INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS AND EMAIL COMMUNICATION

A THESIS

by

WEI-HONG KO

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Chair of Committee,	Zohreh Eslami
Committee Members,	Lynn M. Burlbaw
	Shari Kendall
Head of Department,	Yeping Li

August 2013

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated learners' interlanguage pragmatic development through analysis of ninety requestive emails written to a faculty member over a period of up to two years. Most previous studies on interlanguage pragmatics have been comparative. These studies focused on how nonnative speakers' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence differed from native speakers' and compared learners with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to native speakers. In addition, the few existing literature on developmental pragmatics have used elicited. Naturally occurring data, in the form of emails, offer a more valid reflection of learners' pragmatic competence. This study adopted speech event analysis approach, which seeks to account for all parts of requestive emails and recognize the "work" each part does in the production of the speech event. Results indicated that although quantitative analysis did not indicate much pragmatic development, content analysis revealed learners' development of pragmatic competence such as showing ability, clearer requests and relevant supportive moves and improvement from a reason then request to request then reason structure. This study elucidated the merits of analyzing natural data in interlanguage pragmatics as well as offered the benefit of recognizing email requests as a situated event.

DEDICATION

To my grandparents Gu-Kui Wang & Cai-Ying Lai Wang, with love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed this thesis without many people's help. First and foremost, my sincere gratitude goes to my advisor, Professor Eslami. It is she who first recognized a potential for academic work in an average student and a slow learner. In addition, she willingly provided literature and data and spent countless hours reading and revising many versions of the drafts of this thesis. Without her generosity and patience, this thesis would never have been completed. In addition, I shall thank my committee members: Professor Burlbaw and Professor Kendall for spending time reading my thesis and offered invaluable comments that vastly improved the quality of this thesis. In addition, I have learned critical thinking from Professor Burlbaw's curriculum and development course. Also, Professor Kendall taught me many important concepts concerning sociolinguistics and generously shared her ideas with me. Honestly I could not have progressed as far as I could without these three professors' instructions.

In addition, my study in the US would not have been possible without my family's generous financial support. I would like to express gratitude to my parents, who encourage me and are willing to invest a considerable financial commitment to their prodigal son. My brother, Eddie, also provided continuous spiritual support as guidelines about life as a graduate student. My paternal grandmother always shows her love for me and encourages me to pursue graduate study. Finally, thanks must go to my maternal

grandparents, whose untimely passing during the third semester of my study made it impossible for me to share the joy of graduation with them.

Furthermore, I am very much appreciative of all the support and kindness my former teachers and friends show for me. First of all, I wish to thank my former teachers: Professor William S.Y. Wang, Professor Jen-Chieh Ting, Professor Hui-Chun Deng, Professor Collins Chia, Professor Yueh-Hua Wang, Mr. Wen-Nan Hsieh and Ms. Sarah Brooks for teaching me and encouraging me to pursue graduate studies abroad. In addition, my dear friends, Kung-Ting Kuo, Xin-Hui Jian, Qian Chen, Kelly Chou, Chih-Ming Huang and Alex Chang are the best confidants when I feel lonely and need someone to talk to and for that I am forever grateful. In addition, thanks to Marianne Snow, Anna Wharton, Xuewei Chen, Yuwen Su, Yu-Yu Hsiao and Mark Lai for providing me with support about academic writing and statistics. I also shall thank Silvia Chen, Linda Chao, Emily Chen, Lu Yang, Xinyuan Yang, Luping Niou, Qiong Yu, Dan Hui, and Shi Shi for various help and accompaniment rendered during my study.

Last but not least, I wish to thank Professor Chia-Chiang Wang, who expertly organized online Tao meetings so I can still cultivate Tao in a foreign country. Thanks also shall go to the participants of the meeting: Ming-Ching Liang, Chien-Ming Huang, Douglas Yang and Yun-Ling Chang. I also shall thank the Chou family for hosting me and allowing me to visit Buddhist temple during my visit to Dallas. In addition I wish to thank all members of TAMU Tzu-Ching Garden for spiritual support. Finally, I wish to

express appreciation and devote the glory to my spiritual teacher, Jing-Gong Living Buddha, who always shows care for me and teaches me in immeasurable ways how to live a righteous life and be a better person.

NOMENCLATURE

CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project
DCT	Discourse Completion Tasks
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
NS	Native Speaker of English
NNS	Non-native Speaker of English

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the development of pragmatic competence in nonnative graduate students as evidenced in their requestive emails sent to a faculty member. Opening strategies, request strategies, internal and external modification and closing strategies are analyzed to examine the students' development of pragmatic competence.

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is defined as the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic actions by nonnative learners (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). However, unlike other studies in second language acquisition (SLA), most previous studies on interlanguage pragmatics have been comparative (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). These studies mostly focused on how nonnative speakers' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge differed from native speakers' and compared learners with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Eslami-Rasekh, 1993, 2008; House, 1989). The relative shortage on developmental pragmatics research has led Kasper and Schmidt (1996) to strengthen the link between SLA and ILP by profiling the latter as an area of inquiry in SLA (Rose, 2000). In addition, Bardovi-Harlig specifically pointed out that, "Not only was interlanguage pragmatics not acquisitional, but it was, fundamentally, not acquisitional" (1999, p. 679). Further, previous acquisitional studies have used elicited data collected either through discourse completion tasks (DCT) or role-play. It is argued

that naturally occurring data, such as emails, offers a more valid reflection of learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, the aim of the current study is to track nonnative graduate students' pragmatic development in their two years of study at a large university through three different time points. In addition, emails allow the inclusion of openings, small talk and closings, which influence the appropriateness of the message (Bou-Franch, 2006). Therefore, following previous research on emails (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2013; Merrison, Wilson, Davies, & Haugh, 2012), this study took a speech event analysis approach and analyzed each component found in an email message.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kasper and Dahl (1991) defined interlanguage pragmatics as the study of nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how that L2-related knowledge is acquired. However, the studies published in this area have been more comparative than acquistional, as Bardovi-Harlig (1999) and Rose (2000) observed. Kasper (1992) argued this comparative orientation was a result of scholars in the field of interlanguage pragmatics deriving its research questions and methodology from empirical and, particularly, cross-cultural pragmatics. In other words, although these studies are useful for documenting learners' pragmalinguistic (Eslami-Rasekh, 1993, 2008; House, 1989) as well as sociopragmatic knowledge (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993), there is a need for more studies that explore learners' pragmatic development and consider whether language proficiency exerts influence on the development of pragmatic knowledge. Therefore following Bardovi-Harlig (1999) and Kasper and Schmidt's (1996) calls for more focus on developmental pragmatics research, a small but growing number of studies probed into NNS learners' pragmatic development (Goy, Zeyrek & Octu, 2012; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000, 2009; Schauer, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009; Woodfield, 2012). Developmental ILP research is either cross-sectional or longitudinal. In this literature review we first discuss cross-sectional studies and then move on to

longitudinal studies. In addition, as Merrison et al. (2012) pointed out, there are issues with results from studies that used elicited data. Therefore, a section devoted to issues with elicited data will also be included. Furthermore, since this study investigated pragmatic development from students' email messages, we will present a section on student-faculty email communication. Finally, since emails allow the inclusion of address forms, small talk and closings, relevant studies related to openings, small talk and closings in emails will also be reviewed.

Developmental ILP Research: Cross-Sectional Studies

Rose (2000) defined cross-sectional design as the study of two or more groups of participants who are in various stages of pragmatic development**.** Several studies have explored pragmatic development of learners with various language proficiency levels (Goy et al. 2012; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007; Rose, 2000, 2009; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008).

