction and the kinds of goods (face included) exchanged between the interactants. A relevant part of the evaluation of D will usually be measures of social distance based on stable social characteristics. Social closeness is, generally, reflected by the reciprocal giving and receiving of a positive face.

The conception of "power" (P) described by the authors, says that it is an asymmetric social dimension of relative power. In other words, P is the degree to which H can impose his own plans and self-evaluation (face) at the expense of S´s plans and self-evaluation. It is mentioned that, generally there are two sources of P, and either of which may be authorized or unauthorized, they are material control (economy and physical features) and metaphysical control (over others´ actions, by virtue of metaphysical forces subscribed to by others). In most cases the power of an individual emerges from both sources or mixes them. The representation of a great P differential is maybe archetypally "deference".

The authors emphasize that ranking of imposition (R) is culturally and situationally conceived as the degree to which R interferes with an individual's wants of self-determination or approval (their positive and negative face wants). Most of the time, there are two scales or ranks that are emically identifiable for negative face FTAs: a ranking of impositions in proportion to the expenditure of services (including the provision of time) and the other is the expenditure of goods (including non-material goods like information, as well as the expression of regard and other face payments).

Regarding the FTAs against positive face, the authors mention that the ranking involves an appraisal of the amount of "pain" given to H´s face, this is based on the discrepancy between H´s own desired self-image and that presented in the FTA. There is a mention that it will be cultural rankings of aspects of positive face (for example, "success" or "beauty"), which can be reranked under particular circumstances, just as in the case of negative face rankings.

Concerning the context dependence of the three factors presented above, Brown & Levinson present a variety of views that help to fully understand the relationship between the factors and the context. They say that P, D and R can be viewed in several ways. In the first view granted in the text, they take P in order to provide an extended example, the idea here is that individuals are assigned with an absolute value on this dimension that measures the power that an individual has relative to others. Then they offer the example of a bank manager who might have a higher rating than a lowly worker. But they challenge this proposal by saying that it is possible for this lowly worker to pull a gun or to sit on a jury trying the manager, the power may be reversed. The anterior example illustrates the idea that it is not adequate to conceive P as a context-free factor.

The second view provided in the book, is defined as a more plausible one, the authors say that P is a value attached not to individuals at all, but to roles or role-sets. Therefore, in the role-set manager/employee, or parent/child, asymmetrical power is built. Additionally, it is necessary to allow that there are role-sets like gangster/victim, in order to handle the way in which the relative values of P could be inverted by circumstances. According to the authors, the two main problems regarding this view are that not all kinds of power come clothed in role-sets and the fact that individuals acquire sets of roles, and high P values in one role usually transfer to others, an example of a new president elected who will be still friend of his current friends, but the equality they had will hardly be maintained, is provided in order to illustrate the idea of transference of P values.

The third view expresses those stable social valuations, whether of individuals or of roles, are only one element that affects the assessment of P. Other situational sources of power would contribute to or adjust or entirely nullify stable social valuations. Momentary weaknesses in bargaining power, strength of character, or alliances may all play a role in the evaluation of P.

This view is the one that seems most adequate for the authors; they also assume that situational factors enter into the values for P, D, and R, so the values assessed hold only for S and H under a particular context, and for a particular FTA.

Brown & Levinson finish their idea concerning the three factors P, D, and R by saying that it would be appropriate to demonstrate that the factors discussed earlier are relevant and independent, and they are the only relevant ones used by actors to assess the danger of FTAs.

They claim that they are not only relevant factors, but simply that they subsume all others (status, authority, situational factors, etc.) that have an effect on such assessments.

1.3.4 Strategies in politeness

Brown & Levinson (1987), maintain that a rational agent that interacts with others, will tend to use strategies in order to reduce the possibility of a FTA, and according to the assessment of the face risk of the participants.

In other words, a subject will choose among several ways to satisfy the face of the H. The authors discuss the strategies that could be used to fulfill the negative face of a particular individual, in the case of negative politeness the desire is to not be imposed upon. They also mentioned that these strategies are not necessarily only verbal, but also can be various other means of expression, as it is in the example provided, where a person would humble themselves kinetically (e.g., body still and shoulders bent in English culture; a bow in Japan) to satisfy the negative face of the other since with those gestures the individual is showing respect for the other and fulfilling his desire of not being imposed to act.

Brown & Levinson (1987), said that they rely heavily on charts that summarize the derivation of the strategies discussed. In this work, two of the charts presented by the authors are used, in this case for the super-strategies of positive and negative politeness. The description that the authors offer for the chart is the following one:

"On the left-hand side of each chart is entered the chosen super-strategy as a desire or end of the S's; connected to this desire by divergent arrows are the means that would (at least partially) achieve this end. In many cases these means are no more than more specific wants — i.e., consequent desires — and themselves have arrows leading to means that will achieve them. In this way we arrive at more and more specific wants, finally arriving at the linguistics means that will satisfy (to some extent) all the wants connected to them by the arrows. Thus, in moving from left to right on the charts, we move from higher-order or super-strategies to lower- and lower-order strategies."

(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 92)

The explanation offered above, explains the main features and the functioning of the charts presented below. The authors add that there are more that the wants in the charts are not the only motivation for using these linguistic means. Additionally, there are social motivations that produce the usage of techniques of positive politeness and negative politeness, and they could work as social accelerators and social brakes for increasing or reducing social distance.

1.3.4.1 Strategies regarding positive politeness

In this case, Fig. 2 illustrates the chart of strategies regarding positive politeness. On the figure it is appreciable a set of strategies that are an option for the subject to satisfy the positive face of a H.

Brown & Levinson (1987), present three broad mechanisms, labelled as 5.3.1, 5.3.2, and 5.3.3 on the chart. They are all involved in the positive politeness strategies. In the case of the first mechanism, it includes S claiming common ground with H, by pointing that both parts, S and H, correspond to a group of people who share specific wants, including values and goals. There are three ways of carrying out this mechanism. The first one is: Convey 'X is admirable interesting'; the second one is: Claim in-group membership with H; and the third one is: Claim common outlook with H. The outputs of these three mechanisms of establishing common ground result in positive politeness strategies one to eight, as it is observed in Fig. 2.

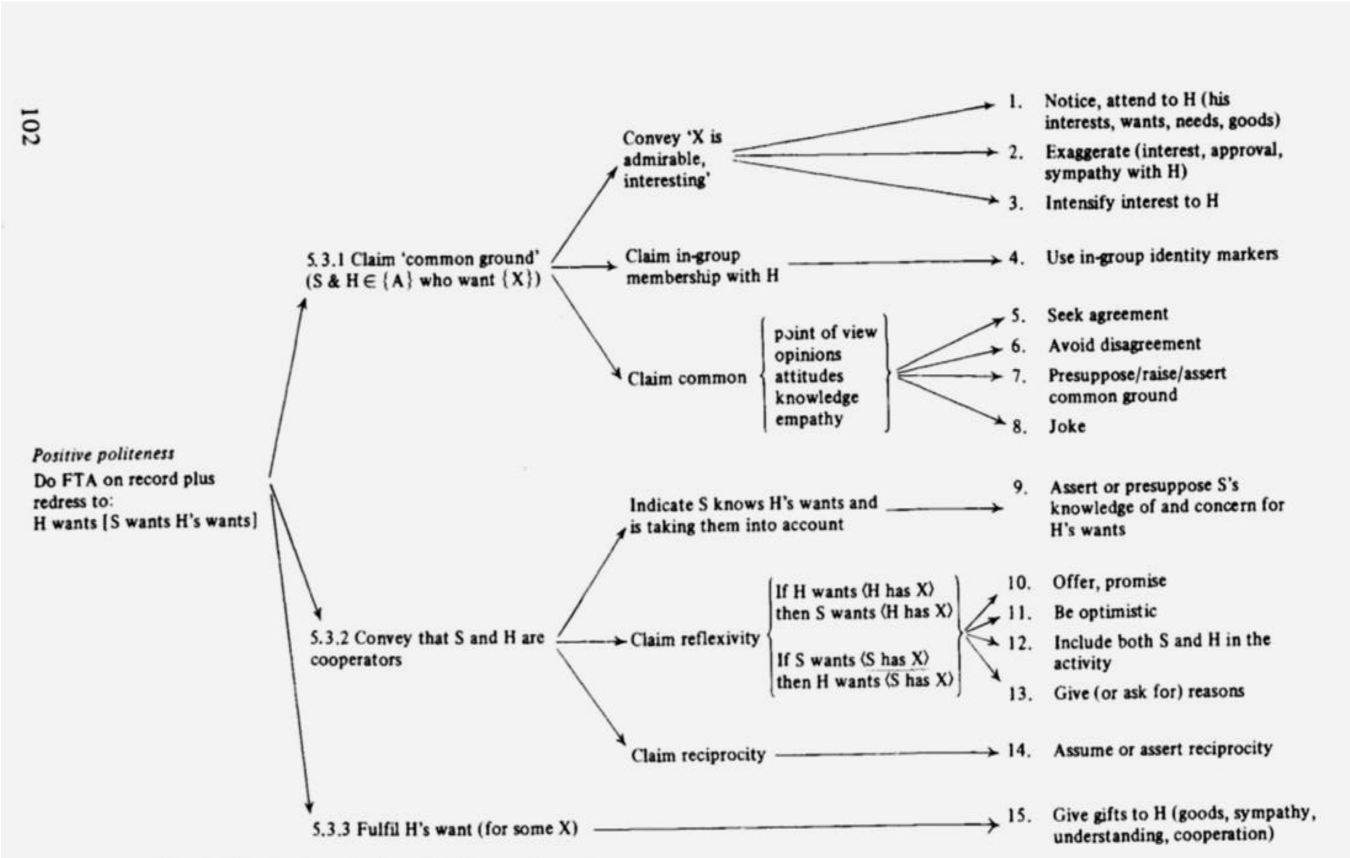


Fig.2 (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 102)

Brown & Levinson (1987), also add that the association with intimate language usage, which gives the linguistics of positive politeness its redressive force. The positive politeness utterances are used as an extension of intimacy, to imply common ground between strangers who perceive themselves as somehow similar, for the purpose of the interaction. For that reason, positive politeness techniques are usable not only for FTA redress, but also as a social accelerator, where S wants to become closer to H.

The second mechanism, is labelled as 5.3.2, it entails that S and H are cooperators. The authors highlight that the second major class of positive politeness strategies charted in Fig. 3 derive from the want to convey that S and H are cooperatively involved in the relevant activity. If they are cooperating, then they share goals in some context. The fact that they are cooperators can function to redress H´s positive face want. The particular strategies that perform the mechanism described anteriorly go from nine to fourteen and they are individualized in Fig. 2.

The last mechanism is labelled as 5.3.3, in this case the focus is on fulfilling H´s wants for some X. This last positive politeness strategy involves the S deciding to redress H´s face directly by satisfying some of H´s wants. This mechanism is illustrated by the strategy fifteen in Fig. 2.

1.3.4.2 Strategies regarding negative politeness

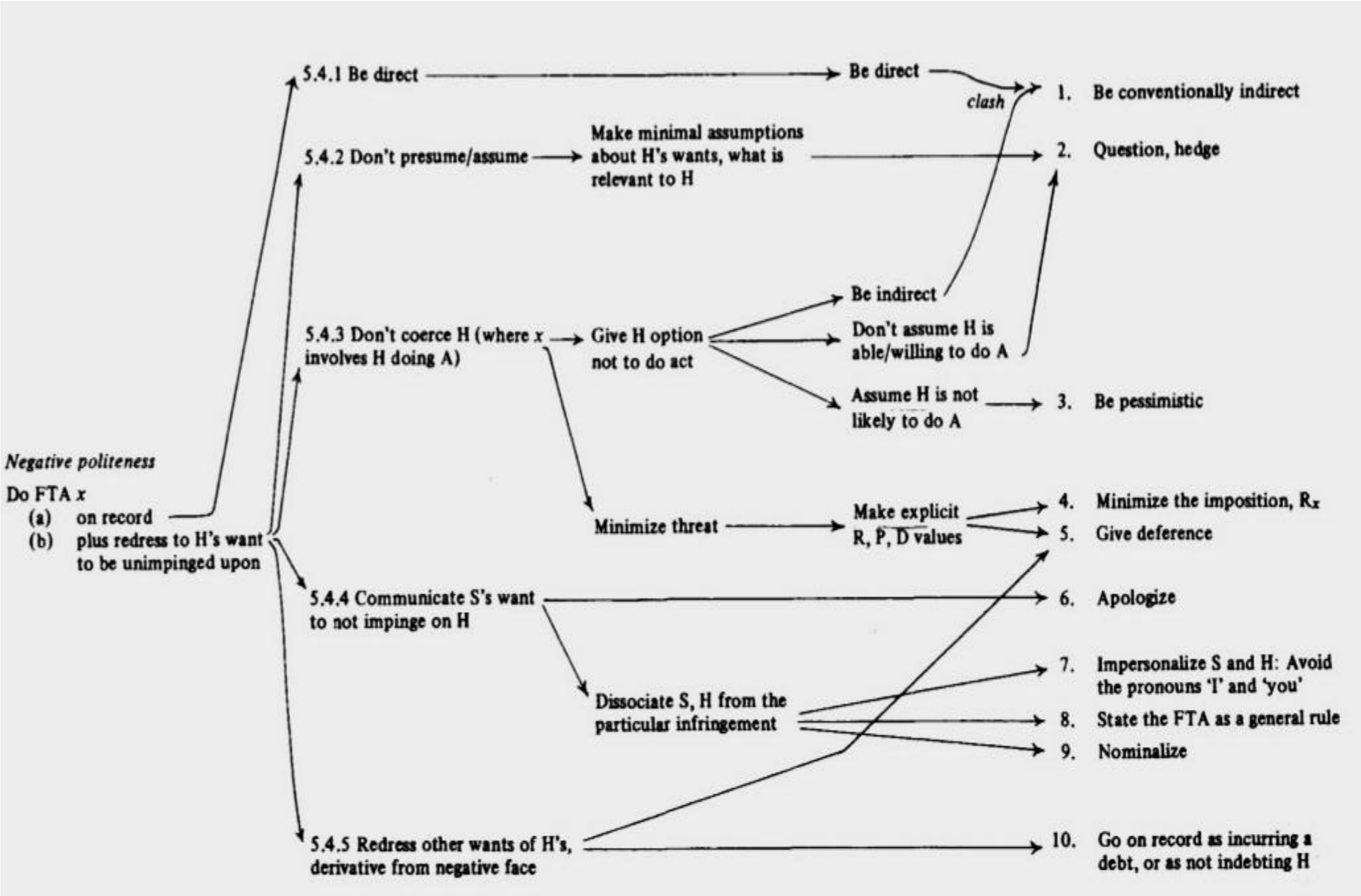


Fig. 3 (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 131)

Negative politeness is the most elaborate and has the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress. It implies a redressive action (verbal, nonverbal or extraverbal) addressed to the addressee's negative face. (Brown and Levinson) The function it plays is to minimize the particular imposition that the FTA effects cannot be avoided, it is specific and focused on the H's relative power. Brown and Levinson (1987) present in negative politeness five broad mechanisms labelled as 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.4, and 5.4.5. on the chart above.

The first mechanism labelled as 5.4.1, expresses that the simplest way to construct an on-record message is to convey it directly. However, it happens that being too direct clashes with the need of redress attuned to H´s negative face, so the S does not perform negatively polite FTAs fully directly.

In Fig. 3, it is appreciable the clash between these two wants, the first one is the want to be direct stemming from Do FTA on record, and the second one is the want to Be indirect that derives from Don´t coerce H.

The equally weighted desires in reasoning, then should be able to provide, as a result two balanced conflicting wants, the compromise of partially satisfying them both is possible. This discussion outputs strategy 1, which develops this mechanism further.

The second mechanism labelled as 5.4.2, makes a difference with the anterior mechanism since it does not work with the desire to be direct, but it focuses on the other negative politeness strategies that derive from the second specification that redress be given to H´s negative face. Fig. 3 shows one way which such redress could be given, and that is by carefully avoiding presuming or assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by H. This includes avoiding any presumption about H, maintaining ritual distance from H. This discussion results in the negative politeness strategy 2 which is in Fig. 3.

The third mechanism labelled as 5.4.3, establishes a dialogue with the ideas presented in the anterior two mechanisms. Brown and Levinson mention that another class of ways of redressing H’s wants is used when predicting an act of H, for instance when requesting aid, a situation which requires his acceptance. For these situations, negative face redress may be performed by avoiding coercing H´s response, and this should be done, on the one hand by offering him explicitly the option of not doing the act. The authors describe the correlation with the others strategies in the following lines:

“This higher-order strategy then produces the subordinate want to Be indirect, which in clashing with Be dire t gives us output strategy 1. It also produces the subordinate want don’t assume H is willing / able to do A, which motivates output strategy 2, as we have seen. And it produces a third strategy which involves S assuming H is not likely to do A, thereby making it easy for H to opt out; this yields output strategy 3, Be pessimistic”

(Brown & Levinson, p. 172).