Rose (2000) investigated three groups of Hong Kong primary school students' use of request strategies and supportive moves. Data were elicited through oral DCT. Results showed that direct strategies were only found in grade two students' data (11.6%) while grade six students realized most of their requests with indirect strategies (85.7%). The findings indicated that language proficiency influences pragmatic development. Results also showed a minimal use of supportive moves (external modifiers), and the external modifiers mostly consisted of grounder (reasons for requests) used by grade six participants (11.6%). According to Rose (2000), the gap

between grade six students' employment of supportive moves on the one hand and grade two and four students' on the other (3% and 3.3%, respectively) may be indicative of a developmental threshold. In other words, the grade six students had reached a stage in which the use of supportive moves was becoming more frequent. He was unable to consider other factors because of participating school officials' resistance. The inability to probe into demographic factors such as parents' proficiency levels or contact with NS domestic helper severely limited the possibility of inferring whether these factors influenced pragmatic development (ex. parents' English proficiency levels or contact with NS domestic helper).

More recently, Felix-Bradsdefer (2007) investigated the pragmatic development of adult foreign language Spanish learners. Participants were recruited from classes of three proficiency levels – beginning, intermediate and advanced – and each group consisted of fifteen learners. Data were elicited through an open role-play that contained informal and formal situations. Results indicated that as proficiency in Spanish increased, so did the learners' use of indirect strategies. The requests of advanced learners were mostly realized through conventionally indirect means (78%). This developmental trend was also observed for internal modifiers as advanced learners used conditionals for modification while beginners largely resorted to the politeness marker "please". For supportive moves, results indicated that only the use of preparator (pre-request sequence) exhibited a developmental pattern, with beginners using it the least (11%) and advanced learners the most (23.5%). On the other hand, participants in the

advanced proficiency group used significantly fewer grounders (65%) than those in the beginner group (73%). The author explained that as learners acquired more external modifiers as their proficiency increased, there was a reduced need for the use of grounders.

Octu and Zeyrek (2008) investigated pragmatic developing Turkish learners of English by studying their use of request strategies, internal modifiers and supportive moves. Nineteen participants from a beginner's English class participated in the study. Their proficiency level was gauged by a proficiency test developed by Middle East Technical University. Another group of thirty-one upper-intermediate students majoring in foreign language education were also recruited; and proficiency level was verified by the in-house tests. Requests were elicited through interactive role-play. In addition, they also collected thirteen sets of native speaker data through written DCT for comparison purposes. Results indicated that for request strategies, both groups of learners used indirect strategies (Beginner: 96%, Upper-intermediate: 80%). Learners only realized their requests with direct strategies in low imposition scenarios, such as borrowing a book from a friend or asking for the menu in the restaurant. In contrast, the use of internal modifiers indicated that pragmatic development correlates with language proficiency, with learners in the upper-intermediate group using significantly more lexical and syntactic modifiers than the beginners. For supportive moves, results indicated learners' approaching NS competence in the use of grounder, preparator and getting a precommitment (Beginner: 60%, Upper-intermediate: 62%, NS: 58%).

However, imposition minimizers were only found in advanced learners' data, suggesting that learners needed time to learn more complex supportive moves.

In order to address the shortcoming of his 2000 study (inability to administer demographic questionnaire), Rose (2009) conducted a second study examining the use of request strategies and internal and external modifiers for three levels of Hong Kong junior and senior high school students. As in Rose's earlier study (2000), data were collected through oral DCT. A demographic survey indicated that participants were typical Hong Kong students (ex. use Cantonese at home but English at school, no study abroad experience, and no English-speaking domestic helper at home). Consistent with Rose's (2000) study, results showed that participants realized requests mainly through indirect strategies (92.1%). Only grade two junior high school students used some direct strategies (6.4%). In addition, Rose (2009) documented developmental patterns in the uses of internal modifiers. For example, grade two junior high school students relied exclusively on modals like "may" and "can" (56.2% and 37.7%, respectively) while grade three senior high school students acquired new modals like "would" (8.4%) and formulaic phrases like "would you mind" (27.7%). On the other hand, consistent with findings on primary school students in Rose (2000), the frequency of supportive moves was rare in this study. However, the mean frequencies doubled per level, from 0.02 per request in grade two junior high students' data to 0.10 per request in grade three senior high school learners' data. This result again indicated the onset of a pragmatic expansion stage in pragmatic development.

Finally, Goy et al. (2012) investigated Turkish English-learners' use of internal modifiers in relation to situations with different combinations of power and distance. A total of thirty-eight participants were equally divided into beginner and upper-intermediate groups according to their performance on Middle East Technical University English proficiency exam. In addition, data from fifteen NS graduate students at Columbia University were elicited for comparison. Learner data were elicited through open role-play while baseline data were collected through written DCT. Results indicated that participants from beginner and upper-intermediate groups considerably underused syntactic downgraders compared to NS participants (Beginner: 1%, Upper: 8.1%, American: 43.6%). However, the jump of one percent use of syntactic modifiers to about eight percent in the upper intermediate group significantly pointed to development of pragmalinguistic competence, with conditional (0% to 2.9%), conditional clause (1% to 4.3%) and tense (0%-1%) showing the most improvement. For situational variations, it was also found that both groups of learners employed significantly fewer syntactic modifiers than NS participants. A developmental pattern for sociopragmatics also existed. Advanced learners used more syntactic downgraders for high imposition and high power distance request situations like borrowing a book or asking a ride home from the professor (Book: Beginner: 12.5%, Upper: 20.8%; Ride: Beginner: 20.9%, Upper: 25%).

To summarize, previous studies demonstrate that learners' levels of L2 proficiency is related to their pragmatic development (Goy et al., 2012; Felix-

Bradsdefer, 2007; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000; 2009). Rose (2000, 2009) found that lexical and syntactic modifiers were acquired earlier than supportive moves for young learners. Further, when compared with baseline data, learner data showed that even learners with advanced language proficiency, fell short of reaching target language norms (Goy et al., 2012; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008). Having surveyed previous cross-sectional studies, the review will now move on to longitudinal studies.

Developmental ILP Research: Longitudinal Studies

Unlike cross-sectional studies, studies with a longitudinal design track a particular group of learners' progress over a certain period of time (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Longitudinal studies have the advantage of tracking long-term development in the same group of learners, enabling analysis of change at the individual/micro levels (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The following longitudinal studies have investigated learners' pragmatic development in classroom and study abroad contexts.

Ellis (1992) observed the development of requests for two ten and eleven-year old boys in a formal learning context (classroom) for sixteen and twenty-one months. He examined the learners' use of request strategies as well as internal and external modifiers. Results evidenced little pragmalinguistic development because both learners only acquired "please" as an internal modifier and mostly used grounders as a supportive

move. In addition, there was also little evidence for sociopragmatic development due to learners' overreliance on direct request strategies (J: 78%, R: 58%) and consistent use of direct requests to teachers and peers. Ellis pointed out that the nature of the communicative settings may have hindered learners' development, claiming, "The classroom constitutes an environment where the interactants achieve great familiarity with each other, removing the need of careful face-work that results in the use of indirect request types and extensive modification" (1992, p. 20).

Similarly, Schauer (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) conducted a series of longitudinal investigations focusing on the pragmatic development of nine German study abroad learners. The data were collected in a period of eight months and the data collection sessions were divided into three distinct points: the learners' arrival at the UK University, in the middle and before their return to Germany. The method used in all four studies was multimedia elicitation tasks. Results indicated learners gradually learned to use conventionally indirect strategy in the last phase of data collection. In addition, the development of internal modifiers was also observed as learners employed at least one new internal modifier like appreciative embedding "It would be really nice if…" and marked modality "may' not documented in the first data collection session. Patterns of external modifiers suggested that although grounders and alerters (ex. "Hi Dr. Smith") were documented in the first phase of data collection, more complex supportive moves such as small talk or considerator (ex. "Only if you got time of

course…") were only found in phase two of the study, indicating that length of stay at the target language environment influenced learners' pragmatic development.