On the other hand, avoiding coercion of H may end up in attempts to minimize the threat of coercion by making clear S´s view of P, D and R. Then, the subject claiming that R is small gives output to strategy 4, he may also claim that H´s relative P is great (implying that S is powerless than H), giving output to strategy.

In the mechanism labelled as 5.4.4 we can find the strategies to partially satisfy H’s negative-face demands, which indicate that the S is aware of them while taking the decision to communicate FTA. (Brown and Levinson) There are two ways to do it, the first one is to straightforwardly apologize, which implies recognizing the infringement and making amends for it, this is strategy 6. The other way is by making a dissociation to either H or S or both from the FTA, this can be done by being vague, generalizing or making unclear who is the agent of the FTA. These lead us to negative-politeness strategy 7 to 9.

In this final mechanism labelled as 5.4.5 a partial compensation is offered to mitigate the face threat in the FTA, this can be made by redressing the H’s particular wants. As Brown and Levinson mention “for negative politeness involves a focus on a narrow band of H’s wants, a very narrow facet of his person. This of course is in contrast to positive politeness, where H’s wants are actively attended to over a broad spectrum.” (p. 209) This mechanism leans to the final strategy 10.

1.4. Communicative and Pragmatic L2 Competences

Firstly, coined by Hymes in 1967, communicative competence refers to the capacity to communicate in a successful and appropriate manner. Based on Celce-Murcia's 2007 work, the objective of this section is to introduce communicative competence approaches and their development through time in order to manage and understand the concept of pragmatic competence. These approaches were divided by Celce-Murcia in the following chart:

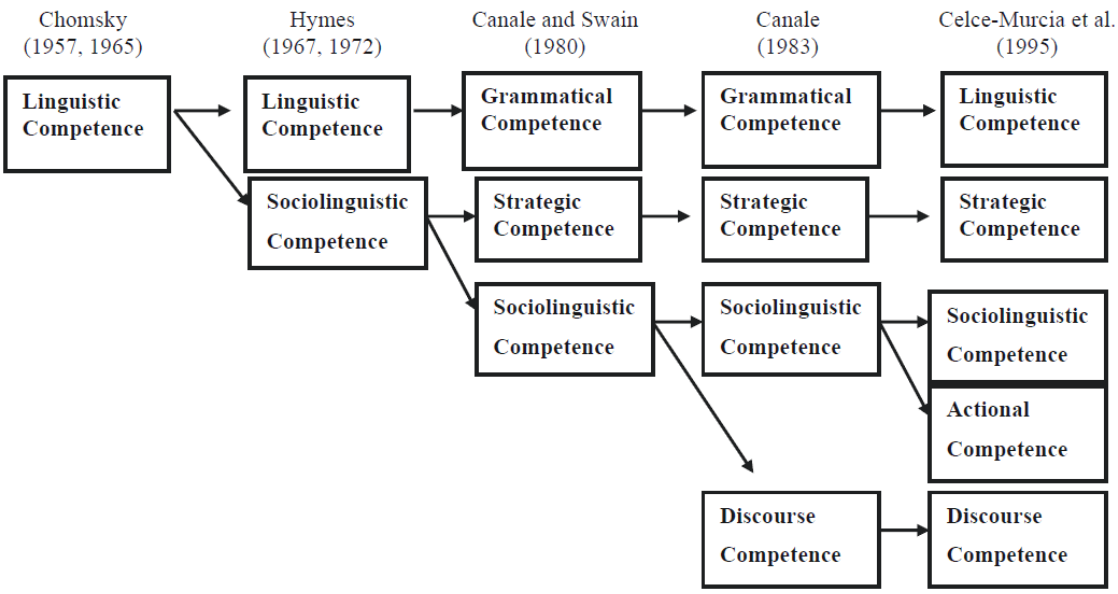


Fig. (4)

Therefore, the first notion of communicative competence was coined by Chomsky in 1957, calling it "linguistic competence", where he focused on linguistic competence of the S claiming that social factors are not part of linguistic importance. Nevertheless, Hymes thought the contrary, stating almost a decade after that communicative competence must consider both linguistic competence (that is, the describing and combining sound system's rules) and sociolinguistic competence (that is, considering the contextual rules and their proper use) in order to take into account both acquisition and use of language.

In consequence, a model made by Canale and Swain (1980) was created to complement both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence ideas of Hymes

(1972) (in which linguistic competence was referred by them as grammatical competence) adding the concept of strategic competence, related to the ability of problem's compensation in different communicative plans. Later on, Canale added in 1983 the concept of discourse competence, considering it as "the ability to produce and interpret language beyond the sentence level" (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 42).

It was not until 90s that Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed a new competence: actional competence, related to "the ability to comprehend and produce all significant speech acts and speech acts sets" (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 42). It was proposed by the authors certain modifications to the Canale-Swain model mentioned before:

"(1) that sociolinguistic competence be modified to sociocultural competence (the cultural background knowledge needed to interpret and use a language effectively) and (2) that grammatical competence be re-labeled as linguistic competence to explicitly include the sound system and the lexicon as well as the grammar (i.e., morphology and syntax)"

(Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 42)

The following model is what they considered as the ideal of these competences, describing it as the center of it the core competence, which, according to Celce-Murcia, considers that "the lexico-grammatical resources, the actional organizing skills, and the sociocultural context all come together and shape the discord" (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 44). The three triangle's edges are top-down and bottom-up learning methods. The inner arrows indicate that these competences are in constant interaction between them and the core competence, in contrast with the outer arrows, which indicates strategic competences of communicative, cognitive and metacognitive skills.

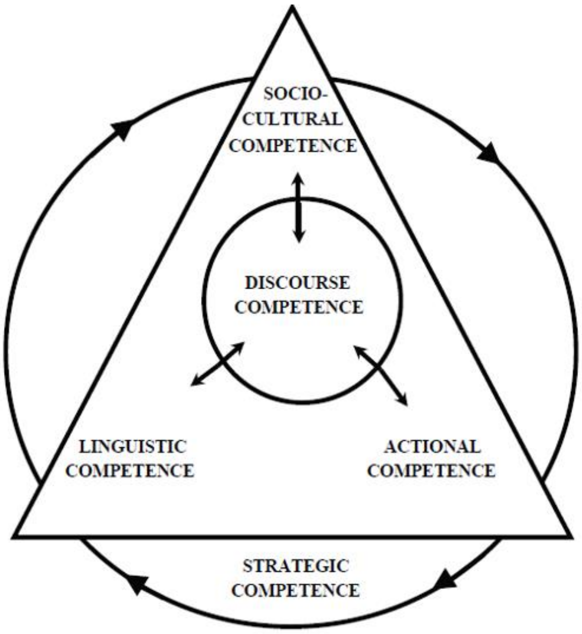


Fig. (5)

Nevertheless, it was Celce-Murcia herself who in 2007 changed again the model of 1995, where she actualized her model into a different shape:

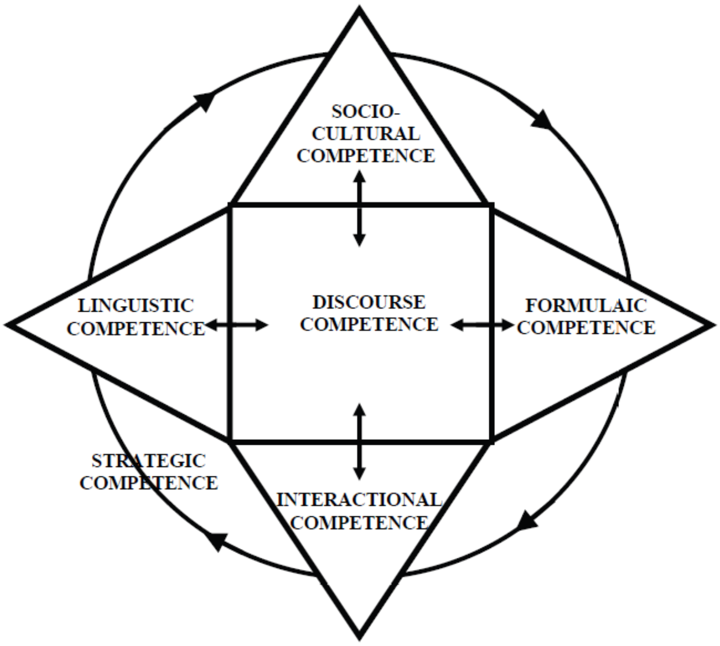


Fig. (6)

It is appreciable that Celce-Murcia changed some competences (such as eliminating actional competence, and dividing it into interactional and formulaic competence) while maintaining others (such as socio-cultural, linguistic, discourse and strategic competences). These categories are explored in the following subsections.

1.4.1. Discourse competence

It is maintained as the central competence of any communicative competence, referring to selection, sequencing, structures, utterances and arrangement of words that the S does in order to achieve a unified message. Therefore, this competence is regulated by four areas: Cohesion, related to the linguistic interrelation of the parts of the message; Deixis, related to the linguistic elements used to determined personal pronouns, spatial terms, temporal terms and textual reference; Coherence, related to the logic relation between two or more things; and the Generic structure, which performs the user performs to identify whether an oral discourse is a conversation, a lecture, a narrative, etc.

1.4.2. Linguistic Competence

Therefore, Linguistic competences are determined by specific types of knowledge: Phonology, which consider segmental and suprasegmental knowledge; Lexic, which considers content and unction words' knowledge (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns, determiners, prepositions and verbal auxiliaries, respectively); Morphology, considering speech parts, process of derivational type and inflections of grammar; and Syntax, considering the structure of phrase and constituent, the types of sentences, the modifications and coordinations, and so on.

1.4.3. Formulaic Competence

Considered as the counterbalance of the competence described before, it works with the pieces of language used by Ss in their daily routine interactions. It considers routine phrases, collocations, idioms, and lexical frames.

1.4.4. Interactional Competence

This competence has sub areas that are considered by the author relevant to its application. These are Actional Competence, which is the “knowledge of how to perform common speech acts and speech act sets in the target language involving interactions such as information exchanges, expression of opinions and feelings, problems, future scenarios”, and so on (Celce Murcia, 2007, p. 48); and Conversational Competence, related to the turn taking system in a determined conversation (Celce Murcia, 2007). This subarea considers dialogue genres such as opening and closing conversation, the establishment of topics and the changes of them, how to interrupt a conversation, the nonlinguistic resources employed on the conversation, etc.

1.4.5. Strategic Competence

It is thought that in order to enhance L2 learning, the learner must present learning strategies or communication strategies. Hence, the author mentioned that learners that present both effective use of these strategies tend to learn faster and better. On one hand, learning strategies considers cognitive, metacognitive and memory-related abilities as important to develop a successful learning method. On the other hand, communicative strategies consider achievement, time gaining, self-monitoring, and social abilities as important to develop themselves as good L2 learners.

1.4.6. Sociocultural Competence

According to the author, this competence “refers to the S’s pragmatic knowledge, i.e., how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication” (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 46) The variables that determine whether the learner succeeds in the use of this competence are social contextual factors, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural factors.

1.4.7 Pragmatic Competence

In addition to what Celce-Murcia postulated, the concept of Pragmatic Competence encompasses different aspects of her competences' descriptions. It is defined by Taguchi as "the ability to use language appropriately in a social context" (2009, p. 1). Its study focuses on questions such as: "What does it mean to become pragmatically competent in a second language (L2)? How can we examine pragmatic competence to make inferences of its development among L2 learners? In what ways do research findings inform teaching and assessment of pragmatic competence?" (Taguchi, 2009, p. 1).

In the learners' case, they need to use linguistics forms, such as grammatical and lexical abilities in order to perform a successful and functional utterance or speech act, e.g., greeting, requesting, apologizing, etc. According to the author, the pragmatic competence must present a certain number of skills from the S, so they can combine both sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics features in order to be considered as successful.

Even though pragmatic competence deals with pragmalinguistics (and sociopragmatic) features, it differs from Grammatical Competence, as the last one focuses on the correctness of the exercise of choosing the right structure, the right word or phrase according to grammatical rules. In contrast, pragmatic competence focuses on which terms are appropriate depending on the given context, which would be defined not only by your linguistic repertoire but also by your own knowledge of the context and culture in which we as Ss are involved. Wang (1999) highlights the previous idea on her work: "since our learners must deal with differences between their native language and culture, which clearly reflect values and social norms, it is crucial for them not only to understand the system, but also to be able to use it with proper pragmatics" (p.1).

Therefore, Pragmatic Competence has been widely investigated in theoretical works. The term appeared from many authors at the decade of the 90s (such as Bachman, Palmer, Canale and Swain) in theoretical models of L2 communicative competences, merged from the notion of communicative competences, a term that Hymes developed in 1972 (cited in Taguchi, 2009). Later on, an interactional competence (Young and He, 1998; Young, 2000, cited both in Taguchi, 2009) and symbolic competence (Kramsch and Whiteside, 2008, cited in Taguchi, 2009) research appeared as an alternative to the notion of communicative competence's models, focusing directly onto dialogic aspects of communication. Furthermore, these studies positioned both sociolinguistic competences and pragmatic fields as an indispensable characteristic to investigate L2 proficiency, where it is stated by Taguchi that the "ability to perform language functions and knowledge of socially appropriate language use had to be operationalized in some way as a measurable construct, and specific tasks, instruments, and analytical methods were explored to elicit and examine this construct" (2009, p. 2).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section we discussed the relevant literature that dealt with the study of Second Language (L2) pragmatics learning, regarding the presence of speech acts and politeness. Therefore, the role that the literature had in our investigation was relevant due to the conception of these learning processes and the factors which affect this procedure, having a direct relation with ourselves as students of English as a Second Language (ESL). On top of that, this information helped us to understand in a simpler manner how email communication is developed in terms of pragmatics and English learners.

2.1. Pragmatics and L2 learning

It is a well-known fact that “linguistic competence is not sufficient for [the development of] communicative competence” in a second or foreign language (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, p. 62). And this is where pragmatics enters the picture in L2 learning. However, teaching and learning L2 pragmatics has been considered as a real challenge by the majority of the researchers of this area, the difficulty of developing a learning atmosphere in which students could face real life situations, and the fact that the subject is not part of the community learning the particular L2, are two of the biggest difficulties that make learning L2 pragmatics a difficult task.

Taguchi (2015) points out that L2 learners face important difficulties when learning pragmatics, this is partly because of the complexity of pragmatics which goes beyond just focusing on formal aspects. She adds that in order to learn pragmatics, students need to pay attention to multipart mapping, particularly: form, meaning, function, force, and context. Wolfson (1989) highlights the importance of linguistic and non-linguistic means as required tools to perform social functions, and also that norms and conventions to achieve communicative purposes are often solely defined in relation to a particular culture. Hence, it might be difficult for the learner to notice how people project appropriate levels of politeness or how they communicate meaning indirectly. The previous ideas expressed by both authors briefly explain some of the biggest difficulties in the process of teaching L2 pragmatics.

Roever & Taguchi (2017) state that research into instruction in L2 pragmatics has been conducted for almost as long as research into uninstructed learning of L2 pragmatics, with the first major instructional study appearing in the mid-1980s, developed by Wildner-Bassett in 1984. Moreover, House (1996) addresses the discussion of learning pragmatics in L2 by making a comparison between two methods of acquiring pragmatic fluency in a group of students. In her research she analyzes if fluency could best be acquired in the classroom by provision of input and opportunity for communicative practice alone, or whether learners' profit more when additional explicit instruction in the use of conversational routines is provided. Ellis (2009) approaches the discussion of teaching L2 pragmatics by presenting task-based language teaching. According to Widdowson et al. (1992, in Ellis, 2009), this model achieves success in teaching pragmatic meaning to the learners, but it fails regarding the semantic sphere of language.

Taguchi expresses that: "existing studies roughly fall into two categories: observational and interventional. Observational studies explore opportunities for pragmatic learning available in a classroom, while intervention studies implement specific instruction and assess learning outcomes using a pre-post design" (2019, p. 12-13). After making this distinction, Taguchi (2019) maintains that observational and interventional methods fail in their goal of teaching pragmatics to L2 learners. The author refers to a couple of studies that could be labelled as observational and interventional respectively. The first one, by Tateyama (2019) analyzed classroom discourse and how it provides opportunities for pragmatics-related language use, facilitating the pragmatic development of the students, while the second one, by Tatsuki (2019), analyzed the pragmatics-focused information and practice provided in textbooks (Tatsuki, 2019). Taguchi (2019) concludes that observational studies show the classroom not as an ideal place for pragmatic learning since the language used in it does not reflect a variety of communicative situations. Learners do not interact with Ss of diverse social roles, and the amount of pragmatic samples that they find is restricted. In the case of interventional studies, she highlights that "textbooks have been criticized for the paucity of pragmatics-focused materials" (p.13), and reinforces her point providing an example in which Vellenga (2004) analyzed eight English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks, with the results evidencing that less than 30% of textbooks involved pragmatics content.

She also mentioned that learning strategies have been largely investigated in L2 studies, although those investigations have discussed a variety of aspects in L2 that could be improved by the implementation of strategies when learning. Pragmatics has not been the case since few studies have addressed the importance of learning strategies for this area. The first studies that considered the implementation of strategies for pragmatics learning had appeared during the middle 2000s. Taguchi pointed out that:

"Cohen (2005) was the first to present taxonomies of strategies for pragmatics learning. He proposed a set of speech acts learning strategies (e.g., using a memory aid to remember speech act expressions). Following this, Cohen and Shively (2007) examined the effect of strategy instruction in learning speech acts while abroad (L2 French and Spanish) and found some effects"

(2009, p.15)

A more recent approach was introduced by Oxford (2011), her work was based on a strategic self-regulation model, in which learners actively use strategies to manage their own learning process. This model addressed three dimensions of learning, which are cognitive, affective and sociocultural. The first one attends to the task of processing knowledge, the second one deals with the mental aspect of learning, and the third one assists learners' interaction with the target community.

2.2. Speech Acts and Politeness in EFL

Speech acts are broadly considered in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) investigations as a resourceful tool thanks to the wide universe of options of analysis such as apologies, complaints, or requests. In the case of speech act realization in an L2, Ss/learners must dominate both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistics norms in order to fulfill certain communicative purposes in an appropriate manner (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Furthermore, speech acts should be regulated by their level of politeness, and if the S is considering the aspects of the positive and negative face. Cohen & Olshtein state that an apology, for example:

"(...) is potentially complex because it can comprise a series of speech acts, such as expressing apology (I'm sorry), acknowledging responsibility (That was dumb of me), offering repair (Here, let me pick them up), and giving an explanation or excuse"

(1993, p. 34).

In terms of EFL, both speech acts and politeness are study cases thanks to the possible violations of sociocultural norms. According to Seliger, the nonnative Ss were classified in two categories: “the planners and the correctors; the former plan out their utterances before delivering them, whereas the latter start talking and make midcourse corrections” (1980, cited in Cohen & Olshtain, 1993, p. 34-35). One issue here is how these learners plan and correct, what resources they use and why.

There have been several studies of Speech Acts and Politeness in EFL situations. According to Cohen & Olshtain, one of the first studies was using verbal reports in speech act production, conducted by Motti. The study had 10 intermediate level EFL university students, which were requested to produce spoken apologies, later giving a retrospective verbal report data (1980, in Cohen & Olshtain, 1993). The students mentioned that they were thinking about many things when producing the utterances. These thoughts were, for example, an analysis of the possible variables of apologies depending on the age and status of the reader; or thinking first in Portuguese rather than just thinking in English.

Another more recent study by Chen (2001) about American and Taiwanese graduate students’ email requests, compares the ability of the students that know how to use query preparators (such as “can you”) and want statements (such as “I want to/would like to) when realizing their requests, but specifically in their lexico-syntactic abilities to use politeness features (such as the use of past tense, please, possibly, etc.). The study gave as a result that NS are more indirect and polite than NNS when doing their requests (cited in Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, 63).

These studies are supported by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), carried out by Blum Kulka, House and Kasper (1989, cited in Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). According to Biesenbach-Lucas, the CCSARP:

“Analyzes requests in terms of (a) direct and indirect strategies realized by particular linguistics structures (e.g., imperatives are direct while could/would you constructions are indirect), (b) request modification realized by lexical items and syntactic elements, and (c) request perspective (from H's or S's viewpoint) that serve to mitigate the force of the request and thus assure compliance through greater politeness”

(Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, p. 63)

Even though this method is specifically made for requests, it can be used for other Speech Acts, such as those that are categorized as Directives, Representatives, Expressives or Commissives.

The research mentioned before can be summed up with others in order to determine that it has been discovered that both NS and NNS present different features in their politeness abilities. It was observed by Blum-Kulka and Levinson (1987, cited in Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), that NNS used lexical and syntactic devices that differ from how NS norms are stated, achieving pragmatic effects that diverge from those intended, e.g., the tendency of using please in ways that mark the utterances as a requestive force, in preference of using a politeness marker (p. 64-65).

In general terms, both Speech Acts and Politeness in EFL are determined by the sociocultural norms that the NNS are exposed to, in comparison to NS that are normally adapted to those norms. In the case of learners, not being aware of certain norms can give rise to what is known as Pragmatic failures, or the inability to communicate appropriately, a topic developed in section 1.2. “Pragmatic failure”, in the Theoretical Framework section.

2.3. English learners' Pragmatics and email communication

The studies of language in email communication have characterized email as a ‘hybrid medium’ similar to ‘informal letters’ and ‘telephone conversations’ (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3195). On the one hand, some of the common elements between email language and speech are the dynamic, interactive and ephemeral nature. On the other hand, e-messages cannot be categorized as spoken messages because the participants are not able to see or hear each other (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3194). Furthermore, Chen (2001) points out that email has become a popular interpersonal communication medium, with characteristics of both spoken and written language. This form is also mentioned since the variety of discourse strategies that have been employed in oral and written communication are present in email communication as well.

The way in which email is used as a form of communication requires a different understanding of how language interferes with the writer and the audience relationship, of the differences between formal and informal writing, and of what is private and what is public. This idea is explained by Bloch (2002), where he mentioned that email allows for more carefully prepared discussions. Nevertheless, synchronic forms of discourse, that is to say face-to-face interaction could be more useful in many situations than any kind of computer mediated communication. The notion mentioned above is also raised by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), in face-to-face encounters power routines are usually present, and such routines may manifest in different ways in email communication to an authority figure.

In the last decade, Emails in academic contexts have become an indispensable tool that is constantly changing. The pragmatics of foreign language in email writing, however, has not been much studied, therefore there is little information about this phenomenon (Bou-Franch, 2013).

In her work, Bou-Franch investigated the electronic discourse in a group of Spanish learners of EFL and their degree of (in)formality and (in)directness. As email communication has broadly complemented face to face interaction (Taylor el al., 2011 in Bou-Franch, 2013), research emphasis has mostly been on the imposition, social distance and power relations in ESL students' email, evaluating their pragmatic adaptation in a foreign language (Duthler, 2006; Knupsky & Nagy-Bell, 2011 in Bou-Franch, 2013). Studies have shown that different contexts can affect the formal and informal styles combined in email writing, as well as the degree of (in)directness that can vary across cultures and situations; this is why in pragmatics the cross-cultural variation and their expression in a foreign language is an interesting area to research (Bou-Franch, 2013). As the author mentioned: "it was not until Hymes (1971) bridged the gap between language and society, through the formulation of a socially-situated communicative competence, that the study of pragmatic transfer became centre stage" (Bou-Franch, 2013, p. 3). The interaction between pragmatic knowledge and skills from different languages and cultures is what is called pragmatic transfer (cf. Kasper, 1992 in Bou-Franch, 2013).

The results of Bou-Franch's work showed a preference for formality and conventional indirectness when ESL participants wrote their emails. The informality found in FL learners' emails can be explained due to the deficient training in sending/receiving emails to/from higher status users and the students' reliance on their previous email experience. However, in the EFL study emails were mostly formal, this highlights the use of formality in academic exchange. In terms of directness, conventional indirectness is the predominant 'strategic' way of formulating a request, showing a balance between avoiding the imposition and making the message clear, as the author mentioned: "conventionally indirect strategies are seen as balancing transactional and interpersonal goals, clarity and politeness, in efficient ways" (Márquez Reiter et al., 2005, in Bou-Franch, 2013).

This illustrates that students with knowledge of a new language can be aware of contextual factors and adapt to them. On the one hand, regarding pragmatic transfer, it can be assumed that it exists in EFL email communication and that it promotes the use of formality in the writing. On the other hand, the comparative study showed almost identical patterns in terms of (in)directness (Bou-Franch, 2013).

Email has become an accepted and liked way of communication between university students and staff. Studies have been focused on requests, principally comparing pragmatic performance of nonnative Ss of English (NNSs) with those of native Ss (NSs) (Ren, 2017). Bloch (2002) argues that, like any other form of communication in Cyberspace, email can break down the time and space limitations that exist in traditional classrooms, and by dissolving these boundaries of time and space, email can erase the traditional barriers between teachers and students (p. 122) Following this view of the email's relevance in a university community, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) mentions the importance that few ESL books include sections on email communication; they usually focus more on overall email etiquette than specific speech and production. This leads to pedagogical intervention to appropriate student-professor email interactions and their own materials. In Ford's view (2003) there is also a shortage of pedagogical materials dedicated to the systematic instruction of the pragmatics of email communication in the ESL context since most textbooks of academic writing for ESL students provide brief sections on email usage, which is focused on formal and functional rules for the university setting.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) mentioned that few studies have focused on how nonnative Ss of English express their L2 email requests from a pragmatic perspective, and on the linguistic features that might violate the social appropriateness and power asymmetry characteristic of this kind of status incongruent relationships. The author argues that in email communication there is a preference for directness, insufficient mitigation and lack of acknowledgment of the degree of imposition which might not be typical of nonnative S communication but of the email itself. Among young people who live within an instant messaging culture, speed and directness are particularly valued. To confirm this claim further contrastive research between native and nonnative S email to faculty is necessary. The pragmatic instruction is important and relevant not only to nonnative students but for native students as well, as Reza (2012) mentions, students in general might be equally unsure about what is appropriate and preferred when it comes to email communication in university settings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Objectives and Research Questions

3.1.1. General objective

To characterize the speech act structure and politeness perspective used in the email communication written in English to faculty by a group of Licenciatura students.

3.1.1.1. Specific objectives

1. To identify which are the speech acts most frequently used by students when writing an email in English to faculty.
2. To determine and characterize the type of modification (internal or external) employed by students when writing an email in English to faculty.
3. To identify the dominant perspective of politeness employed by students when writing an email in English to faculty.
4. To characterize the changes over a four and a half year period in the emails written by students in English to faculty.

3. 1. 2. Research questions

1. Which are the main speech acts, as defined by the Head Acts, most used by students when writing emails to faculty in English?
2. What type of modifications (internal or external) are used by students in their speech acts and what are their structural characteristics?

3. What is the dominant politeness perspective appreciable on the Head Acts and Openers performed by the students when writing emails to the faculty?

4. What changes can be identified in the realization of the speech acts in the emails written by students over a 4.5-year period, in terms of: the Head Act, modification, and politeness perspective?

3.2. Participants

This is a self-study. We are six native Chilean Spanish speakers, senior students of English Linguistics and Literature from the University of Chile. There are two females and four males, and the age range is between 22 and 23 years old (at the time of gathering the data). Under the circumstances of every member of the investigation team, they all had to study one more year than the official length of the program. That is, 9 semesters at the time of the data, in contrast to the 8 semesters that the program has as the official duration.

3.3. Approach

The characteristics of this study allow us to label it as an exploratory one since the topic of the email production within an academic context has not been largely studied. The context under which we are carrying out this research is exceptional due to the fact that the corpus was influenced by non-regular situations, such as a social outbreak and a pandemic. Both situations entail a context where people, specifically students, were obligated to stay at home. Hence, the usage of technological devices such as the computer and the cellphone increased importantly, and as a result the communication between student and professor became mainly online through email exchange, making a significant contrast with face-to-face communication which was the ruling method before those events. In addition, the focus of the work is on an aspect of communication that has not been taught widely.

The pandemic context under which we are doing this research also plays a fundamental role, the fact that people all around the world have to stay in home and conduct online classes is a scenario that proliferates the production of emails in a large scale within an academic context, the increase in the usage of email communication as well as the employment of language that individuals make in order to deliver their messages have been affected due to the pandemic.

The impact of the Covid-19 on the email communication exchange, specifically in an academic context, is one of the issues that we can appreciate in this research, and because of the unexpected arrival of the pandemic, any effect or change produced by it would be an interesting and novel finding.

Another important point, is the fact that this is a self-study of our production of email messages, the work with our corpus and the possibility of interviewing among ourselves in depth, grants an innovative way of work regarding this topic. Moreover, the lack of studies concerning this topic in our country, Chile, highlights the exploratory quality of this research, making the results and discoveries fresh and innovative within our local community.

3.4. Type of study

In this study we decided to use a mixed method to describe the email texts that the participants produced in certain situations. We first revised the corpus with a qualitative method, that is to say, we categorized the different emails based not only in previous literature about speech acts and politeness but we had meetings were the contexts of the emails were discussed, in these meetings two perspectives collapsed at times, what the group categorized externally based on the forms of the emails, and what the intention of the author of the email was when writing.

We decided to classify the emails with the focus being the intention of the author, since categorization based on the forms of the emails are vastly present in the current pragmatic field. We thought the context behind the emails with the intentions being available was something rarely found in studies and could potentially be illuminating in the posterior analysis. This meant that if we encountered a contradiction between the intention behind the message and how the message was delivered, we classified the email by the intention. This decision was taken because we did encounter linguistic structures and patterns being used in unorthodox ways, however composition was not disregarded in any case, and it was considered too. This results in a gap that future investigation could cover

We transformed the emails and the categories into quantitative data, since it helped us to systematize the study's phenomena, the purpose of these is to give a more accurate and objective perspective about how "us" as a particular group of English students communicated, to detect trends, preferences, styles, and resources to figure out what type of politeness and structure of the speech acts were the most common. These two sides of the investigation proved to be crucial when asking ourselves about the objectives of our work, describing a phenomenon is a complex task to do, through numbers and classifications we could shape the study to be a coherent unit that fulfilled its role.

Results would be analyzed in a mixed way, the quantitative information was used not only with the purpose of describing what we as subjects were doing pragmatically, they also offered us other angles to consider the study, with more generalized data we could adopt a top-down view.

3.5. Sample and context

The present study is based on the analysis of 64 emails written in English and sent by a group of students from 2017 until May of 2021. One student of the participants started the program back in 2016, the rest of the participants belong to the next generation starting the program in 2017, and May 2021 corresponds to the moment when we agreed on the topic of this study. Hence, the time lapse is the years that all the participants have shared at the University. We do not include emails written after this date because the emails that were written and sent after May 2021 might have been written with bias (whether pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic, or both) as we were explicitly discussing emails from a pragmatic perspective. For example, precautions may have been taken from the students in terms of the grammatical elections, of respecting the distance between professor-student, among others.

The sample of the study corresponds to a specific context given by the University, the program, and the nature of the participants in the exchange (student – professor relation). The students are typically referred to as second language learners of English and they were trying to establish communication effectively with the professors in this educational context.

As students of English literature and linguistics we are taught how to communicate successfully in English. In this sense, we are prepared to face listening and writing activities along with oral presentations; the three components are practiced in classes to be evaluated in tests. According to the program and depending on the semester we were studying the focus had changed, as we were moving forward the contents acquired more specificity along. The focus of the teaching and the program was to perform with a correct use of English, meaning that academic or educated, proper English was the variety that we learnt.

It is worth mentioning that the emails were chosen from the data that we as students have access to, the emails that are in our corpus are only the ones written in English exclusively, meaning that probably we communicated through email with our professors in Spanish before and after this study was carried out. Some names were deleted or changed on purpose to protect the privacy of classmates that were not part of this study, in any case this situation does not change or affect the result since we are analyzing the head acts of the emails. Openings and closing of the emails, as well as the structure are going to be analyzed too to identify resources of politeness and what are the most common structures used by the students. Why do the students write emails for is the main factor for this study, the main features are going to be classified under the following speech acts categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.

The teaching of English was targeted only in one class, the other components of the program were also in English, but the focus was different for example linguistics or literature. We learnt English in terms of grammar, vocabulary, oral expression, written discourse, reading comprehension, and ear training for the purposes of listening. The class was divided by semesters into English Language Pre-intermediate I, English Language Pre-intermediate II, English Language Intermediate I, English Language Intermediate II, English Language Upper Intermediate I, English Language Upper Intermediate II, Advanced English I, and Advanced English II. The main tool used by the University and our professors, which is also mentioned in all the programs, is the use of the textbook series from National Geographic Learning: Life. Along with dictionaries, websites and the reading of a semestral book that later will be evaluated on a test.