Finally, Woodfield (2012) investigated eight Asian graduate students' development of use of internal modifiers during an eight-month sojourn at a British University. The requests of eight native speakers were also collected for comparison purposes. Open role-play consisting of two discourse situations (requesting an extension for an assignment and borrowing notes from a fellow student) was adopted; data were collected at three distinct points (learners' arrival in Britain, five months after arrival and before return to home country). Woodfield (2012) also conducted retrospective interviews after the last session of data collection for better understanding of learner perspective on pragmatic development. Results indicated linear decrease in the use of internal modifier employment across data collection sessions (f= 54 in phase 1, f= 43 in phase 2 and f=32 in phase 3). The author speculated that the gradual decrease of the use of downtoner (24.1% in phase 1, 13.2% in phase 2 and 12.8% in phase 3) could be attributed to gradual familiarity of students' with faculty members. In addition, learners' preference for lexical modifiers over syntactic modifiers was also documented, especially at the first phase of data collection (lexical modifier: 57.7%, syntactic modifier: 25.9%), indicating that syntactic modifiers took time to learn. Results on supportive moves evidenced learners' use approaching native speaker competence because equal amounts of external modifiers were found in learner and NS data (Learner: phase 1, 13%, phase 2, 17%, phase 3, 20%, NS: 18%).

As has been pointed out, most previous studies on developmental ILP research used elicited data collected either through DCT or role-play. The only study that utilized naturally occurring data was Chen (2006), who conducted a longitudinal investigation of the pragmatic development in a Taiwanese student's emails. The participant, Ling, was pursuing both her master and doctorate in the United State. The corpus of data consisted of ninety-eight emails Ling sent to professors during her two-and-a-half years of study. Results for request strategies showed a gradual move from preference of directness to indirectness. In addition, Ling acquired a number of new internal modifiers like conditionals and subjectivizers. In an interview session Ling told the author that she learned these internal modifiers through observation of her NS peer's emails, verifying Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis. For supportive moves the results indicated that Ling's pragmatic development from using reasons with personal details to institutionally sanctioned reasons. Furthermore, Ling learned to acknowledge imposition on the professors' time, as her message length became shorter and to the point through better understanding of target norms.

In summary, previous longitudinal studies find that as length of stay in the target community increases, so does the learners' pragmatic development as they used more indirect strategies and acquired more and varied internal and external modifiers. However, except Chen (2006), all other studies collected elicited data through either DCT or role-play, which may not reflect learners' pragmatic competence as the following review shows.

Elicited Data in Pragmatics Research

Previous studies of NNS' pragmatic competence have frequently employed DCT to elicit speech acts (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). However, since DCT lacks authentic turns, a number of studies have questioned the validity of this instrument (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1992; Golato, 2003; Bou-Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008). Through the administration of concurrent and retrospective verbal reports, Woodfield (2008) documented instrument effects on participants' responses in DCT.

Kasper, in discussing the scope of DCT, pointed out that production questionnaires are an effective instrument for establishing "what L2 learners know rather than what they can do under the much more demanding conditions of conversational encounters" (2000, p. 330). She further argued that the use of questionnaires in pragmatics research exclude from investigation "those pragmatic features that are specific to oral interactive discourse, any aspect related to the dynamics of a conversation, turn-taking, and the conversational mechanisms related to it, sequencing of action, speaker-listener coordination, features of speech production that may have pragmatic import, such as hesitation, and all paralinguistic and nonverbal elements" (2000, p. 325-326). Importantly, studies comparing naturalistic and elicited data have proved Kasper's (2000) concern.

Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1992) investigated whether differences exist in natural and elicited data in native and nonnative students' production of refusals in academic advising sessions. The natural data came from thirty-nine audio-recorded advising sessions, and the elicited data were from DCT. Results showed different frequency and types of rejection strategies and semantic formulas in elicited data in comparison to natural data. For example, the strategy of criticize/accuse was found in elicited data, whereas this strategy was not found in natural data. In addition, the opting out strategy was only found in elicited data, while the postponement strategy was only found in natural data.

In a similar line of research, Golato (2003) compared conversational data collected through a previous study with DCT adapted from natural data. She opined that DCT is metapragmatic in that "it explicitly requires participants not to conversationally interact, but to articulate what they believe would be situationally appropriate responses within possible, yet imaginary settings" (2003, p. 92). To empirically test her contention, she administered DCT constructed based on her naturalistic data to thirty respondents. Results showed noticeable differences between naturalistic and elicited data. The use of "thank you" to indicate acceptance of compliments was a case in point. Golato (2003) found that participants in natural settings would just say thank you in acceptance of a compliment (f=27). However, DCT data revealed that participants would always include other elements like assessment of the compliment and two accounts (e.g., "Yes, correct. The China is an heirloom and my pride and joy). Golato (2003) speculated that lack of

interlocutors forced the participants to imagine a scenario of compliment and compliment response.

Furthermore, Woodfield (2008) employed verbal reports to track participants' responses to the DCT. Six pairs of native English speakers were required to write a response to eighteen DCT situations and verbalize their thought processes at the same time. Results indicated that respondents questioned the lack of interactive and contextual features of DCT and also might just constrain their responses to the tasks or reconstruct the situation in the task to better fit their responses, thus contradicting the goal of DCT.

Finally, Bou-Franch and Lorenzo-Dus's (2008) comparison of British English (BE) and Peninsular Spanish (PS) students' production of requests in DCT and emails was most relevant to the present study. The elicited data consisted of one hundred sixteen DCT (58 BE, 58 PS) completed by students while the natural data contained sixty emails (30 BE, 30 PS). Importantly, they analyzed not only the request strategies but also openings and closings in these two data sets. Results indicated that there were few openings in elicited data (DCT: BE, 17%, PS, 28%; email: BE, 76%, PS, 93%). The frequency was more striking when it came to closings because all email data contained closings, but closings was found sparingly in elicited data (BE: 3%, PS: 29%). In addition, although request strategies did not differ much in these two data sets, supportive moves showed a marked difference as only one fourth of elicited data contained external modifiers in BE data (f=14 in DCT, f=62 in emails).

As documented in previous studies, although DCT has its advantages (e.g., eliciting large amounts of data in a short time and collecting not easily observed speech acts such as refusals), the unnaturalness of the experimental condition may undermine valid claims about language use. In fact, as Kasper (2000) and Golato (2003) observed, if we want to study people's metapragmatic knowledge under different situations, then DCT is a suitable tool. However, since the current research aims to document language use, naturalistic data, in the form of emails, is used to track pragmatic development of the students.

Pragmatics of Student-Faculty Email Communication

Baron (2002) observed that advances in technology often bring new ways of doing things, and student-faculty communication is one domain that is influenced by these advances. Email, once exclusively used by technologically savvy people, is rapidly being adopted by different people at universities, replacing the previously popular trend of face-to-face advising sessions for students asking for varieties of "services" from professors (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). As an asynchronous medium, emails have the advantage of allowing the recipients to reply to received messages when it is convenient for them (Lightfoot, 2006). In addition, students have sufficient time to construct status-congruent emails to better optimize the way they represent themselves (Duthler, 2006). However, since email is a relatively new communication medium there are not so many

reference guides. Therefore, emailers have to compose appropriate messages according to their own understanding of politeness (Baron, 2002; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

If it is difficult to compose appropriate emails, the task is compounded when power imbalance exists between senders and receivers, such as when employees write to supervisors or when students write to professors. To effectively communicate with faculty members, students need to have sufficient pragmatic competence, awareness of politeness conventions and understanding of email etiquette (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). They also may need more time to plan and compose emails in which various face-threatening acts may be performed (Chen, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Furthermore, they have to make sociopragmatic choices regarding forms of address, degree of formality and directness, closings, presence and amount of mitigation and the types of modification strategies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). This means they must assess the kind of relationship with professors and degree of imposition of their requests in relation to rights and obligations of the parties involved (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Comparative studies have found that, in general, non-native speakers of English, even those with high English proficiency, lack appropriate pragmalinguistic ability to sufficiently mitigate their requests and often resort to nonacademic reasons (e.g. working full time), which are not appropriate in academic contexts (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2012). A detailed review of the relevant studies is presented here.

Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) was the pioneering study in the examination of students' request speech acts through emails. They analyzed variations in requests found in NS and NNS students' emails and faculty's evaluation of the positive and negative affect on addressees. Results indicated that non-native speakers' emails contained errors that caused pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983) such as insufficient mitigation, lack of acknowledgement of faculty's efforts, emphasis on students' needs and unrealistic time frames. The authors concluded that the NNS students' emails reflected their ignorance of their institutional roles and acknowledged the need for pedagogical intervention to make students more aware of the need for composing status-congruent emails.

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) also investigated the linguistic forms of NS and NNS request speech acts. She analyzed five hundred and thirty-three email messages (382 NS messages, 151 NNS messages) and employed the CCSARP coding scheme (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) as her analysis framework and categorized the requests into three groups: request for appointment, feedback and extension. In addition, she reported two new email group types found in her data, which were assurance getter "e.g. I wanted you to make sure that I'm on the right track*"* and appreciative embedding "e.g. I appreciate your taking a look*"*. She examined native and non-native speakers modification of speech acts both internally (by using lexical or syntactic modifiers) and externally (by using supportive moves), as well as request perspective. Results showed that all students used more direct strategies for low imposition requests. However, when

mitigating high imposition requests, NNS students lacked the necessary pragmalinguistic competence to use a combination of syntactic modifiers and primarily resorted to lexical modifiers such as understaters (just) or the politeness marker please. A surprise finding of her study was that NS students did not use extensive syntactic modifiers, which she believed might be ‘‘an indication that in the e-mail medium, a minimum amount of internal modification may be considered sufficient for realizing students’ requests of faculty’’ (as cited in Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007 p. 64).

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) conducted a study that probed into possible reasons for communication breakdown between students and faculty. Her corpus consisted of two hundred emails from Greek Cypriot university students over an eighteen-month period. Participants had varied backgrounds; some were undergraduate students, while others were graduate students. The requests coded were request for information and request for action. The author followed the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) but proposed two new strategies found in her corpus, namely reminder requests “e.g. please do not forget to read my paper” and pre-decided statements “e.g. hopefully you can help me read this paper” and recruited twenty-four lecturers from twelve universities in the UK to rate the emails through online questionnaires. Results indicated that in regard to the scale of directness, student mostly employed direct strategies, showing their unawareness of politeness conventions. For mitigation strategies, students’ emails lacked syntactic modifiers for softening requestive force. Instead, external

modifiers such as grounders and pre-closings were utilized, which did not adequately mitigate the illocutionary force of requests.

Felix-Bradsdefer (2012) collected three hundred and eighty-two L1 English and L2 Spanish corpus of email requests and analyzed two hundred forty of them (120 in L1 English, 120 in L2 Spanish). The goal of his paper was to investigate the level of directness and lexical and syntactic downgraders used in NNS requests in relation to different request types (ex. information, confirmation, feedback or action). Results indicated that there was a correlation between types of requests and imposition levels. For example, students used more direct strategies for low imposition requests like the request for information and for confirmation (L2 Spanish, 45.5%, L1 English, 37%) while resorting to conventionally indirect strategies for high imposition ones (L2 Spanish, 48%, L1 English, 49%). In addition, internal modifiers varied in regard to L1 English and L2 Spanish data. Students employed relatively few lexical modifiers in L2 Spanish emails (29.4%) but the number was notably higher in L1 English data (70.6%). Syntactic modifiers exhibited the same trend as they predominated in L1 English data (61%) and were less frequent in L2 Spanish email requests (39%). Syntactic modifiers also correlated with levels of imposition as most of them were utilized to modify high imposition requests.

Finally, Merrison et al. (2012) investigated one hundred ninety emails (consisting of 264 requests) from British and Australian students utilizing Blum-Kulka et al.'s

(1989) coding scheme. They mainly focused on external modifiers, analyzing what they called the use of but-justification, virtual gifts, appeal to communal common ground, and self-disclosure as well as openings and closings. Importantly they coded each element within the email. Results indicated that although conventional indirectness was the favored method across the corpora, there were more direct requests from British emails and more hints in the Australian data. In addition, British students constructed an image of dependent students by using more apology, more self-disclosure, more personal account and more use of recipient title in the opening while Australian students oriented to the interdependent nature of student and faculty relationship with more use of communal common ground, more employment account and more use of pre-closings.

As Merrison et al. (2012) demonstrated, the design of requests (speech acts) are situated within a speech events (emails) from student to faculty, thus an analysis of not only levels of directness, internal modifiers and supportive moves but also other elements such as openings, small talk and closings is warranted. In addition, as Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Branch's (2008) study demonstrated, electronic requesting behavior is a socially-situated discourse that includes a greater variety of openings, small talk and closings, a section on these three elements is warranted for clearer understanding of different components of requestive emails.

Email Communication

As has been previously stated, this study takes a speech event analysis approach to examine emails. Therefore, it is important to provide a review of the related literature on each of the email components. As Brown and Levinson (1987) pointed out, the presence or absence of openings and closings not only set the tone for the messages that follows, but also are a way for the sender to attend to receiver's face needs. Email openings can include different components, such as forms of address "e.g. Dear Dr. Henson", greetings "e.g. Hello, Hi" and sender's self-identification "e.g., This is Peter Wang". The following section provides a review of relevant studies on opening strategies.

Openings. A number of studies have investigated opening strategies in authentic emails in workplace and academic settings (Bjorge, 2007, Bou-Franch, 2006 ; Economidou-Kogetsidis , 2011; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2001, 2006; Formentelli, 2009; Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2013; Waldvogel, 2007). However, since the goal of this study is exploration of student-faculty email communication, only five related studies (Bjorge, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis , 2011; Formentelli, 2009; Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2013) are presented here.

Bou-Franch (2006) examined Spanish students' opening strategies found in thirty emails written to her. Results indicated that nearly all emails contained openings, which could be further categorized into components of greetings (consist of greeting words and

forms of address: e.g. Hi Dr. Bou-Franch, 89%) and self-identification (70%). In addition, some greeting moves were more informal than others "e.g.. "hola versus estimada name surname". The author explained that emails containing informal greetings were mostly from Ph.D. students due to their familiarity and frequent contact with her. On the other hand, students unfamiliar with the author tended to use formal greetings due to perceived social distance. For self-identification, students mostly oriented to common ground and familiarity by using self-identifying information "e.g. Somos Name, Nickname, Name y Name de tu clase de inglés 1".

In addition, Bjorge (2007) studied openings in emails from international students sent to academic staff in Norway. Her assumption was that students from countries with high power distance culture would employ more formal strategies than those from low distance ones (Hoftstede, 2001) and results validated her premise. She found that students from high power distance cultures tended to use more formal forms, such as "Dear Professor/Sir/Madam/Teacher + professor's first and last name." On the other hand, students whose countries of origin were categorized as low power distance cultures favored informal greetings like "Dear + professor's first name," "Hi/Hello + professor's first name" or even no openings.

Formentelli (2009) also investigated how British students addressed professors in academic settings by interview and audio-recording data. Results indicated that, despite the increasing use of informal address forms in British institutional encounters, students still preferred to use formal strategies for conveying deference and respect.

Furthermore, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) examined Greek students' use of openings in her study of request emails. In a corpus of two hundred emails, she found wide variations in openings, ranging from those which were grammatically incorrect but could not be seen as causing pragmatic failures (Thomas, 1983) to those which could cause serious offense due to incorrect use of titles (Mrs. instead of Dr.). Specifically, she found thirty-one percent of emails omitted the use of deference term "Dear" in the salutation. The omission was further compounded by the use of incorrect academic title + last name (Ex. Mr. Jones instead of Dr. Jones, 10%), incorrect academic title + first name (Ex. Mrs. Maria, 13%) or title + first name (Ex. Dr. Jonathan, 3%). In addition, she found students were unable to differentiate between the informality of the word "hi" with the formal salutation "hello" as they employed the informal word "hi" with formal title + first name construction (ex. "Hi Dr. Michael," 7.5%) with the less formal, yet unacceptable constructions title + first name (ex. "Hi Dr. Paul," 4%). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) also found that faculty evaluators pointed out that the lack of salutation and omission of formal deference term "Dear" seriously affected the overall politeness of email messages.