The activities designed for our learning process were specified on the semestral program and accordingly, with the activities from the different units from *Life* books. *Life*'s books are divided into Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper-Intermediate and Advanced. In the same line, each book was divided into twelve thematic units. During the first semester of each academic year, it was planned to cover from unit one to six, and during the second semester of each academic year units seven to twelve were planned to be covered. However, it varied depending on how the specific academic year and class was, for instance one first semester the pre-intermediate group read and worked until unit six while the Advanced group only reached unit four. Meaning that not all the contents were fully covered with the guidance of a professor, the material was fully available for the students.

Considering the time in classes that was exclusively designed to the teaching of English exclusively, it was theoretically impossible to develop all the activities contained in the books with its corresponding feedback. According to the programs, the time established to accomplish all the competences and sub competencies was divided into two groups: time in classes, meaning face-to-face teaching, and the time that we as students dedicated to study outside the classroom, non-presential. The working hours were expressed sometimes as hours per week, varying from 6-7,5 hours depending on the year, and sometimes it was expressed with bigger numbers like 135 or 162 hours per semester. In the case of non-presential hours of work, it usually varied from 5 to 7 hours. Learning and developing new skills involves a process that takes time and accordingly with what was established as competences and sub-competences along with the focus of the classes the final aim remains the same across the years: develop oral and written comprehension and production. Nevertheless, there is no mention of email writing, as there is no mention of a pragmatic approach involved in the hours of work whether face to face or non-presential.

There is across the competences and sub competences the notion of communicating effectively in English as L2, also it is the application of theoretical and descriptive perspectives in the linguistic analysis of English. “Recognize, decode and comprehend” different types of oral and written discourses are usually mentioned in the programs.

The teaching of written skills does not include the writing of emails, not on the programs but some activities of Life books are about writing emails. However, the writing of emails is thought with a pragmatic approach in one page (p. 137) from Advanced book, in the thematic unit of “Reason and Emotion”, “11e Don’t get me wrong”:

Writing an email message

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

1 It’s said that up to 40 per cent of all emails are misinterpreted in some way. Why do you think this happens?
2 When was the last time you had a misunderstanding in an email exchange with someone? What happened?

4 Writing skill avoiding misunderstandings

Look at the phrases used for avoiding or clearing up misunderstandings (1–8). Then use the phrases to rewrite the emails and make them clearer. In some cases you can use more than one phrase, but in D you only need to correct the grammar mistake.

1 Don’t take this the wrong way.
2 No offence intended.
3 I don’t want to pressure you.
4 I’m joking, of course.
5 It took me rather by surprise.
6 Many thanks for getting back to me so quickly.
7 I do appreciate all your work on this.
8 I am not offended in any way.

(Dummett, Hughes & Stephenson, 20, p.137)

These two activities are representative of what we are aiming to illustrate. Teaching and learning are complex processes that need to be addressed in several perspectives to get the most out of the result of both processes. In this sense emails are representative of those processes since they were written in the most natural environment possible and reflect the sum of teaching and learning along with the need for effective communication. Also, the approach of this study is from pragmatics where it is more suitable to take into evaluation an individual and personalized sample where it is possible to find the context and all the variables being part of a whole.

4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the first RQ, every participant analyzed their own corpus of emails individually, searching for the HAs, understanding this concept as the utterance containing the main purpose behind every email interaction. After that, the corpus was analyzed by the whole group in order to corroborate each participant´s findings and validate the results. Then, every email was quantified and classified by one participant, who individually met with the other 5 participants to review their corpus separately, in order to clarify any remaining doubts about which were the main speech acts in every email, to finally end up dividing every HAs in different tables and statistics.

Once the distinctions were ready, we quantified the amount of main speech acts according to the five different types of speech acts proposed by Searle, which are shown in section 1.2.1. Speech Acts Categories of the Theoretical Framework. This allowed the identification of tendencies in the corpus: which were the most common categories of speech acts, or why students wrote emails to teachers. We also divided the corpus by year, in order to see which main speech act prevailed every year of the analysis. The next step consisted in assigning the speech acts to subcategories within the general categories, following also the categorization proposed by Searle, but with a few modifications. This resulted in 9 subcategories. In our analysis, we found the presence of some speech acts corresponding to the category of "Expressive" that we could not classify into any of the proposed subcategories. After analyzing the HAs with the whole group and the context that surrounded the email, we decided to create 3 new subcategories that in our opinion captured the purpose or intention of the different HAs. Then, the classification of HAs regarding main categories and subcategories ended up as the table (1) shows:

REPRESENTATIVES
- Informative
DIRECTIVES
- Requesting
-Questioning
EXPRESSIVES
-Thanking
-Apologizing
- Wishing Good
- Rejoice
-Worrying
COMMISSIVES
-Promise
DECLARATIVES
There is no presence of any Declarative HA.

Table (1)

Also, it is worth mentioning that there were some emails in which we found more than one main speech act which was categorized individually, because our intention was to put attention not only in the writer's main goal but also in every communicative instance that was worth highlighting. These instances were analyzed by the whole group, considering the writer´s original intention and the context that surrounded the email when it was necessary. The following 2 examples aim to exemplify a counterpart between first an email that clearly contained more than one main speech act and the second one that although states more than one communicative intention surrounds one main goal only.

Hi teacher, first of all thank you for understanding the situation**, I think that the best option for my case is number 2,** given though mails is the easiest way to communicate with the sources I hace, so If I understood well, **should I send you an email with a 300 words commentary about Titus Andronicus?** if its okay for tomorrow I could send it on the afternoon, and then, **should I continue doing the same with the other tales? One tale one email?**
If I understood it wrong please let me know.
And as a final question, tomorrow I have to submit my topic arround Hamlet, then if I have problems submitting my presentation, **should I send you a preavious email?** I think Hamlet presentation deadline is the Next tuesday.
Thank you again, and have a good week!!

Ex. (3)

Dear professor,
I hope this message finds you well, we are writing this email, to inform you that we have not been able to develop a significant advance in our oral presentation, due to one of us only have one computer at home and is obligated to share it and the other have only the phone to do the work.
Based on escuela de pregrado´s resolution of being in a marcha blanca period until May 25th, we assumed that through this period we would not be requested to make compulsory activities, so we felt carefree about the established deadline of the work assuming that we would have the possibility of sending the work around the May 25th week, **we would like to follow the faculty resolution and request you the opportunity to send the presentation when the marcha blanca period is over**, we know that you consider the realization of this work as a diagnostic evaluation and also that there is the chance to resend the work in the May 25th week, but we think that is prejudiced being evaluated in base of a work that we developed in a context that doesn't allow us to do our best performance.
Hence we request you the chance to send the presentation once the marcha blanca is over or at least more time to finish our work.
Best regards!
Catalina Carrillo and Luciano Martínez

Ex. (4)

The sections in bold in the first emails are examples of more than one main HA in the email, as all these sections represent a different communicative intention and also follow a different purpose. While the first main speech act is a Representative type of email as it aims to give information, the following 3 main speech acts not only follow a different classification of speech act (Directive) but also refers to a different previous conversation, a different topic. On the other hand, although the second email explicitly starts by saying “we are writing this email to inform you" (our emphasis) which may confuse about the classification of the main speech act, this extract works as a PreM to the main HA used in order to keep the face with the teacher regarding the hierarchical order. The main and only HA in this case would be "request you the opportunity to send the presentation when the marcha blanca period is over".

In order to answer the second RQ, related to the structure of the emails, we separated the emails by the amount of EM that they had, differentiating PreM from PostM modifications. Once the distinctions were ready, we quantified the amount of HAs that corresponded to the different types of speech acts proposed by Searle to see any inclinations that we as students had. We repeated the process to quantify the different structures that were present in the emails.

As we encountered fuzzy HAs, we were able to use the advantage of the participants being ourselves to clarify the intentions and the context, which accompanied the text, proved to be essential to discern the core of the email. Since our approach means to capture "natural communication", this had a great impact when analyzing the corpus. From the beginning, our objectives had been descriptive, as we are not looking for any given results, the "perfect" or elaborated conditions that the majority of studies have when they collect data was not applicable here, or at the very least, was not aligned with our investigation. However, this also means that we are not able to get the accuracy of a controlled and reduced environment. When participants are tested or asked to produce a "request" (which is the speech act that seems to be studied the most), the results are funneled into concrete data. Is this the reason that we also needed to clarify context and intention when proposing a certain "HA", or if there was more than one in the same email.

When addressing the structure that the different emails had, we started from the previous classification of the HAs in the first research question. Therefore, we analyzed the different parts of the email. First, there was a classification made for every single email that went through a process of discussion between the group, especially with the author of the email. This serves the purpose of solving if any classified PreM or PostM would instead be OP/CL. This was also in cases where there were more than one HA to determine, which each HA was the modification aiming for. There is no further description or classification of the EM/IM since in this section we only focus on their presence.

The different OPs and CLs were found sometimes in the body of the emails, and since there were a significant amount of emails that did not have OPs and CLs, we looked at each case individually to determine if some sequences such as "Thank you" were to be considered as a modification or not.

We designed a table which contains every structure found in the corpus and all the years that we were considering in this study. This shows not only tendencies in a synchronic way, but helping us to look for the influence of time in the choices of every student and of every student in general:

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
Ha						
Pre-ha						
2Pre-ha						
3Pre-ha						
4Pre-ha						
Ha-post						
Ha-2post						
Ha-3post						
Ha-6post						
Pre-ha-post						
3Pre-ha-post						
Pre-ha-2post						
Pre-ha-4post						
2Pre-ha-2post						
4Pre-ha-3post						

Table (2)

This table goes from the most basic structure, the HA isolated, to more complex forms, such as 4 PreM before the HA and 3 PostM after it. This table was used in the general data, and we replicated the formula for every student individually too.

We chose to systematize the criteria for every single email. The result of this led us to not consider as modifications parts of the body, such as “this message is to” and “I send this email to u because”, since they had no intention behind for the most part. Once this was established, we reviewed every email containing this type of structure with the person who wrote them to decide if it constituted an exception. An example of this is found in the email number 6 of Catalina (available in the appendix), where “I would like to know,” was considered as a modification. A few things were involved in this decision, such as the comma present there, which shows the one reading the message a pause and indicating the importance of this phrase as a preparation for the next part of the email: “the 5 decimals can be added to the pronunciation test?”.

These exceptions also were present within the closings, since Javier had some really developed or “unusual” closings. We first thought this constituted a PsM as it was not the structure that is found regularly; however, once we discussed this with Javier, we found out that he wrote this closing with no intention.

An example of this situation is found in the email number 10 from Javier’s corpus:

Dear, First of all, I'm deeply sorry about your current situation, and I wish you the best of the best. Secondly, I'm concerned about the notification of a class starting today, because this week we are not supposed to have any, and it would be sad if I missed important information of the course. **Once again, I wish you the best of the world and I hope you are doing better this time.** Javier Sánchez

Ex. (5)

When using strictly pragmalinguistics tools, this sentence might appear as a modification, since it has some straightforward markers that are not typical in closings, the length of if, the repetitions of elements that would constitute a modification (such as "I wish", "I hope", "the best of the world"), and the personalization of the message with "*this time". Looking at this in isolation, one could perfectly believe this is a post modification, but we decided to leave it as a CL after a discussion with him.

Therefore, we made a table centered on the number of internal modifications present in the HAs of the participants, which will give information of the level of customization that every student applied in their HAs. This will also complement the EM data, since we will be able to determine if there were any tendencies about modifying internally or externally, and if this changed over time or not.

Internal Modifications	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
Participant 1						
Participant 2						
Participant 3						
Participant 4						
Participant 5						
Participant 6						

table (3)

To continue with the third RQ, the analysis carried out to investigate the politeness orientation of emails was based, on the one hand, on Bou-Franch's (2013) model of classifying OPs in the emails, where she uses a categorization based on the level of formality of such OPs. On the other hand, the analysis in terms of the positive and negative politeness orientation in the HAs was based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model. In the cases where the orientation was not identifiable, we used the term "neutral" employed by Leech (1983). The politeness analysis of the corpus only considered the HAs and the OPs of the emails, by analyzing them we appreciated the belonging orientation of politeness and formality, respectively. Furthermore, we created 5 different charts and graphics that organized our analyses of the data, and which are shown in the results section.

It is essential to mention that the analysis we made to the corpus considered the linguistic resources used by us in the determined time as well as the context provided by ourselves, which was focused on the HAs appreciable in the emails and their OPs. That is to say, the categorization concerning politeness orientation and (in)formality relied both on the linguistic resources observed in the corpus, such as when the writer employed a word or structure that was intrinsically related to the models in which we based the analysis, and their specific context, such as previous conversations and the communicative intention of writer. The specific HA or OP was classified with the corresponding category. For instance, the example (6) evidences this reliance on the linguistic resources:

> Hey professor,
>
> **it is impossible for me attend to the review session tomorrow at 16:15**, I am able to make it any day of next week, except for Tuesday afternoon.
>
> Regards!

Ex. (6)

The example above evidences the fact that the analysis was based on the linguistics resources employed by ourselves, in this instance the word “impossible”, and its direction to the S by saying “for me”, allowed us to classify this particular HA under the category of negative politeness oriented to S.

In terms of contextual analysis regarding their politeness, the following example shows a chain of emails that are connected by context. For the interpretation of this particular HA, the fact that a dialogue is taking part played a role regarding the categorization of this HA because that was the main reason, we had to label the 2nd email of the chain (the one in bold) as a Negative politeness Hearer-oriented.

The first email shown in the example is key since it allows us to understand the context in which the second email is taking place. The fact that there is a previous misunderstanding regarding the 5 decimals which could not be added to the pronunciation test, makes clear that the second email is a request to add the 5 decimals to another test, in this case the theory test, implying that the request of the first one was denied. In other words, the previous disagreement led us to interpret it as a negative politeness Hearer-oriented since there is an indirect request which was previously interpreted as representative (informative) with a positive politeness orientation.

1. Professor, I would like to know, the 5 decimals can be added to the pronunciation test?

2. **I would like to add the 5 decimals to Theory test 2 please.**

3. Thank you Miss!

   Best regards

Ex. (7)

The politeness analysis of the corpus considered the HAs and the OPs of the emails. In the case of the second ones, it only considered the greeting aimed at the addressee, ignoring the components of the opening sequences which correspond to the body of the email, such as, “I hope you are doing well”. These showed vital character for our investigation, such as formality, politeness orientation, and how these components of the emails were structured by the students with certain strategies in order to fulfill their necessity to communicate something. CL were not considered since there was not valuable data regarding the politeness analysis that we are carrying out. In contrast with OPs, CLs do not imply a direct reference to the addressees of the emails, therefore it was more important for us focusing on the OPs which contain a nominative value because it was a constant in the messages that the writer started their emails by saluting the professors with a particular OP. This variation entails a significant meaning in terms of politeness.

The OPs sequences identified in the corpus were divided into 8 dominant structures of OPs that were used by the students. These sequences were categorized according to their level of formality. It is important to mention that the 11 emails that did not present any OP sequence were not considered for the elaboration of the table presented below since they did not have any relation with the data of formality. Nevertheless, that information is registered in another table in the results section. Therefore, the focus is on the categorization of formality and the realization of the OPs encountered:

Openers	**Categorization**	**Total**
Dear	Formal	-
Dear + Subject	Formal	-
Good (depending on time)	Formal	-
Subject (Miss/mister, Professor, teacher)	Formal	-
Sir	Formal	-
Hello + subject	Informal	-
Hi + subject	Informal	-
Hey + Subject	Informal	-
Total		-

table (4)

Once we defined the politeness orientation of HAs, we decided to examine the politeness orientation of them in relation to their presence in emails with or without OPs, in order to obtain more clarifying data about the relationship between HAs and OPs. The information was divided into 3 categories, which demonstrated a tendency concerning negative politeness, positive politeness and those that had a neutral orientation of politeness. The tendencies were classified with regard to their belonging in emails that had formal OPs, informal OPs or no OPs at all, with the objective of obtaining a representative quantification of politeness orientations regarding these categories of OPs, as it is demonstrated in the table below:

Politeness orientation on HA	**Frequency on Formal OPs**	**Frequency on Informal OPs**	**No OPs**
Positive Politeness	-	-	-
Negative Politeness	-	-	-
Neutral	-	-	-

table (5)

A similar analysis was carried out with the HAs: we analyzed them with the positive and negative orientation categories. When classifying the HAs in relation to their politeness perspective, some difficulties were encountered. In the first place, there were some HAs in which it was not easy to identify the dominant politeness notion. Therefore, a new categorization was necessary in order to develop a clear analysis of the data, with a focus now on the S and H as well. The table (6) we used shows to whom the politeness resources employed by ourselves are oriented:

Positive Politeness	**Frequency**
Speaker-oriented	-
Hearer-oriented	-
Negative Politeness	-
Speaker-oriented	-
Hearer-oriented	-
Neutral	-

Table (7)

In other words, when the writer of the email had the objective of saving their own negative face, the categorization is S-oriented, and when the objective is satisfying the face of the addressee, the categorization is H-oriented.

There are some examples that clarify the categorization regarding the orientation of politeness employed:

Hey professor, **I don't mind if you upload it.**

Ex. (8)

The previous example corresponds to a HA where the politeness orientation is negative since the writer is satisfying the negative face of H, the professor, by giving him freedom of action. This is evidenced by the expression “I don't mind”, which delivers S’s attitude of not interfering with the will of H. In this other case, the example (8) evidences a HA categorized as negative politeness oriented to S:

Dear, Hoping you’re doing fine, **I have to sadly inform you that I won’t be able to speak nor write on the class** due to connectivity problems with my cellphone. I hope you can understand. Wishing you the best, (student’s signature)

Ex. (9)

The two examples provided above make a contrast between the two orientations present in the table. Therefore, it is essential to fully understand that the leading factor that makes a HA being part of a specific category, is the dominant politeness perspective appreciated regarding the objective that its usage has.

Another complication we had occurred when classifying the politeness orientation observed in the HAs labelled as Representative since the majority of them did not present an appreciable politeness orientation. Those ones were classified as "neutral", but there were some problematic cases where, albeit being a Representative case, it was possible to identify a politeness orientation. The following example (9) evidences one of the cases in which a Representative HA was categorized with a politeness orientation. In this case, negative politeness oriented to S:

Dear, Hoping this mail finds you well, **I felt the need to tell you that I won't be able to attend the class this week.** My justification is simple: I feel really sick and with symptoms of covid-19. I already had the PCR done, so I am waiting for results. Working on a supermarket could be dangerous indeed. Wishing you nothing but the best, (student's signature)

Ex. (10)

As mentioned previously, this HA was categorized with a politeness orientation, in contrast with other cases where it was impossible to identify a politeness orientation. The following example evidences this case:

Dear teacher, **I attach the document with the questionnaire 1** Best wishes

Ex. (11)

Therefore, in terms of responding the fourth RQ, related to changes in the speech acts through the 4.5 years of our university education, we reviewed as a group the tables, graphics and data obtained from the analysis of the three previous questions, looking for variation this time with the past of years as the main parameter. We divided the parameters between HAs, modifications, and politeness perspective respectively, and created new tables and statistics when it was necessary. For the HAs section we designed a new table that aimed to show the HAs performed by year, in order to see if there was a difference or a tendency along the years. We also detailed the analysis by using the individual statistics from the first research question. With this, we also aimed to look for tendencies and differences but this time individually, to compare the data collected previously with the new data obtained and search for differences along the years.

For the structure section we elaborated a table which contemplates the amount of EM and IM, we also made a distinction between PrM and PsM, the intention behind was recollecting data about the inclination that the participants had regarding this matter.

We also decided to put a graphic to illustrate better the way in which these changes were occurring throughout time. Since we had already done some tables regarding the periods of time in relation with the structures above, we consider that as complementary material for the later discussion of time and its influence in the topic.

IM and EM as mentioned before were not classified within the different types that are proposed in previous research, this decision was taken because we were not aiming at the type of modifiers used by the participants, but in their use per se.

Regarding the politeness analysis of the corpus, we based on the analysis developed on RQ3, but in this case the focus is on the appreciable changes throughout time. In order to organize the data according to the year that we used or employed a determined politeness orientation or OP, we created two tables that point out the year when this information took place.

To determine the politeness orientation used by us in our past years as students, we decided to use a table divided into 4 categories, which were subdivided by year. These categories are the year of the written email, how many presented positive and negative politeness orientation, or if they were written with a neutral orientation. Moreover, the method used to determine the (in)formality level of the OPs of the emails used by us in our student's years were categorized by email's year, and if they presented a formal or informal OPs, or if they showed no OP at all.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Results for RQ1:

From a corpus of 82 emails in total, we were able to identify a total of 98 HAs that were assigned to one of the five general categories of HAs. It is of relevance to mention that there is a difference between the numbers of emails and HAs since there were emails with more than one HA. In this respect, we found that the HAs most used by the participants fell into the category of Representative, corresponding to a total of 48 instances, followed by Directive with 32, and then Expressive with 15. The final 3 main speech acts corresponded to the Commissive category. There were no occurrences of speech acts of the Declarative category. The following are examples from the corpus of the main categorization of speech acts, and of the subcategories when corresponding. The sections highlighted in bold are the speech acts corresponding to each category/subcategory.

Representative:

Hello miss,
i send the question for today's presentation,
regards!

Ex. (12)

Directive-Request

Dear professor,
I think there is no link for today's clas**s, could you please send it?**
Thank you.

Ex. (13)

Directive-Question

Professor, I would like to know, **the 5 decimals can be added to the pronunciation test?**
Expressive-Thanking
Thank you Miss!
Best regards

Ex. (14)

Expressive-Thanking

Thank you Miss!
Best regards

Ex. (15)

Expressive-Apologizing

Dear Miss: I just uploaded the new version of my self
evaluation report, the new sections are hightlighted with yellow. **I apologize for the delay, I did not have engough time during this week to give the necessary attention to my report since I had exams and other report to submit today**. I know this is not an excuse, it was my mistake to trusted me on the last instance to submit the report since I just needed to fix up some aspects. I reiterate my apologies.

Ex. (16)

Expressive-Wishing good

Dear,
First of all, **I hope you're doing fine and I wish you the best of all.**
Secondly, I'm ashamed that I didn't read the text, and I prefer to have a homework. I apologize this time.
Best regards,
Javier Sánchez B.

Ex. (17)

Expressive-Rejoice

I'm glad you found it! I'll see you on Tuesday then. Best wishes,
J.S.

Ex. (18)

Expressive-Worrying

Dear,
First of all, **I'm deeply sorry about your current situation**, and I wish you the best of the best.
Secondly, I'm concerned about the notification of a class starting today, because this week we are not supposed to have any, and it would be sad if I missed important information of the course.
Once again, I wish you the best of the world and I hope you are doing better this time.
Javier Sánchez

Ex. (19)

Commissive:

I'll correct it asap, thanks!
Best regards
j.s.

Ex. (20)

Also, we identified that from the 98 main speech acts, 59 were performed in the year 2020, followed by the year 2021 with 19 and the year 2019 with 11 main speech acts. Finally, 8 main speech acts were performed in the year 2018 and only one in 2017. The table (8) shows the total amount of HAs performed by the participants regarding the 4 general categories found in the email corpus in percentages, The table (9) of HAs performed per year shows the general categories to which the HAs were divided by year.

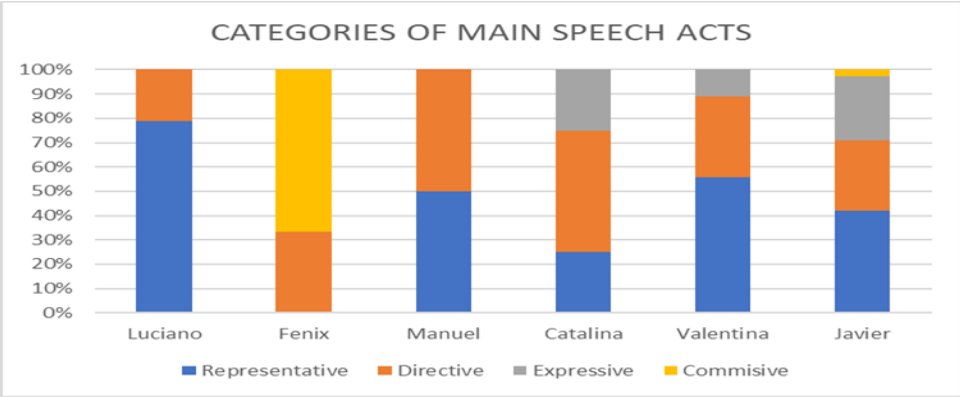


Table (8)

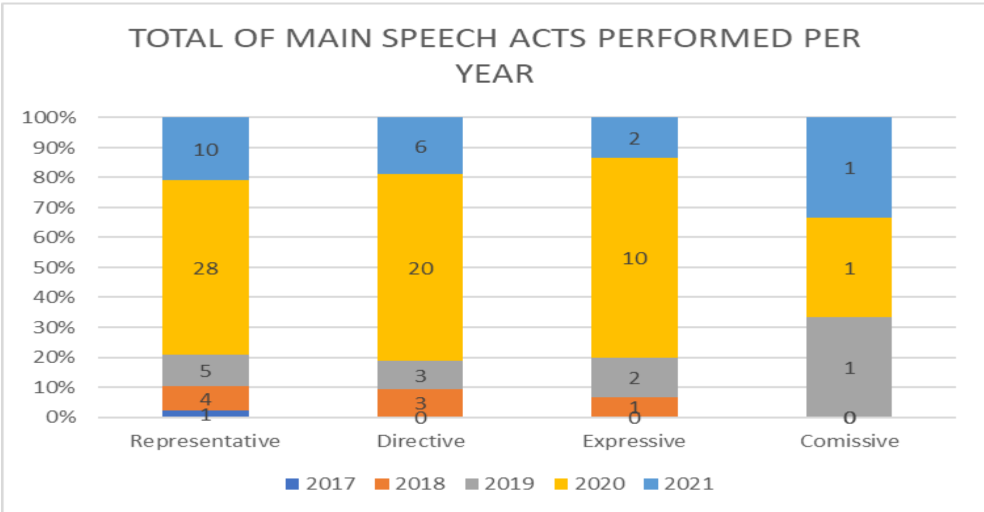


Table (9)

It is also important to know that from this analysis, we could also collect data about which category of HA was the most performed by every participant individually and compare the results obtained by this analysis with the general analysis made previously. The previous data collected showed that by far Representative is the most performed main category of HAs in the corpus, as we mentioned before. Nevertheless, an individual analysis showed that only 50% of the participants have the mentioned category as their most performed. The following two tables, (10) and (11) aim to compare the differences between two participants, one that has Representative as their most performed type of HA and a second that has another category as their most performed type of HA.

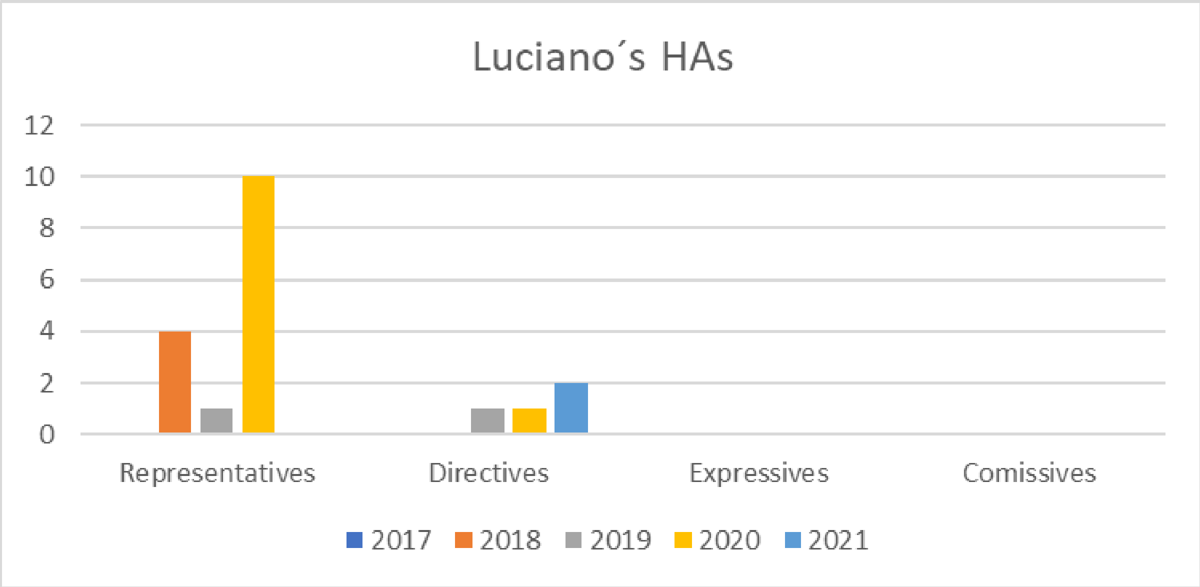


Table (10)

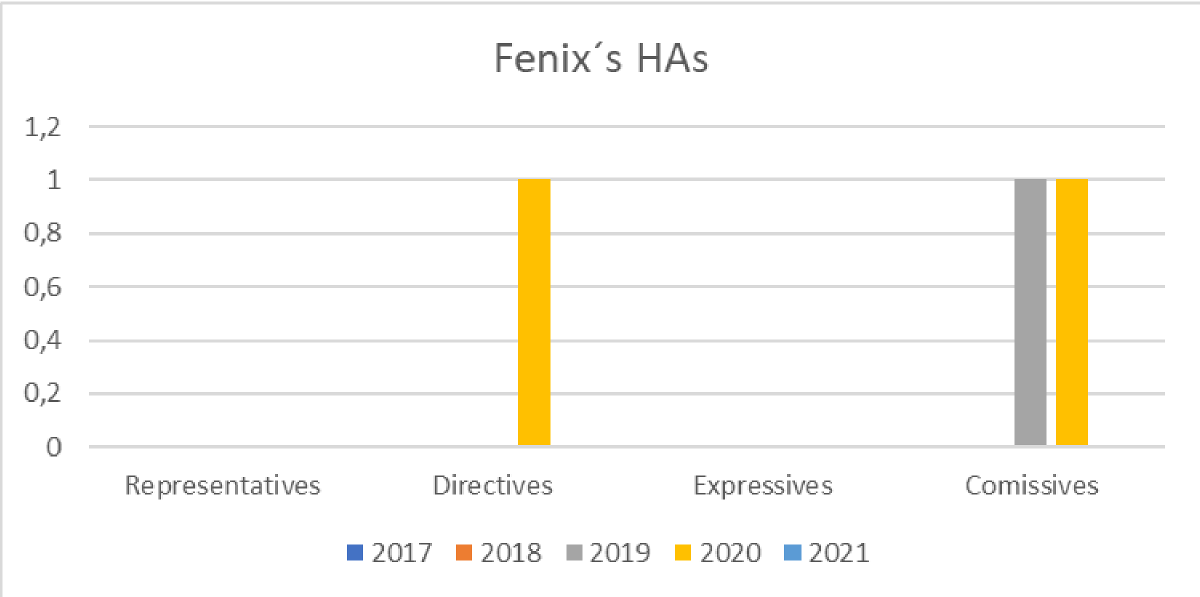


Table (11)

Regarding the 5 mentioned general categories of HAs by which we analyzed our corpus, we divided them into 9 sub-categories. From the 98 main speech acts performed we found out that Informative is the most frequent sub-category (the most recurrent of speech acts) with 48 instances, followed by Request which corresponds to 25 main speech acts. The rest of the speech acts were divided into Question (Seven) Thanking (Six) Apologizing (Five) Wishing

Good (Two) Rejoice (One) Worrying (One) and, finally, Promise (Three). As we pointed out previously, there is no presence of any of the sub-categories corresponding to Declaratives. The table (12) shows the subcategories of HAs performed by students in percentages.

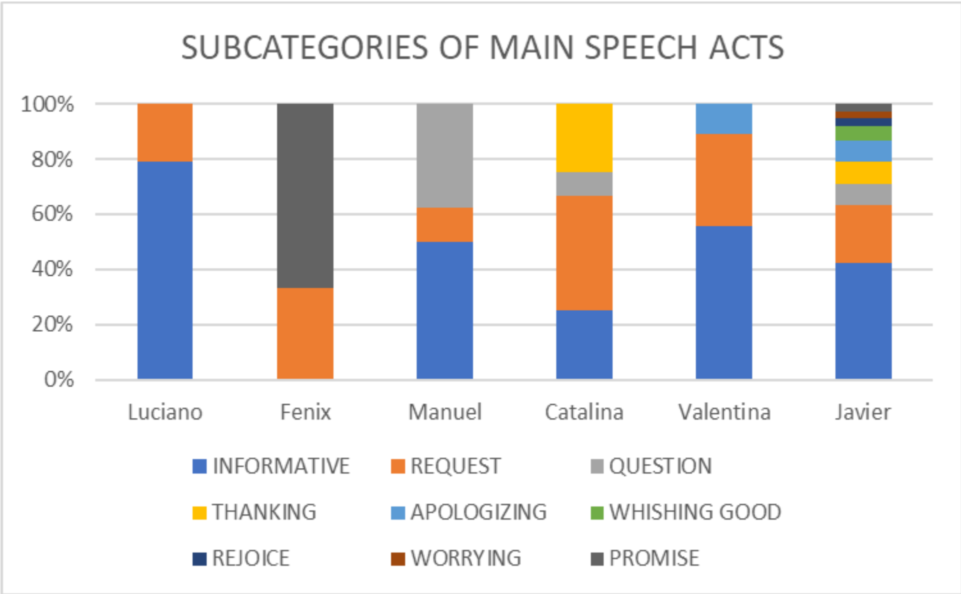


Table (12)

5.2. Results for RQ2:

5.2.1. Fenix Cortés

Fenix is the participant with the least amount of emails, considering the structure he used the most was a single Pre-modification plus the HA, it is also notable that he did not use the isolated HA, which is a strong option for the majority of participants.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA	0	0	1	1	0	2
2Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ha-Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ha-2post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ha-3post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ha-6post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table (13)

5.2.2. Manuel Vásquez

In Manuel's data, we have two principal structures, the HA + PsM, and PrM+ HA+PsM. After Fenix, Manuel is the participant with the least amount of emails sent; however, we got a little more to work with and that revealed his preference for a little more complex forms which integrated PrM and PsM.