Merrison et al. (2012) examined British and Australian students' emails. Results showed that the use of formal title occurred more frequently in British students' data (B: 19%, A: 2%). In addition, there was no use of professional titles in the Australian corpus.

Finally, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch (2013) examined the openings in British English (BE) and Peninsular Spanish (PS) students' emails. The data consisted of one hundred student-initiated emails collected over a six-month period. Results indicated that most emails contained at least one opening move (BE: 86%, PS: 96%). In addition, greeting and self-identification were the two most common components in these email openings. Furthermore, both groups of students orientated themselves toward informality in these openings (BE: 86%, PS: 61%).

Small talk. Opening strategies are not the only elements available for tailoring messages to individual email recipient. Small talk, defined as a non-task oriented conversation about neutral topics, can function as a mitigator to soften face threats and provide an initial time interval that allows interlocutors to size each other up, establish an interactional style and some degree of mutual trust and rapport (Bickmore & Cassell, 1999). However, research in linguistics has often overlooked the importance of small talk, possibly due to its categorization by Malinowski as "mere socialbilities" (as cited in Pullin, 2010, p. 458). Malinowski coined the term phatic communication and considered small talk to be devoid of any information. However, as Pullin (2010) suggested, small talk is a valuable asset in establishing harmonious working relationships.

Pullin (2010) conducted a study that investigated the function of small talk and how English as a lingual franca speaker utilized this important tool to manage rapport with colleagues and clients. She found that small talk served the function of creating a

relaxed atmosphere before the beginning of serious talk (meeting) and thus nurtured rapport. In addition, as the boss joined the banter, small talk helped mitigate power and nurture solidarity.

Body (requestive speech act). Requests are the most studied speech act due to its frequent occurrence in everyday life (Schuaer, 2009). According to CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989), the structure of a request contains the head act and other supportive elements called internal modifiers and supportive moves**.** According to Blum-Kulka et al (1989), the request head act is defined as the part of the sequence, which serves to realize the act independently of other elements. A head act can vary in two dimensions: strategy and perspective. The CCSARP scheme classified requests on three levels of directness: direct e.g., "Pass the salt", conventionally indirect e.g., "Can you pass the salt?" and non-conventionally indirect or hint e.g., "The soup is rather bland". In addition, choices in request perspective presented important sources of variation in requests. According to CCSARP, requests can emphasize the role of the agent and can be speaker-oriented e.g., "Can I meet you on Monday?", or it can focus on the role of recipient and be hearer-oriented e.g., "Can you give me an appointment on Monday?". Two other possibilities are the emphasis on inclusive aspect e.g., "Can we meet on Sunday?" or impersonal e.g., "Is it possible to get an appointment on Monday?".

Internal modifiers. CCSARP also included elements within or around the head act that served as modifiers to downgrade the illocutionary force of the head act. Internal

modifiers are defined as elements within the head act, the presence of which is not essential for the utterances to be potentially understood as requests. Such modifiers have two distinct functions. First, they may serve as indicating devices used to indicate pragmatic force, as well as sociopragmatic devices that affect the social impact the utterance is likely to have. In addition, the modifiers in their sociopragmatic role may act either as downgraders for mitigation of the head act or alternatively as upgraders which increase the degree of coerciveness of the head act. Internal modifiers can be further categorized into lexical and syntactic types. Examples of lexical modifiers are subjectivizer e.g., "I was thinking if you can help me with my assignment", consultative device e.g., "Do you think Friday is good?", downtoner e.g., "I just want to ask you a question" or politeness marker "please." Syntactic modifiers, on the other hand, are linked to the grammatical systems of languages and realized by language-specific subcategories. In English, the CCSARP identified the grammatical distinction of tense e.g., "Could you help me?", aspect e.g. "I was wondering if you can help me" and embedding e.g. "Let me know when is the due date for assignment submission" as syntactic downgraders.

External modifiers (supportive moves). In addition to directness in head act and syntactic modifiers, the head act can be further modified by supportive moves. Supportive moves, also called external modifiers, are defined as elements that either precede or follow the head act, whose presence does not affect the utterance used for realizing the act, but rather the context in which it is embedded, thus indirectly

modifying the illocutionary force of the head act. Examples of supportive moves are preparator (pre-request sequence), grounder (reasons or justification for the request), appreciatior and apology. Taken together, the choice of request strategies, request perspectives, internal modifiers and supportive moves determine the perceived illocutionary force of a request.

Closings. According to Waldvogel (2007), closings in emails consist of three elements: pre-closing phatic comments like "Have a nice day," farewell formula and any name signoff. In addition, "thanks" is considered as a closing when it comes with or without the writers' name. Studies on closing strategies found that these three moves (pre-closing, farewell, self-identification) were not always present in closing in emails examined and thus stylistic variation existed. In Bou-Franch's (2006) study, she found great variation in the closing strategies in her email data. All thirty emails contained closings, of which thanking (93%) and signature (73%) were most prevalent. Leave-taking (e.g., "see you in class on Monday", 36%), which is a subcomponent of pre-closing, also was found in the emails. In addition, Bjorge (2007) in line with openings, discovered that students from countries with high power distance cultures mostly favored the use of formal closings, as she found that fifteen out of seventeen students chose formal formulas for closings. In contrast, ten out of twelve students from low power distance cultures adopted informal variants of closing formulas. Further, in a study of a corpus of two hundred emails, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) found only twenty-three percent of messages ended with closings. However, the low number may be

a function of categorization because she coded pre-closing as an external modifier. Since seventy percent of emails contained pre-closing, if it was coded as a closing formula, then almost all emails contained at least some types of closing moves (95%). In addition, she argued the absence of closing formulas would increase the directness and possibly the coerciveness of the messages, thus rendering these emails status- incongruent. Finally, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch's (2013) comparison between Peninsular Spanish (PE) and British English (BE) emails also documented different stylistic conventions for closings. In the PS data, thanking (33%), leave-taking (ex. "See you soon," 27%) and signature (45.7%) comprised almost ninety percent of all closing moves whereas the most two frequently used moves in BE data were signature (45.7%) and thanking (34.3%)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The current study adopted a longitudinal design and investigated patterns of pragmatic development by studying requestive emails written by nonnative speakers of English to a faculty member. More specifically, the focus of this study is on the speech act of requests and how they are constructed within the medium of email. Following previous studies on emails (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2013; Merrison et al., 2012), the analysis seeks to account for all the components of requestive emails and recognize the "work" each part does in the production of the overall speech event. Thus, this approach recognizes the fundamentally situated nature of email requests. Both internal modifiers that are used in the request head act and supportive moves (external modifiers) are considered in the analysis. In addition, following Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch's (2013) analysis procedure, each email in the corpus is segmented into three components: openings, requests and closings. Following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the main parts of the email (requests) is further divided into request head act and supportive moves. The classification schemes for openings and closings are adapted from Waldvogel (2007). Finally, small talk, the non-task oriented messages that usually appear following the email opening, is also accounted for and analyzed. Research questions, participants and data elicitation procedure and classification schemes are presented in the following subsections.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there evidence of pragmatic development in relation to requestive speech act in comparison to requests produced by native speakers of English over the period of study (up to two years) ?
2. Is there evidence of pragmatic development as found in learners' use of internal modifiers and supportive moves?
3. Is there evidence of pragmatic development as found in learners' use of address forms, small talk and closings?

Email Data and Participants

The corpus consisted of emails sent to a faculty member over the course of up to two years. Emails that were mainly sent to the faculty member to make some type of request (request for information, for feedback, ….) were separated from other emails by the researcher. The requestive emails were then grouped based on three time periods, namely at the start of the first semester (fall or spring), the middle of the students' study period (third semester) and the end of the 4th semester. To comply with the university's Institutional Review Board requirements, personal information related to the participants would stay confidential and pseudonyms were used.

The professor to whom the email messages were sent is a female faculty member. She encourages communication with emails through inclusion of her email address on her course syllabi. She maintains a formal style of communication with her students, and does not encourage students to address her using the first name of the professor.

The senders of emails are thirty nonnative graduate students. These students were selected from a pool of forty-five students because they had at least one requestive email at the three distinct phases of data collection. These students are mainly from Asian and Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia, among others) and are either pursuing their master's or doctoral degree at Texas A&M University. Although there was no administration of standardized testing for gauging students' English language proficiency, the university's minimum requirement of English proficiency for international students is TOEFL 550 (paper version) and 80 (internet based version).

The emails of thirty NS graduate students were also collected and analyzed as baseline data. These students are also graduate students working toward either their master's or doctoral degrees at Texas A&M University.

Data Analysis

Contrary to speech act realization patterns found in elicited data, email communication is usually realized with inclusion of other additional elements (e.g., openings and closings), and thus a speech event analysis framework was used to analyze the data. The CCSARP framework for coding requests developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) was adopted for coding the requests. First, the exact sentence in each message that contained the request head act was identified and categorized according to different requests types such as appointment, feedback and extension developed by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007); and one new category, request for information, was also added. The request head acts were then categorized into request strategies with one of three directness levels identified in CCSARP: direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect (hints). Table 1 presents levels of directness of request strategies.

Table 1 Request strategies

CCSARP Directness Levels	Request Strategies	Examples
Direct	Mood Derivable	"Clean up that mess."
	Performative	"I am asking you to clean up that mess."
	Hedged Performative	"I would like you to clean up that mess."
	Obligation statements	"You'll have to clean up that mess"
	Want statements	"I really wish you'd clean up that mess."
Conventionally Indirect	Suggestory formula	"How about cleaning up?"
	Query preparatory	"Could you clean up the mess"
Hint	Strong hints	"You have left the kitchen in a right mess"
	Mild hints	"The smell is not right"

Internal (syntactic & lexical) and external modifiers that affect the illocutionary force of the requests were also analyzed. Tables 2 and 3 present examples of syntactic and lexical modifiers.

Table 2 Internal modifiers: Syntactic

Syntactic Modifiers	**Tense**: could. would **Aspect**: I am wondering… **Embedding**: I just wonder.....could you tell me what textbooks that we are going to use.

Table 3 Internal modifiers: Lexical

Lexical Modifiers	**Politeness Marker**: Please **Downtoner**: just **Subjectivizers:** I think, I wonder **Consultative Device:** Do you think, Is there a chance

Email Openings

As mentioned previously, emails allow the inclusion of openings, small talk and closings. Openings may include the use of different forms of address, greetings and self-identification. Therefore, different types of strategies used by students in their email communication were also analyzed. Following Waldvogel (2007), opening is defined as the use of a person's name or greeting words to initiate the email. The relative ranking of politeness found in address forms followed Brown and Levison's (1987) definition of negative politeness (emphasis on distance between student and faculty) and positive politeness (emphasis on solidarity with faculty). The opening strategies coded in the

emails following a continuum from negative to positive politeness are presented in (1)-(6):

(1) Dear Title + Last Name: e.g., "Dear Dr. Henson, Hi Dr. Henson"

(2) Title + Last Name: e.g., "Dr. Henson. Professor Henson"

(3) Dear + Title: e.g., "Dear Professor"

(4) Greetings: e.g., Hi, Hello

(5) Dear Title + First Name: e.g., Dear Dr. Zoe

(6) Title + First Name: e.g., Dr. Zoe

Small Talk

Small talk is defined as a non-task oriented, phatic conversation about neutral topics (Bickmore & Cassell, 1999). Holmes and Stubbe (2003) opined that small talk is a crucial function of talk with important implications for ongoing and future interactions. Since students frequently have to ask professors to help them accomplish a variety of tasks, small talk is important in maintaining a harmonious ongoing relationship. In emails, small talk usually follows the openings, and the contents are mostly about the well-being of the receiver or shared events, as illustrated in examples (7)-(8):

(7) "I hope everything is ok to you in Katar."

(8) “It is good to see you at GSA get-together event.”

Email Closings

In addition to openings, closings found in emails were also coded and analyzed. According to Bou-Franch (2006), although closings are ritualistic, they are found to be more complex because parting is considered to be a more delicate social endeavor. Previous studies of email closing recognized three distinct parts (Waldvogel, 2007). Pre-closing is any phatic comments used to signal the end of the email message. Thanking is coded as a pre-closing when it comes with or without the name of the sender. In addition, farewell is any well-wishing formula at the end of email messages. Finally, senders may include their signatures (first name or first and last name) to end the message. Examples (9)-(11) were sample closing sequences in this corpus:

(9) “Thank you for your kindness and friendliness”

(10) “Sincerely”

(11) “Lee”

After the analysis of each set of data (NS and NNS), inferential statistics (Chi-Square) was used on data that met chi square analysis criteria (1. Categories are independent of each other 2. Eighty percent of cells contain items that have observed frequencies of at least five 3. The sample size is large) to examine if the differences between NS and NNS graduate students is significant.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Email Openings

As Merrison et al. (2012) argued, the degree of entitlement to make different types of request—and thus the ways in which a requestive event is constructed in emails, is afforded and constrained by organizational and policy differences (Waldvogel, 2007) between institutional policies and the nature of preceding online and offline interaction between faculty and student. In addition, Bou-Franch (2006) wrote email request is situated in a speech event, thus in addition to investigate types of request strategies, internal modifiers and supportive moves, this study also seeks to document learner's employment of opening strategies. Table 4 presents results of openings across the three phases and native speaker data.

Table 4 Email openings by groups

	P1 *f*	%	P2 *f*	%	P3 *f*	%	NS *f*	%
Greeting Title + LN	5	14.3	7	20	11	29	38	41.8
Greeting Title + FN	2	5.7	1	2.9	1	3	0	0
Greeting + Title	1	2.9	1	2.9	0	0	0	0
Greeting + FN	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3.3
Greeting	0	0	2	5.7	2	5	5	5.5
Dear Title + LN	17	48.6	16	45.7	13	34	6	6.6
Dear Title + FN	1	2.9	1	2.9	1	3	0	0
Dear + Title	1	2.9	1	2.9	1	3	0	0
Title + LN	4	11.4	5	14.3	6	16	37	40.7
FN + LN	0	0	0	0	3	8	1	1.1
FN	3	8.6	1	2.9	0	0	0	0
Identifying information	1	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0
No opening	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Total	35	100	35	100	38	100	91	100

The findings indicated that these leaners mostly preferred formal openings in the construction of the deference term dear title + LN (e.g., “Dear Dr. Henson”, 48.6%

45.7%, 34% in phase 1, 2 3, NS: 6.6%). In addition, the learner data indicated a linear increase in the construction of greeting title + LN (14.3%, 20%, and 29% in phase 1, 2 3, NS: 41.8%). Chi square test was used to examine if difference between learner and NS group was statistically significant. Due to zero frequencies on some cells, decision was made to collapse the items to only three categories: openings with greeting, openings with dear and self-identification. The statistical test revealed that learners' opening strategies only differed significantly from native speaker usage at phase one of data collection when p value was set at 0.05 level (df=2, χ^2crit=5.99, P1, χ^2obs=10.7 P2, χ^2obs=3.7, P3, χ^2obs=3.7). This finding suggested that learners' increasing familiarity with the faculty member. Chen (2006) also documented her learner, Ling's initial preference of formal letter style of opening. In addition, Bjorge 's (2007) study indicated that students from countries with high power distance cultures preferred formal construction. Since most learners in this study are from oriental countries like China, Taiwan and Iran etc., which are characterized as high power distance cultures, this result seemed to be expected and suggested that from the start these learners understood the asymmetrical power relations in institutional communication. However, as time progressed, learners gradually changed the use of epistolary conventions to conversational greeting like greeting title + LN. According to Chen (2006), this change revealed learners' understanding of showing solidarity with the professor. Since most of these students took more than one course with the professor, it should be expected that they became more familiar with the faculty member. In addition, Schauer (2007) and

Woodfield (2012) also documented opening (which they coded as alters) appeared in the first phase of data collection. It seemed to suggest that openings are very basic constituent of a request because it is used to obtain interlocutor's attention. In addition, the move from letter style to conversational openings suggested learners' growing pragmatic competence.