It is true that this position is shared with the HA + 1PsM. Nevertheless, either way no one else had this type of structure at the top of their inclinations.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	0	1
2Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-Post	0	0	0	2	1	3
HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-6Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	3	0	3
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-ha-2post	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table (14)

5.2.3. Valentina Olguin

The case of Valentina seems to be different from others, since we found a greater variety of structures used. Furthermore, she has a surprisingly balanced chart; her most used structure is also the isolated HA, but in her corpus, it only constitutes 22,2% out of the total structures.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	0	0	1	3	0	4
Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	0	1
2Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-HA	0	0	1	1	0	2
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-Post	0	0	1	2	0	3
HA-2Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
HA-3Post	0	0	1	1	0	2
HA-6Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	1	1	0	2
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	1	0	0	1
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table (15)

5.2.4. Catalina Carrillo

Catalina as well as Luciano and Valentina also seem to have an inclination for the isolated HA found in 5 instances, moreover this structure's presence in her total is of 41,7% which is bigger than Luciano's 31,6% however, since Luciano's corpus is larger, he had a greater impact in the final results.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	0	0	0	5	0	5
Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	1	2
2Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	0	1
3Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ha-post	0	0	0	3	0	3
HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-6Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-ha-post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table (16)

5.2.5. Luciano Martinez

In Luciano’s corpus, table (17) demonstrates once again the influence that one individual has in the results, since we found 9 times the structure of HA+PsM, even when this structure appeared in the majority of the corpus. The corpus of him was what brought it to the first position over the structure: “Head act without any modifier”. This last mentioned structure has a pretty high average in terms of frequency, being present at least over four times in 4 out of the 6 participants. Moreover, the two participants which did not have this structure at all were Manuel and Fenix, where they sent the least amount of emails out of the group.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	0	2	0	4	0	6
Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
3Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ha-Post	0	1	2	5	1	9
HA-2Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
HA-6Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	0	1	1
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pre-HA-2Post	0	1	0	0	0	1
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table (17)

5.2.6. Javier Sánchez

On the table (18), Javier Sanchez used 9 structures of HA+2PsM, where he by himself pushed this structure to the second most used structure, since in the rest of the corpus there are only 2 instances of it.

His impact is also noticeable in the isolated HA found in 7 instances, which impact the general results. However, the amount of isolated HAs within its corpus is not as relevant as in other cases, where the percentage of HAs was over the 40 percent range while here is only 18 percent of the total. In fact, Javier's corpus length made the percentages held by a single structure lower in comparison with the rest.

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	1	1	1	4	0	7
Pre-HA	0	1	0	1	1	3
2Pre-HA	0	1	0	2	1	4
3Pre-HA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	0	1
HA-Post	0	0	1	1	3	5
HA-2Post	0	1	0	3	5	9
HA-3Post	0	0	0	2	1	3
HA-6Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	1	1	2
Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	2	2
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	0	0	0
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table (18)

5.2.7. Structures used in the participant's emails

Structure	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
HA	1	3	2	16	0	22
Pre-HA	0	1	1	5	2	9
2Pre-HA	0	1	0	3	1	5
3Pre-HA	0	0	1	1	0	2
4Pre-HA	0	0	0	1	0	1
HA-Post	0	1	4	13	5	24
HA-2Post	0	1	0	6	5	11
HA-3Post	0	0	1	3	1	5
HA-6Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pre-HA-Post	0	0	1	5	1	7
3Pre-HA-Post	0	0	0	3	1	4
Pre-HA-2Post	0	1	1	0	2	4
Pre-HA-4Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
2Pre-HA-2Post	0	0	0	1	0	1
4Pre-HA-3Post	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table (19)

The data indicates that the most used structures were the HA+PsM, followed by the HA without any modifications: these structures appeared 24 and 22 times, respectively. Then, we find structures whose range in frequency was 4 to 9 instances and then there are the structures that only appeared once or twice. Examples of this are the HA+6PsM.

In 2017, there was only one email and one structure. Therefore, it was the year with the least amount of data; then, in 2018, we started to see some simple structures, with the exception of 8 structures obtained from the corpus of two of the participants only, Luciano and Javier. In 2019, we observed a little increase in the number of structures, observing 11 structures. Nevertheless, this time Valentina Olguin was the most prolific, since she presented 6 of the structures while Luciano and Javier just presented 2 structures this year. In 2020 was the most prolific of them all, with 60 of the 98 structures found, in 5 out of the 6 participants this year concentrated over 50% of their total structures. The only exception would be Javier, who presented 44.7% of his total, which is still his most prolific year with a big margin. Finally, in 2021 we found that 14 out of the 18 structures belong to Javier’s corpus, two in Luciano’s corpus and only one structure in the case of Manuel and Catalina.

5.3. Results for RQ3:

5.3.1. OPs used by students:

OP	Categorization	Total
Dear	Formal	19
Dear + Subject	Formal	32
Good (depending on time)	Formal	1
Subject (Miss/mister, Professor, teacher)	Formal	8
Sir	Formal	1
Hello + subject	Informal	4
Hi + subject	Informal	3
Hey + Subject	Informal	3
Total		71

Table (20)

Table (20) presents the OPs used by the group of the students in the corpus, presenting 8 varieties of OPs; 11 emails which do not have an OP were excluded from the table. It also categorizes the opening into two groups, formal and informal.

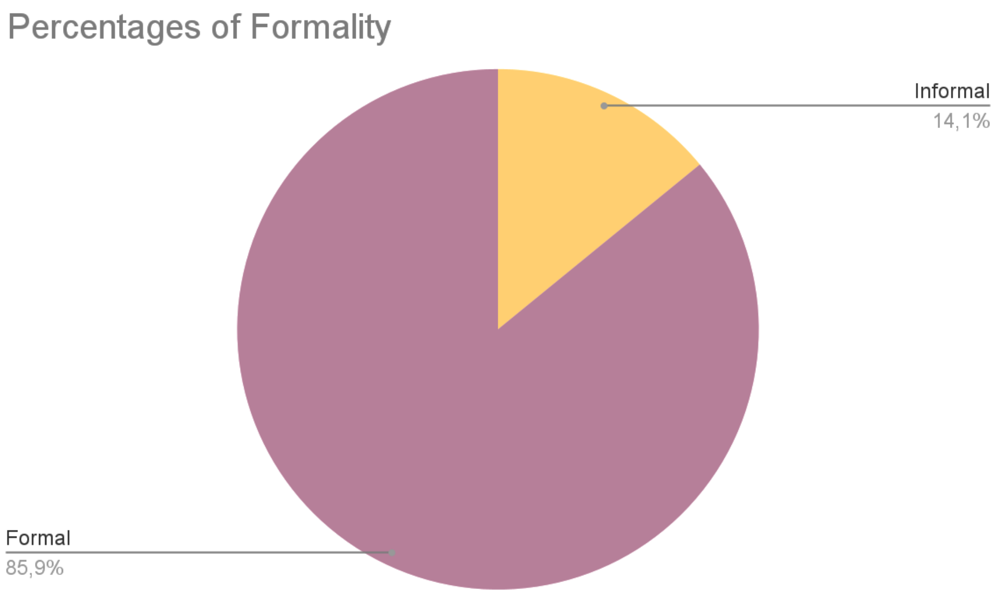


Fig. (7)

Fig. (7) illustrates the percentages obtained from the sample, which shows that there are 71 OPs in the corpus of the investigation, 61 OPs present a formal structure (85,9%) in contrast to the 10 OPs that present an informal structure (14,1%).

5.3.2. Frequency of politeness in OPs:

Politeness orientation	**Frequency on Formal OPs**	**Frequency on Informal OPs**	**No OPs**
Positive Politeness	21	1	8
Negative Politeness	27	7	1
Neutral	26	5	2

Table (21)

Table (21) shows the frequency of formal and informal OPs regarding their presence in politeness. In formal OPs there is a higher representation of negative politeness resources with 27, followed by neutral cases with 26, and positive politeness resources with 21. In informal OPs, there is a higher representation with negative politeness with 7, followed by neutral instances, which are 5 and just 1 positive instance. The emails that do not present OPs have a higher frequency of positive politeness above the rest of categories with 8 in comparison of neutral cases and negative politeness, with 2 and 1 respectively.

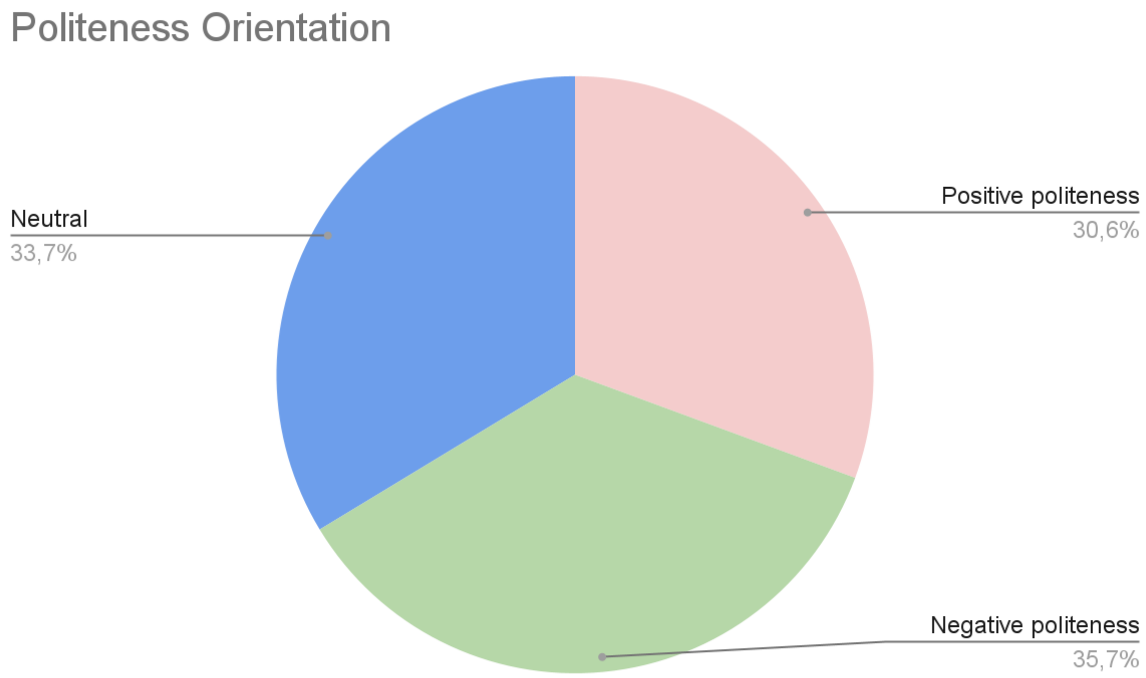


Fig. (8)

In the figure (8) it is appreciated the percentages corresponding to the politeness orientation employed by the students. In this instance, negative politeness has a frequency of 35 which represents 35,7% of the cases, positive politeness has a frequency of 30, which represents a total of 30,6%, and finally neutral has a frequency of 33, which represents 33,7% of the cases.

5.3.3. Frequency of Politeness in HAs:

Positive Politeness	**Frequency**
Speaker-Oriented	24
Hearer-Oriented	6
Negative Politeness	-
Speaker-Oriented	14
Hearer-Oriented	21
Neutral	33

Table (22)

Even though it is appreciable that the negative strategies are the most repetitive in the corpus of the investigation with 35 HAs, both positive politeness and neutral are similar in terms of frequency, with 30 HAs and 33 HAs respectively. Nevertheless, in terms of positive politeness, there is a major representation in relation with the Speaker-oriented politeness with 24 HAs, in comparison with negative politeness which shows a major representation in relation to the H with 21 HAs.

5.4. Results for RQ4:

Regarding the 98 HAs performed in the whole corpus, we found out that there was a progressive increase in the quantity of HAs during the years of analysis of our investigation, except for one year.

In the year 2017, only one HA was performed, while in the year 2018 there were 8. Then, in 2019, the number increased to 11, followed by 2020 with 59 HAs performed. Finally, in the 2021 only 19 HAs were performed. We also found out an established variation regarding the categories of HAs in the corpus during the years, as Representative were the category of HAs most performed during the 5 years of analysis, followed by Directive that, with the exception from 2017, were the second category with most HAs performed in the 4 remaining years of analysis, followed by the Expressive category with the same exception in 2017. Finally, the Commissive category was the least performed category every single year, with the exception of 2 HAs of 2017, sharing the second place along with Directive and Expressive with 0 HAs performed each. The following table shows the HAs performed regarding the years and the categories.

		HA performed per year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	TOTAL
Representative	1	4	5	28	10	48
Directive	0	3	3	20	6	32
Expressive	0	1	2	10	2	15
Commissive	0	0	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	**1**	**8**	**11**	**59**	**19**	**98**

Table (23)

Modifications	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	total
Pre-modifications	0	4	6	39	10	59
Post-modifications	0	5	10	57	24	96
Internal modifications	0	3	7	27	11	48

Table (24)

In this table is shown how IM are consistently outnumbered by the EM. It is remarkable that PMs are the most preferred in the EM. As time passes, we see an increase in IM until the year 2020. This tendency drops the posterior year, but considering we are only taking about half of the timeframe in 2021, we were not able to discern if this tendency of growth would have been maintained or not.

To be more specific, in the year 2018 we found 9 EM and 3 IM for a total of 12. This is the year with the most balanced results. In 2019, we found 16 EM and 7 IM. That is, 31,8% of the total modifications, which is in fact a higher percentage than in the previous year, where IM only constituted a 25%. In 2020, the distribution is 96 for EM and 27 for IM, with a total of 123 modifications. In this case, IM were 21,9% of the total, which is a decrease from the previous year. Finally, in 2021 we observed 11 IM, 34 EM and a total of 45 modifications. This time, IM constituted a 24,4% which indicates a new rise.

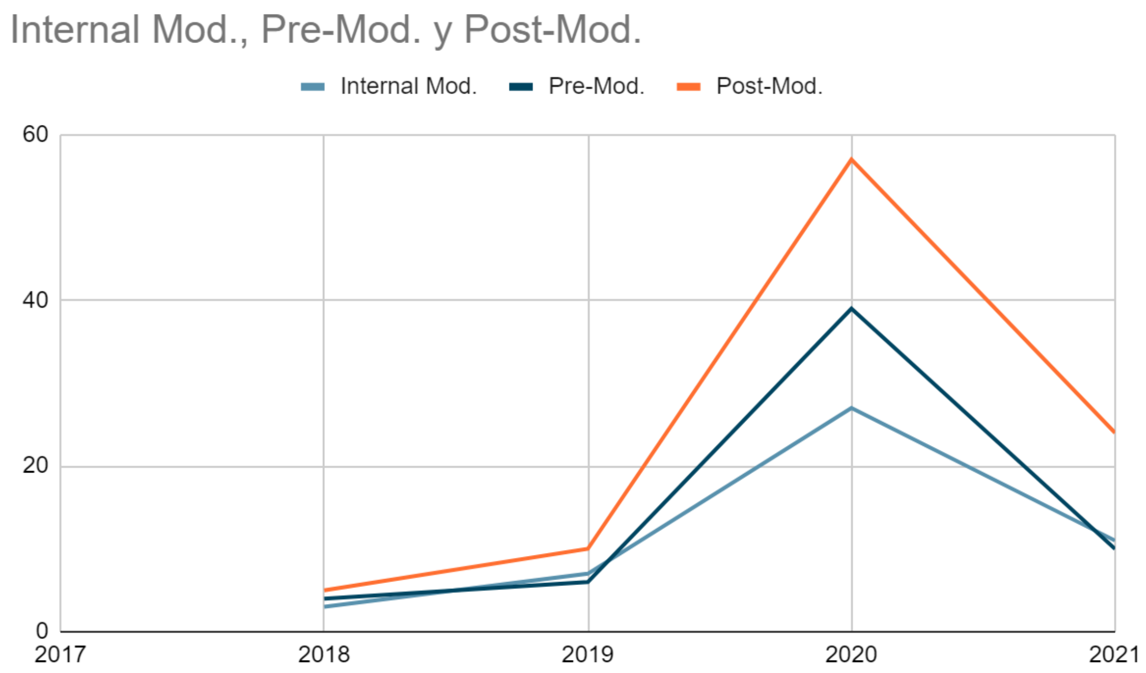


Fig. (9)

Year	Positive Politeness Orientation	Negative Politeness Orientation	Neutral
2017	0	0	1
2018	1	3	4
2019	6	1	5
2020	17	18	23
2021	6	9	4

Table (25)

In terms of politeness analysis, table (25) shows the politeness orientation employed by us through time. In 2017, there is only the presence of neutral orientation since there is only one email. In 2018, there is also a major presence of neutral orientation with 4, followed by negative politeness with 3. In 2019, 6 emails presented positive politeness, followed by 5 emails of neutral orientation. It is appreciable that there is a major presence of data in 2020 in terms of quantity, where neutral orientation repeats the major presence, with 23. Hence, it is followed by negative politeness with 18, not so far of positive politeness, with 17. In 2021, the tendency of neutral politeness is broken thanks to the major presence of negative orientation with 9, followed by positive politeness with 6.

Year	Formal OPs	Informal OPs	No OPs
2017	1	0	0
2018	6	0	0
2019	6	1	3
2020	35	6	5
2021	14	1	4

Table (26)

Table (26) illustrates the level of (in)formality in OPs. There is scarcity of data in 2017 since there is a single email with formal OP. Furthermore, in 2018 all 6 emails are categorized as formal. Something similar happens in 2019, where formal OPs are present in 6 emails. In addition, there is a single email with informal OP, and 3 that do not have any. In 2020, the data increases in number, but with a similar tendency: there are 35 formal OPs, 6 informal OPs and 5 with no OPs. In 2021, there are 14 formal OPs, 1 informal OP and 4 emails with no OP.

6. DISCUSSION

The discussion section for this research is the following, it is divided into four sections. Each section addresses a different discussion derived from its corresponding research question. Regarding the data collected from the first research question, we found some crucial data to understand the results obtained. They could be explained mainly by the pandemic, because it was the main trigger for the increasement of email communication in the last year and a half, as before the Covid-19 most of the interactions were face to face, leaving to the email field only the remaining doubts or the important messages or requests. In two thousand and twenty this changed abruptly, the numbers skyrocketed and the normal hallway conversation, after class question, etc. were replaced by emails. There are features that could explain the results, which we'll proceed to review now.

As to the categories and subcategories of HAs, most of the performed categories were Representative and Directive, and from these the most performed sub-categories were Informative and Request, respectively. The presence of the first one could be explained because the Representative category was commonly determined to a previous interaction in class, in which as students the participants played their role answering with the information required. The example (21) precisely shows an interaction in which we assume that the participant is answering to a previous interaction, performing a Representative HA.

Professor,
I hope this message finds you well,
these are the four tentative academic sources that I searched to support my essay.
Best regards!
Luciano Martínez

Ex. (21)

On the other hand, the large amount of Directive-Request HAs could be explained as the interactions that needed to be treated privately or individually, before or after every class. The rest of the categories and their respective subcategories of HAs performed remain on average between each other and could be explained individually. The example (22) aims to show a Directive-Request HA in which is treated as an individual and private situation, that perhaps could not be done during class.

Dear Miss, I am writing to you because I have been trying to upload the video but I could not do it on time. Because my Internet conection is extremely low. I know that late submission are not going to be accepted, is it posible to send you my video anyway?
Best Regards, Valentina Olguin

Ex. (22)

In regard to the individual analysis of the corpus, there were differences between the participants´ number of emails, and the respective HAs contained within them. Only two of the six students wrote emails before the pandemic, which could be explained because most of the first and second-year activities were carried out in groups, with a group leader that was in charge of communicating with the teacher, so there was no need for everyone to interact with the teachers by email. Another reason given by the participant that could explain this result was that they were unsure about how they were going to perform and how formal should the interaction be, as they had a basic pragmalinguistic repertoire, null instruction in email production and also were just knowing the university context and the teachers, reasons that lead some of the participants to avoid email interactions.

As to the results regarding the years, the year two-thousand and twenty is by far the year with the most quantity of HAs performed in the whole corpus with fifty-nine HAs performed, which could be explained mainly because it was the only year that classes were developed completely online. In two thousand and nineteen everything was normal until October, when the social outbreak interrupted the normal development of the classes, and when the whole university from teachers to students needed to adapt to the changes that virtual classes required in those few months. It was an experimentation period that although increased the numbers, is not comparable to the subsequent year. On the other hand, the year two-thousand and twenty-one although is immersed into the pandemic context, was analyzed only until the first semester because as participants we didn´t want to include the emails we wrote to faculty in the second semester, as our performance may be affected by how aware we were of politeness resources or email structures, which could have affected our objective that was to catch natural email interactions between students and the faculty. This caused that much of the emails written after that period were not considered into the corpus.

Regarding the resources we used to analyze the data collected for this question (section 1.2.1) the categorization proposed by Searle (1976) in Saaed (1997) was very useful in the analysis of our corpus, although we needed to modify one of the five categories in relation to their respective sub-categories. In the proposed categorization of Expressives HAs there are four subcategories proposed by the author, nevertheless we found some HAs that were categorized as Expressive but that didn´t match with any of the proposed sub-categories, so we had to add three new subcategories. This could be explained by the changes during time that the purposes of email communication had and the features that affected this process throughout the years. On the other hand the null presence of Declarative HAs and their respective subcategories, defined by Searle (1976) in Saeed (1997) "immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extralinguistic institutions" could be explained as the categorization and definition proposed by the author don´t match with the hypothetical interactions that are developed between students and the faculty, as the category refers to situations that are not treated in a common university context.

In terms of what was found on RQ 2, we found that simpler structures were the inclination in the corpus. As it is tricky to analyze general results considering the immense gap between the participants' corpus, we determined this by seeing everyone's data individually as it appears the type of speech act seemed to influence politeness. This directly defines the structure that the participant will use. When the speech act performed was representative, it was enough to get straight to the point.

We think students are more likely to send emails with these characteristics, since some participants manifesting their English proficiency level was something they usually were ashamed of, which might enlighten one of the reasons for these emails to be as prolific as we saw.

It was also determined that EMs were the preference over IMs. In this case, the results might also be tricky to analyze since email's length tends to put numbers for EMs over the top. However, there were a lot of cases where the isolated HAs had no IM, which might be due to the nature of the speech act itself.

An example of this is the following email:

Hello miss, i send the question for today's presentation, regards!

Ex. (23)

A simple message, meeting a requirement from the teacher is not challenging at all. The writer did not have to apologize for a late submission; in fact, the whole message acts in a similar way in which a greeting does. The message is present only to acknowledge the other persons and that this student cares enough to write something that is not even necessary since I respect you.

In the same way that the "length" factor interfered a little with the comparison between EMs and IMs, the amount of HAs found in one email also affected the number of structures in general, particularly in the case of Javier, there were a lot of cases in which we had double HA. This phenomenon increased even further the number of structures that we could find in his corpus since every HA equal one structure.

The following examples correspond to an email written by Javier and one written by Catalina. The two emails have a reasonable length to be exemplified. In fact, Catalina's email is a bit longer. However, in Javier's emails we found two

Has (marked in bold) which meant two structures, in comparison with Catalina's email despite being longer, where we found only one structure attached to one HA.

Dear I have two doubts for you: first, **what is the difference between the instruments and the procedures of the research? How can we describe each of them?** And secondly, **it is necessary to go to a school and do a research?** a lot of people just told us that it must be theoretical, so we are not sure if we have to go to a school. Hoping you are having a good day, Javier Sánchez Barría 4th semester student of Linguistics and English Literature

Ex. (24)

Dear professor,

I hope this message finds you well, we are writing this email, to inform you that we have not been able to develop a significant advance in our oral presentation, due to one of us only have one computer at home and is obligated to share it and the other have only the phone to do the work.

Based on escuela de pregrado´s resolution of being in a marcha blanca period until May 25th, we assumed that through this period we would not be requested to make compulsory activities, so we felt carefree about the established deadline of the work assuming that we would have the possibility of sending the work around the May 25th week, **we would like to follow the faculty resolution and request you the opportunity to send the presentation when the marcha blanca period is over,** we know that you consider the realization of this work as a diagnostic evaluation and also that there is the chance to resend the work in the May 25th week, but we think that is prejudiced being evaluated in base of a work that we developed in a context that doesn't allow us to do our best performance.

Hence we request you the chance to send the presentation once the marcha blanca is over or at least more time to finish our work.

Best regards!

Catalina Carrillo and Luciano Martínez.

Ex. (25)

The double HA is a rare phenomenon among other participants but really frequent in Javier's emails. This means that when looking at the general results, Javier's impact will be even greater in this section than what already was previously because of his corpus being the biggest.

In relation with the previous theory on speech acts, we decided to describe the structure of the emails in terms of EMs and IMs to describe the resources students presented when placed in different circumstances.

The corpus is based on real communication, so we obtained a variety of intentions and objectives which required different levels of complexity and resources. Because of this, we believe that linguistic devices by themselves are not an accurate source to measure the level of English every student has.

When describing real communication there are many approaches in which the research could have been carried out. Therefore, we decided that classifying the type of modifications we found could be an entire new inquiry on its own. Previously, when classifying speech acts, we learned that in a lot of cases theory was not conclusive enough to encapsulate the HAs we produced. In the cases of modifications, it was even more complex. Most research is focused on requests and controlled tests with specific settings, which makes us believe that this background data on modifiers was not solid enough to classify our corpus. In addition, we thought that extending the categorization of modifiers in a wide range of speech acts might be a great framework to develop in future research.

What was seen in politeness orientation is, on the one hand, the head acts (HA) mostly found within the email corpus of the group of students, are representative with a frequency of 48, followed by directives and expressives, with 32 and 15 respectively. On the other hand, the HAs less found were commisives and declarative, with 3 and 0 respectively.

This data regarding the HAs performed by the participants, allow us to know and understand the content and intentions that a group of students can perform within an academic context. In this case, from a bachelor program of Universidad de Chile. Taking into account this, the major frequency is of representative and directive acts presented, which to us is not a surprise due to these categorizations come down speech acts that perform utterances that result common in the communication between student and professors in the university, such as reporting or requesting.

The social environment and the treatment between student and professor are highly determined by the academic context in which all the university's activities are carried out. D and P are referred by Thomas as illocutionary acts, which “has the potential to damage the hearer's positive face (by, for example, insulting H or expressing disapproval o f something which H holds dear), or H's negative face (an order, for example, will impinge upon H's freedom of action)” (Thomas, 1995, p. 169). Therefore, they play a fundamental role regarding the communicative exchange appreciated in the faculty, where P has to do with the natural asymmetry between student and professor, while D has to do with the closeness that two people have. In the case of the relationship between professor and student, D tends to be high, but it could change with time and under specific circumstances.

The intrinsic characteristics of the social interactions and communicative aspects mentioned above, have an effect on the politeness orientation and resources used by students, because they tend to satisfy the needs or intentions that they think professors want from them. In other words, it is appreciable that participants communicating with their faculty tried to convey this natural desire of finding approval from professors on these instances of email communicative exchanges.

R and D levels influence the writing process of the students in various aspects. As long as the level of any of these two factors is higher, the message tends to have a bigger extension. That is, using a series of EM that worked in order to adequately transmit the intention of a particular email. Additionally, the politeness aspect suffers an impact if those values are high. Hence, S will need more politeness resources in order to achieve this goal and transmit the intention with an adequate degree of formality, satisfying the positive face of H.

The following email serves as an example of a situation where a high level of R is present:

Dear professor,

I hope this message finds you well, we are writing this email, to inform you that we have not been able to develop a significant advance in our oral presentation, due to one of us only have one computer at home and is obligated to share it and the other have only the phone to do the work.

Based on escuela de pregrado´s resolution of being in a marcha blanca period until May 25th, we assumed that through this period we would not be requested to make compulsory activities, so we felt carefree about the established deadline of the work assuming that we would have the possibility of sending the work around the May 25th week, we would like to follow the faculty resolution and request you the opportunity to send the presentation when the marcha blanca period is over, we know that you consider the realization of this work as a diagnostic evaluation and also that there is the chance to resend the work in the May 25th week, but we think that is prejudiced being evaluated in base of a work that we developed in a context that doesn't allow us to do our best performance.

Hence we request you the chance to send the presentation once the marcha blanca is over or at least more time to finish our work.

Best regards!

Catalina Carrillo and Luciano Martínez."

Ex. (26)

In example (26), it is appreciable that students produced a long email with plenty of EM. These work as politeness resources that have the objective to convey suitable messages for the corresponding situation.

The constant usage of explanations and references to faculty´s resolution, evidences the need of being more polite in this case. Moreover, the apparent disobedience of the professor regarding the resolution of not taking evaluations until a stipulated deadline, makes R even higher, resulting in a message which is full of modifiers, caring of politeness, and lengthy.

This effect that R has on the length and structure of the emails, becomes clearer if we compare example (26) with the following example:

> Hey professor,
>
> I can connect to class today!
>
> The comparison between example (26) and example (27) evidences the big impact that a high level of R produces on the emails. In the case of Example (27), R is minimum. Therefore, the extension of the email and the existence of EMs decrease hugely.

Ex. (27)

Another example which shows the effect that a high level of R is the following one:

> Dear professor,
>
> I hope this mail finds you well,
>
> this message is a friendly reminder that we are still waiting for our oral presentation´s assessment.
>
> Best wishes!

Ex. (28)

In example (28), it is possible to observe how a high degree of R affects the characteristics of an email. In this case, S tries to convey politeness by employing an indirect and non-conventional style when requesting the assessment of the oral presentation. Despite the email not being a lengthy one, politeness can be appreciated in the IM that tries to work as a softener, specifically friendly reminder.

The unusual manner of formulating a request presented in example (28), assemble this message to be interpreted as an imposition by S, subjected to three factors (P, D, and R), which played a fundamental role since it is not common or conventionally correct that student request to their professors in a manner that could be understood as inappropriate or impolite, opening the possibility of performing an FTA and damaging the negative face of the addressee.

When interpreting the absence of a dominant politeness perspective (regarding the HAs of the corpus), of special interest is the fact that we found the same number of instances with a positive and a negative politeness orientation since there were 30 HAs where we could appreciate each notion. The equality present in the data concerning politeness orientation, allows us to discover that there is not a dominant notion perceived by us at the time of writing these emails. Example (29) shows a case where positive politeness is present:

> Dear professor,
>
> I think there is no link for today's class, could you please send it?
>
> Thank you.

Ex. (29)

In example (24), it is observed that the HA is directive, specifically a request. Despite it showing a simple structure does not have a high level of R, it is D which is higher. Speaker (S) uses a couple of resources that work in order to satisfy the positive face of the Hearer (H). In this case, the EM works as a tool that establishes common ground between S and H. Also, there is an internal modifier (IM) which works as a softener, and finally the directness implied in this request makes this email work as an accurate example that denotes the presence of positive politeness orientation in a request.

Although there were some instances where a similar level of R, and D are appreciated, the politeness perspective employed by the students tended to change, as it is demonstrated in the example below:

> Dear,
>
> As you mention in today's class, some texts can be analyze depending on their contents. In my case, I have to work with Paradise Lost, a text that have 12 books. It is possible to use only the ones that we consider useful to our presentation?

Ex. (30)

Example (30) shows a situation where S uses negative politeness addressed to H, this is appreciated in the HA, where the writer had the intention of not imposing himself on the professor. Another element that evidences the notion, is the fact that the request is not limiting the freedom of action of H.

The lack of a dominant politeness perspective, also can be appreciated regarding the representatives HAs performed by us. The example (31) evidences an instance where the writer employed a positive politeness oriented to H since he was constantly trying to establish a connection with the professor (H) by sharing with him his health condition, and his intention of being back to classes soon.

Usually, representative speech acts do not contain an appreciable degree of politeness, however, in this instance the HA is accompanied by resources that are attributed to the positive politeness, ending up in an informative act with an observable politeness notion:

> Good afternoon teacher, this email is only to **let you know that I feel better and I will be back on classes this week, so I will be in tomorrow's class.** Thank you for your answer in the preavious e-mail.
>
> Kind regards.
> Manuel Vásquez Salazar.