Small Talk

In addition to opening, small talk is another element which senders can make an effort to engage recipient in unrelated topic for a while, as Brown and Levinson wrote that "S can thereby stress his general interest in H, and indicate that he hasn't come to see H simply to do the FTA (ex. a request)"(1987, p. 117). Results of frequencies and percentages of small talk were shown in table 5.

Table 5 Small talk by groups

	P1 *f*	%	P2 *f*	%	P3 *f*	%	NS *f*	%
Small Talk	12	40	30	100	19	63.3	25	27.8
No Small talk	18	60	0	100	11	38.7	75	72.2
Total	30	100	30	100	19	100	90	100

The findings indicated that learners' use exhibited a curvilinear pattern. In addition, the token counts and frequencies were quite similar across the three phases. This result was contrary to Chen (2006) and Schauer (2006, 2007)'s findings. Chen (2006) only found the appearance of small talk after emails Ling wrote during her doctoral study. In addition, Schauer's (2007) study of German study abroad learners indicated that small talk was only found at the last phase of data collection. The discrepancy between the current finding and Schauer's (2006, 2007) may be explained by the different data elicitation method. Since Schauer (2006, 2007) elicited spontaneous speech data, it could be argued that learners needed sufficient exposure to English to acquire small talk. However, the data for the current study came from emails, which allowed the senders enough time to construct messages (Duthler, 2006). Regarding Chen's study (2006), she reported that Ling only used small talk when communicating with professors who used the same style. Therefore the difference may lie in learners' personal choice versus maintenance of power structure and social distance between this study and her study. However, from a pragmatic development point, learners did not improve much in terms of small talk since the quantity was quite similar across three phases.

Main Body of Emails

Request strategies. Requests were analyzed first for head act, which was coded as direct, conventionally indirect or hints. Table 6 shows the distribution of the requests

used by learners across three phases and baseline data. The percentage and frequencies were calculated for each group individually.

Table 6 Request strategies by groups

	P1 *f*	%	P2 *f*	%	P3 *f*	%	NS *f*	%
Direct	11	29.7	10	23.3	9	24.3	37	37.8
Conventionally Indirect	26	70.3	32	74.4	28	75.7	61	62.2
Hint	0	0	1	2.3	0	0	0	0
Total	37	100	4 3	100	37	100	98	100

Note: Due to the possibility of more than one request in an email, the number of requests in each phase adds up to more than 30 for learner group and more than 90 for NS group

Table 6 shows that conventionally indirectness was the most frequent strategy overall, with query preparatory requests "can or may", constituting a total of 70.4%, 74.4% and 75.5% of all request strategies across three phases of data collection. Chi square test was used to examine if difference between learner and NS group was statistically significant. Due to zero frequencies on some cells, decision was made to combine conventionally indirect strategies with hints as one category for chi square test. The statistical test revealed that learners' use of request strategies did not differ significantly from native speaker usage at all phases data collection when p value was set at 0.05 level (df=1, χ^2crit=3.84, P1, χ^2obs=0.8 P2, χ^2obs=2.8, P3, χ^2obs=2.16). This

result was surprising as previous studies indicated that with increasing language proficiency, a move from direct to conventionally indirect strategies was observed (Chen, 2006; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007; Rose, 2000; 2009; Schauer, 2008). It may be that the students in this study already possessed a high level of English proficiency based on their TOEFL scores. Thus, they would be expected to be highly similar to NSs in their use of request strategies. Also, contrary with previous research that has examined development of requests among children learning English (Ellis 1992; Rose, 2000) and adult ESL learners (Schauer, 2008), which found learners reached pragmatic expansion stage (Kasper & Rose, 2002), the current study found learners have passed pragmatic expansion stage as evidenced in their predominant use of indirect strategy across three phases of data collection (70.3% in P1, 74.1% in P2 and 75.7% in P3). In addition, Rose's (2000, 2009) and Schauer's study (2008) documented learners' gradual move from direct to conventionally indirect strategy as language proficiency progressed. For example, Rose (2000) found that second grade primary school students used the most direct strategies (11.6%), but the number dropped significantly in fourth and six grade students' data (0.7% and 1.1% for the two groups, respectively). Schauer (2008) also found learners started to use indirect request strategies from phase 2 of data collection. Contrary to their findings, this study found learners overall preference for conventionally indirect requests from phase 1 of the study. It seemed the upper-intermediate English proficiency these learners possessed influenced their use of request strategies, thus showing minimal evidence for pragmatic development.

Hints are the least direct strategy type, which demand a high degree of inferential ability from the recipient of the message. By using a hint for request realization the speaker "intends to get the hearer to carry out some implied requested act in such a way that the recognition that his or her intention will not be grounded in the utterance meaning of the hints (Wiezman, 1989, p. 71). Similar to the conventionally indirect strategy, requests in the form of hints give the email recipient the opportunity not to perform the act, for example, by pretending to not have understood the request utterance.

Analysis of request strategies showed clearly native speakers did not employ hints and learners sparingly used it in the emails examined. This finding was also consistent with previous research, which showed hints were the least used request strategies (Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007, Rose, 2000; 2009, Schauer, 2008, 2009). Schauer suggested that the reason that hints were seldom used by learners could be that "learners may be unsure about their ability to encode their intent in the L2 in a way that will be inferable by a member of a different speech community and culture" (2009, p. 160). Since email communication lacks paralinguistic cues, email users might feel that using conventionally indirect strategies could ensure that their communicative intent will be received and understood by the recipient, at the same time the illocutionary force of request was sufficiently mitigated.

Internal modification. Having examined the distribution of request strategies across phases and determining that there is minimal evidence for patterns of pragmatic development, it remains to be seen whether the use of internal modifiers across phases

exhibit pragmatic development across three phases. An analysis of the group results for learner participants and native speakers is presented in Table 7

Table 7 Lexical and syntactic modifiers by groups

	P1 *f*	%	P2 *f*	%	P3 *f*	%	NS *f*	%
Tense	21	44.7	14	30.4	17	32.7	37	28.5
Aspect	4	8.5	0	0	3	5.8	13	10
Embedding	7	14.7	5	10.9	14	26.9	41	31.5
Please	12	25.5	13	28.3	12	23.1	21	16.2
Downtoner	3	6.4	2	4.3	1	1.9	4	3.1
Subjectivizer	0	0	1	2.2	1	1.9	9	6.9
Consultative Device	0	0	1	2.2	0	0	5	3.8
Total	47	100	36	100	48	100	130	100

Table 7 indicates the frequency and percentages of internal modifiers in the three phases for learners and native speaker participants. Instances of zero modification include requests that were realized using conventionally indirect strategy e.g.” can I ask for a leave” without any internal modifiers. As seen in the analysis, the learner group’s

total frequencies of use of internal modifiers approximated NS norms (learner: *f*=131, NS, *f*=130). Chi square test was used to examine if difference between learner and NS group was statistically meaningful. Due to zero frequencies on some cells, decision was made to collapse subcategories of lexical and syntactic modifiers into two categories. The statistical test revealed that consistent with request strategies, learners' use of internal modifiers also did not differ significantly from native speaker usage at all phases data collection when p value was set at 0.05 level (df=1, χ^2crit=3.84, P1, χ^2obs=0.1 P2, χ^2obs=3.7, P3, χ^2obs=0.01). This finding were vastly different from both comparative studies (Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010) and developmental ILP research (Octu & Zeyrek, 2008; Goy et al., 2012; Schauer, 2007; Woodfield, 2012), which found native speaker group using higher frequencies of internal modification than learner group. In addition, leaving aside the instances of zero modification, the result also suggested a curvilinear pattern in frequency of internal modification tokens in the learner data across the three phases (*f*=47 in phase 1, *f*=26 in phase 2, *f*=44 in phase 3).