Ex. (31)

On the contrary to the case mentioned above, the example (32) has a negative politeness orientation to the S, even though it also contains an informative HA, due to the necessity of the writer of the email to inform his absence in classes. Therefore, there exists certain negative politeness aimed at the S due to the necessity to communicate something that is related to the violation of the decisions and opinions of the hearer itself. Furthermore, it is remarkable that the speaker of this email used EM in order to justify the absence despite the fact that the S is protecting his negative politeness by himself, not wanting to be imposed by the H’s demands.

> Dear,
>
> Hoping this mail finds you well, I felt the need to tell you that **I won’t be able to attend the class this week.** My justification is simple: I feel really sick and with symptoms of covid-19. I already had the PCR done, so I am waiting for results. Working on a supermarket could be dangerous indeed. Wishing you nothing but the best,
>
> Javier Sánchez B.

Ex. (32)

There are instances where representatives' speech acts do not contain a perceptible notion of politeness; all these cases belong to the category neutral, which according to Leech (1983), “"far from being a superficial matter of ‘being civil’, politeness is an important missing link between the (...) of how to relate sense to force" (1983, p. 104). That is, there is no necessity to impose politeness when informing about something, like actions, news, procedures, etc.

Dear teacher, **I attach the document with the questionnaire 1** Best wishes

Ex. (33)

The irregular distribution of the politeness orientation employed by us in the corpus can have several interpretations. The lack of instruction regarding the pragmatics component of the program that we studied seems to be one of the reasons that explain the inconsistent distribution of the data. That is to say, we as students did not have a guide or reference when writing emails to the faculty, resulting in the fact that students only rely upon their own strategies or beliefs about how a message would be correctly conveyed in terms of politeness. Therefore, it is our own pragmatic competences that did not have a development through the program due to the lack of instruction.

On top of that, this varied results in politeness orientation can be explained as a consequence of our sociocultural Chilean norms that affected/determined our way of writing email in English to teachers. These consequences are a reliable case of pragmatic failure, where we as students failed to apply knowledge of L2 learning when writing emails. Nevertheless, it is percepted that the pragmatic competence that the program developed on us was not enough to understand both simplicity and complexity of writing an email in a correct manner. This can be demonstrated in the review of the texts and activities that we as students did to learn different areas of EFL students, such as the “Life” textbooks. As mentioned in the section of “Sample and Context”, there are few tasks and information about writing emails. Even less information is present when dealing with pragmatic competences, which is approached in p. 137 of the Advanced Book Life (2014).

The evidence of the idea provided above is the absence of a dominant politeness perspective orientation, the existence of a huge variation concerning the frequency corresponding to each categorization reflects the scarcity of a pragmatic based teaching process focused on some kind of texts, such as emails.

When interpreting the dominance of formal OPs in terms of politeness, the data provided by Table (19) and Figure (7) in the results section denote that the OPs most employed by the students can be labelled as formal, with a 85.9%, while informal ones represent a 14.1% of the sample.

The dominance perceived in the usage of formal OPs can be interpreted in more than one way, the reasons why this category was vastly more used than the informal OPs is the aim of this section of the discussion, as well as explaining the perception we have about the discrepancy between the politeness orientation of the HAs regarding their frequency on (in)formal OPs.

As it is appreciated on the table (20), there is no clear tendency in respect to formal OPs in relation with HAs and their categorization. This can be perceived as an indicator of no perception nor use of OPs to formulate an idea that fits with the negative or positive politeness appreciated in the HA, this is also observable by perceiving the low tendency of informal OPs use in relation to its correspondence with positive politeness.

Furthermore, it is appreciable that most informal OPs are accompanied by a HA with negative politeness, a statistic which goes against what Brown and Levinson states. The fact that the politeness orientation associated by Brown and

Levinson with OPs and their degree of (in)formality does not go in the same direction with the frequency of HAs, in relation to their presence on emails with a specific type of OP.

The discrepancy between the politeness orientation associated by Brown and Levinson with (in)formal OPs in relation with the politeness orientation of the HAs that are present in the emails, can be explained by the inconsistency of our employment of politeness resources, that is to say, we do not necessarily assume that a formal OP would work with the objective of satisfying the negative face of the H, this becomes even more clear if we appreciate that formal OPs are accompanied by HAs with a positive or a negative politeness orientation the same number of instances, with 22 each. This evidence shows that students when writing to the faculty, do not necessarily employ OPs and HAs which address the same politeness orientation which is linked with them. Even though informality is related to positive politeness, it is seen that students use these OPs on a few occasions, in contrast with the employment of formal OPs which are widely used by the students. This can be deduced in the consideration that we had as students of an inappropriate use of them, due to the insecurity of being impolite with the teacher.

In other words, we think that professors would like to be treated with formal OPs, so we employed them in order to satisfy what we consider the addressee wants from us. The anterior idea allows us to conclude that the usage of formal OPs goes beyond the connection that Brown and Levinson established between formality and negative politeness, due to the fact that the main reason that led us to prefer formal OPs when writing to faculty is directly related with the essence of what can be understood as positive politeness. Therefore, it is possible to say that the usage of formal OPs under the circumstances of this investigation could have a double value since we can interpret that with this employment of OPs, both positive and negative face of the professors could be satisfied.

We considered this a result of the sociocultural effect of an interference with the mother tongue. That is, even though there are cases in which the OP could be informal, the use of formal OPs is conditioned by the relation between student and teacher, which is related to R and D spheres of FTAs. Nevertheless, there are cases where the students used informal OPs thanks to the different D that the teacher imposed on the student from the beginning.

What was obtained and thought respecting the RQ4 was to characterize the changes that occurred during a specific period. Four-and-a-half-year period of email exchanges were analyzed in terms of the HAs, modifications, and politeness perspectives. Some general comments can be made regarding the last three aspects mentioned, and it may be linked to some context aspects like the moment in which each HA, modification or use of politeness were written and sent by email.

Regarding the context, some clarifications may help to understand the changes in the number of emails. First, we must mention the academic context in which the emails were sent. After the revision of the programs for each class of English at the University, we found that there was no mention of email or email writing on the eight semestral programs, even though the teaching of different academic writing was present along with the idea of real-life context of writing. However, in the textbooks Life it was possible to see few attempts that pursued that goal. The distribution of the information and contents in the books was specified at the beginning of it as the following image shows:

Contents Split Edition A

Unit	Grammar	Vocabulary	Real life (functions)	Pronunciation
1 Health pages 9–20	present simple adverbs and expressions of frequency present simple and present continuous	leisure activities *do, go* or *play* wordbuilding: verb + noun collocations word focus: *feel* medical problems	talking about illness	/s/, /z/ or /ɪz/ sound and spelling
VIDEO: Slow food page 18 ▶ REVIEW page 20				
2 Competitions	verb + *-ing* forms *like -ing* / *'d like to* modal verbs for rules	wordbuilding: word forms sport venues and equipment competition words word focus: *like*	talking about interests	/ŋ/ silent letters

Listening	Reading	Critical thinking	Speaking	Writing
someone talking about two elderly ballroom dancers a health expert analyses sleep a radio interview about long life	a quiz about how well you sleep an article about centenarians an article about measuring health and happiness	the main argument	a quiz your current life measuring happiness	text type: online advice writing skill: conjunctions (*and, or, so, because, but*)
someone describing an Ironman competition three people talking about sport a reporter describing the rules of a competition	quotes by famous sports people an article about crazy competitions an article about female wrestlers in Bolivia	reading between the lines	guess the ambition explaining the rules of a competition your opinions about sport	text type: an advert or notice writing skill: checking your writing

(Hughes, Stephenson & Dummett, 2013, p. 2-3)

Here it is important to highlight the writing section, which is divided into the text type and the skills. Each content unit is related to one general topic like “health”, and the activities look forward to teaching through relevant information about the general topic. Even though several activities were about internet or online communication, only the following were about email writing, and only one was about pragmatic aspects of email writing.

1. Life pre-intermediate: Unit 5 “The environment”, page 65, 10(e) problem with an order, activities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. (one page).
2. Life intermediate: Unit 10 “No limits”, page 125, 5(e) What do you think?, activities 2, 3, 5, 6, 7. (less than one page).

3. Life post-intermediate: Unit 1“Relationships”, page 17, 1(e) News from home, activities 2, 4, 6. (less than one page).

   Unit 10 “Customs and behaviour”, page 125, 10(e) Business customs, activities 2, 3, 4, 5. (less than one page).

   Unit 11 “Knowledge and learning”, page 137, 11(e) The wrong course, activities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. (one page).

4. Life advanced: Unit 11 “Reason and emotion”, page 137, 11(e) Don’t get me wrong, activities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. (one page).

The teaching of writing emails can be summarized in the last activities and pages from the Life textbooks. We cannot secure or deny the actual development of those activities in class time or the assignment of it as homework, but it was all the information regarding emails that have been available for the students.

Regarding the corpus of eighty-two emails and the ninety-eight HA analyses we can establish some tendencies related to the teaching of English and the context. The period of four and half years should agree with the textbooks for the corresponding semester, however, the data exceeds the formal duration of the program. Hence, we cannot establish a direct link between the email’s development through the years and the only tool to develop written skills about emails. Beyond the activities of the textbooks, there is not clarity whether they were applied or not, nor the access to its correspondent feedback.

The HAs had a prolific rise since 2017 when only one HA was performed, reaching 59 by 2020 to then lower the numbers to 19 by 2021. Through the years the category that collected a major percentage of the data was Representative followed by Directive, then Expressive and finally Commissive accordingly with the figures. These variations could be linked with the personal choices that each participant made in each email, meaning that the purpose of writing emails to communicate with professors vary across the participants. Some instances can be named, like the fact that each generation of students defined one student to communicate certain decisions or problems to the professors. Also, there is a huge difference regarding the context of 2017 and 2018, which is the possibility of face-to-face communication. By the end of 2019, and during 2020 and 2021 the instance of communication student-professor was through email. Hence, we can speculate about the new purposes that did not exist before. For example, "Dear Miss, **Here is my test.**" From the corpus, the purpose of directly expressing the intention of delivering a test in face-to-face instances did not require the verbalization of the action, just the action of handing the test was enough for the interlocutors to understand the process: the student finished the test.

In terms of structures and the use of modifiers throughout time, we had almost no development in the first years until we reached 2020. However, as discussed beforehand, the rise of emails sent in this period is not gradual and the pandemic has a great impact over this topic.

The lack of formal education in email writing is believed to play a big role in this corpus's characteristics, one could argue that the use or absence of modifiers fall on the student's decisions and style, and this would be true if participants had access to a solid base of instruction about email communication.

The tools that the program brings to students focuses mainly on the expected scenarios that they will confront in the future, for example applications. Furthermore, the areas that are expected to improve are punctuation, orthography, organization of ideas and the formulaic presentation expected for the type of text. However, pragmatic emphasis is rare and superficial.

One reason for this lack of academic training in pragmatic might be due to the belief that this type of knowledge comes in hand with the level of English that a student has over other linguistics areas, or that is something that one has to learn through experience.

Something similar happens in terms of politeness analysis, where there were a few deviations since 2017. When contrasting the periods of 2017-2018 and 2019-2021, there are a major number of written emails on the last period mentioned, since there were contextual situations that obliged us to interact with teachers through emails, in comparison with the culture of talking face-to-face that they themselves taught us. These particular contexts opened a window to our email writing, where it is appreciable that neutral politeness tended to slightly lead the number of politeness strategies. We believe that the reason for this is related to the number of representative speech acts that were used by us.

2019 presented a higher presence of positive strategies. It is thought that it is related to the beginning of the social outbreak in our country at almost the end of the year, where we had to work with different strategies to acquire information in contrast with the strategies that we used on a daily basis before it.

It is remarkable to say that 2020 was a year of interesting data to analyze since it presents the richest data of all 4.5 years of information. In this year, the social outbreak started to enter onto a different stage, and parallel to it the pandemic of Covid-19 began. It presented similar information between the categories of positive and negative politeness orientation, as well as neutral instances. Nevertheless, it is neutral orientation that predominates, which is interesting to note that the changes that our strategies suffered through time are related to these two situations that changed our channels of communication, where we tended to use Spanish strategies. This may be due to the face-to-face interactions used to be in Spanish, presenting certain interference between our L1 and L2. In contrast, 2021 presented a different situation from the other years: it was negative strategies the orientation that were used more than the rest. We believe it is related to the fundamental use of representative and directive speech acts, where we thought that by appealing to both S and H oriented strategies, depending on what the students wanted to achieve through their messages.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1. Limitations

During the development of our investigation, we found the following limitations. First, we identified the lack of homogeneity between the total number of emails of every student as a limitation. It inevitably affected the statistics since our main goal was to catch the interactions naturally. This affected the results since some students had a major impact with their corpus in comparison with others. Furthermore, this study has been carried out as a self-study, which is translated into the email author´s perspective prevailing over the apparent structures and their respective linguistic rules which is the standard for most of the research that has been carried out.

7.2 Further Research

Regarding future investigation in relation to this topic, we think that it would be useful to analyze a more balanced corpus that includes different features. For example, analyzing the same patterns of interaction with high school students would help to measure the interactions without specific instruction in EFL. This kind of analysis would also be helpful to compare both the educational ministry materials in English language instruction given to schools and the materials provided by the University. In addition, the teacher's response could be included in the analysis, which might help to make an in-depth characterization of the features related with politeness, and how the emails are received by the interlocutors. This would enhance our understanding of the phenomena by addressing both the sender´s and the receiver´s perspectives. It is important to know the reasons behind the interactions and its possible repercussions on the communicative relationship between professors and students. When talking about formal scenarios for email writing the necessity of clarifying the pragmatic rules on the interaction between student and professors outside the actual classroom arises which might open the path for future investigation regarding strategies to teach this type of knowledge. Finally, we think that it would be interesting to suggest an investigation after the online classes period in which the face-to-face interactions will return. This would help to see if the email performances changed or not.

8. CONCLUSION

The investigation presented a self-study of pragmatic nature, we carried out a sample of six participants with a corpus of 82 emails. The aspects considered to be analyzed and described were divided into 4 research questions, contemplating Speech Acts, Politeness, Structures and transitions that student had through 4.5 years. As a result, we determined that in terms of use, the different contexts and the student's necessities altered their writing. HAs had a major representation of Representatives and Directives. Therefore, in order to categorize the data according to Searle into his Speech Act Categories (1975), we found that some HA would fit for more than one category. In those cases, the background knowledge related to the context of the interactions known only by the participants provided the final categorizations. However, further discussions were made later regarding that last point; structures were determined to be simple, related to speech acts type and insecurities; their politeness orientation was determined to be balanced, with the exception of 2021, having a negative politeness tendency. In terms of changes through the years, on the one hand structures and HAs register a big increase during the pandemic while the politeness orientation was more or less maintained. However, if we take a look at the rest of the data there was not a noticeable growth.

It is important to note that we did not analyze the 5 years entirely, as we thought that in the last semester our judgment would compromise our performance in the emails that we were about to write during the development of this report.

8.1 Implications

As we have mentioned, this study was made in a university context. We as learners of English as a second language are constantly evaluated on our proficiency skills, grammatical knowledge, writing skills, among others. Hence, as Bloch (2002) mentioned, this new context of synchronic communication opens new instances that may have enlarged the classrooms.

"This potential for extending traditional social interactions has been extremely important in academic contexts. From the beginnings of the Internet, email has played an important role in the professional lives of its users."

(Bloch, 2002, p. 119)

The author explained that email communication between students and professors creates an extension of the traditional interactions that took place at the faculty. It breaks the normal setting of the classroom in which we were usually evaluated by playing with different pragmatic rules that do not remain in face-to-face communication. Since this phenomenon occurs in a new setting that involves first a foreign language as primary source for communication, and secondly, a possible negotiation between the interlocutors regarding the differences in power, it would affect the politeness resources chosen by the students. At the university, and specifically during English classes, we were directed by semestral programs where there is no mention of the pragmatic contexts and rules that operate when talking about email communication, in relation with the power established between professor and student. Few simulated situations regarding emails were found in the text books series mentioned in the discussion for RQ4. There is no certainty regarding whether the students did the activities mentioned. Hence, it might not have affected this study.

We are convinced that our study could be of great utility for the field of pragmatic research, since context and interaction are heavily organic topics which could receive a lot of benefits from spontaneous data reflected upon personal intentions. In the past the study of behavior and the observation of natural interactions has had undeniable worth, such is the kind of information we tried to gather on this report.

This might not be a solid base neither to develop a theory nor to support specific claims. However, if we value that the study of spontaneous and natural interaction achieves practical results, it could be considered that this type of study might have practical implications in the future of pedagogy. L2 acquisition has been approached in a handful of linguistics perspectives, pragmatics among them, but they had rarely scrapped against this approach.

9. REFERENCES

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10. APPENDIX

The following link contains the total corpus of emails for this research:

Appendix - Google Drive