However pragmatic development could be observed in learners' employment of individual internal modifier. The use of syntactic modifier embedding exhibited a developmental pattern, although comparison with native speaker data showed learners' usage still did not approach native speaker level (P1: 13.2%, P2: 10.9%, P3: 26.9% in NS: 31.5%). Schauer (2004, 2006) indicated that as length of stay increased, more varied and elaborate syntactic modifiers started to appear in the learner data. It could be argued that the length of stay at the target community and higher exposure to English

contributed to the acquisition of this syntactic modifier. It seemed that the learners' English proficiency are high enough to enable them to use a variety of lexical and syntactic modifiers.

Turning to lexical modifiers, the politeness marker please was the most often used lexical downgrader. Previously studies (Ellis, 1992; Goy et al. 2012) also found that learners mostly relied on politeness marker please for internal modification, especially at early stage of development. However, other lexical modifiers were barely found in the learner data. This finding was contrary to Woodfield's (2012) study, which found learners used a variety of lexical modifiers. For example, her learners used consultative device (P1 *f*=4, P2 *f*=5, P3 *f*=3) and subjectivizer (P1 *f*=4, P2 *f*=8, P3 *f*=5). The difference between the two findings may be that since in the current study, learners employed sufficient amounts of syntactic modifiers, they may not feel the need to use other lexical modifiers.

Consistent with request strategies, learners' use of internal modifiers also passed the stage of pragmatic expansion, which is characterized by a wide variety of internal modifiers. In addition, contrary to previous studies (Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007; Woodfield, 2012), which showed frequency and variety of internal modifiers not approximating NS norms, this study also found that learners and native speakers' use of internal modifiers were quite similar.

External modification. In addition to request strategies and internal modifiers found in the head act, requests were also analyzed for the use of supportive moves, for which Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) listed a number of subcategories, including preparatory, e.g. " "grounder e.g., Appreciator and apology. " Table 8 summarizes the group analysis of supportive moves in the learners' and native speakers' requests.

Table 8 Supportive moves by groups

	P1 (*f*)	%	P2 (*f*)	%	P3 (*f*)	%	NS (*f*)	%
Preparator	27	27.6	23	18.5	24	21.6	57	23.9
Grounder	51	52	78	62.9	59	53.2	135	56.7
Appreciator	18	18.4	20	16.1	23	20.7	42	17.6
Apology	2	2	3	2.4	5	4.5	4	1.7
Total	98	100	124	100	111	100	238	100

As shown in table 8, the overall frequency was much higher in the learners' data compared to native speakers (Learner *f*=333, NS, *f*=238). However, if we look at each phase of supportive move use by learners and native speakers, they only differed in the

use of grounder (Learner: *f*=188, NS: *f*=135). Chi square test revealed learners' use of supportive moves did not differ from native speakers across all phases of data collection when p value was set at 0.05 level (df=3, χ^2crit=7.82, P1, χ^2obs=0.7, P2, χ^2obs=1.9, P3, χ^2obs=3.1). This finding was in line with previous studies. Schauer (2007) found her German study abroad learners modified their requests through alerters (100% for both groups), grounders (100% for both groups) and disarmers (Learners: 86%, NS: 85%) in similar frequencies to NS control. In addition, Octu and Zeyrek (2008) also found learners' employment of preparators, grounders and getting a precommitment approaching native speaker level of uses (lower-intermediate: 60%, upper-intermediate: 62%, NS: 60%). Furthermore, Woodfield (2012) also documented similar frequencies of use of supportive moves in learner and baseline data (P1 *f*=100, P2 *f*=82, P3 *f*=94, NS, *f*=91).

Turning to individual supportive move in the current study, the grounder was the most frequent supportive move for both learner and NS group, accounting for 52%, 62.9% and 57% in the respective three phases of the learner data and 56.7% in the native speaker request. This modifier signifies the reasons and justification for the request and has been showed to be a preferred form of external modification in learner requests (Felix-Bradsdefer,2007; Octu & Zeyrek, 2008; 2007; Schauer, 2007; Woodfield, 2012). Faerch and Kasper opined that "giving reasons, justifications and explanations for an action opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s)'' (1989, p. 239). Hassall (2001) further

suggested that giving explanations was a good move for conveying both positive and negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) because of the belief that hearers would respond positively once they understand the reasons for requests and that the speaker would not impose on the hearer without good reasons. Chen (2006) also noted that giving reasons is usually obligatory in making requests and the success of a request will be affected by how persuasive of the given reason.

In terms of pragmatic development stage (Kasper & Rose, 2002), learners' use of supportive moves in the current study suggested they have passed pragmatic expansion stage, which is characterized by supportive moves frequently follow or precede a request head (grounder and preparator).

Message Length

In addition to request realization patterns, internal modifiers and supportive moves, learners' pragmatic development can also be examined in turns of message length. According to Chen (2006) institutional email practice can be best characterized as concise and to the point communication. In other words, the message should only contain institutionally relevant details. Table 9 summarizes the mean length of email messages across three phases and baseline data.

Table 9 Mean length of messages by groups

	P1	P2	P3	NS
No. of Emails	30	30	39	90
Message Length Means	70.7	97.3	76	62.2

Table 9 indicates that learners' overall penchant for lengthiness in their emails. This was due to their overreliance on using grounders, or giving reasons and justifications for the requests. In addition, according to Chen (2006), learners' would often write lengthy emails which include narratives involving unnecessary personal details in addition to institutionally-sanctioned reasons for asking help from professors. In this study, although learners did include some personal details as reasons for requests, the main reason for lengthy emails were learners' preference for consultation of course selection in emails, as example (1) illustrated:

Dear Dr. Henson

I found that the Fall registration has started as well, so I thought it would be better to plan ahead of time. I found that a core course EDCI 601 is available (Wednesday), and Dr. May's EPSY 641 Experimental Design in Education II is available too (Monday). When I searched for content courses, I thought it would be good to take Dr. Tamboli's either RDNG 649 (Reading instruction for high school and college) or RDNG 674 (Developmental Reading in the Elementary School) since they are prerequisite for many other courses in Reading. However, these two courses are on Monday and Wednesday evenings too, so I hope we could discuss about these schedules. Would you suggest that I take another research course to avoid time conflict with RDNG 649, or do you have other recommendations for content courses? (RHA) Thank you!

Regards,
Yuzhen

This student listed the courses she wished to take for the upcoming semester. As it is mandatory for students' to consult with their advisors for course selection, it could be expected that students would resort to emails for consultation. However, face to face advising sessions may better achieve the goal or even making a table and list courses would be better than bombarding professors' with emails with lengthy course details. Learners' online consultation practice also explained the sudden peak of message length in phase two of data collection. Since message length did not vary much across three phases, there was minimal evidence for pragmatic development in this category.

Email Closings

Waldvogel (2007) wrote that email closings usually contain three distinct moves: phatic comments which indicate the message is about to end, farewell formula and the signature of the sender. Table 10 presents results of analysis for learner data across three phases and baseline data for closings.

Table 10 Email closings by groups

	P1 *f*	%	P2 *f*	%	P3 *f*	%	NS *f*	%
Pre-closing	19	32.2	18	29.5	11	20	50	32.9
Farewell	12	20.3	15	24.5	14	25.4	11	7.2
FN + LN	12	20.3	7	11.4	10	18.1	24	15.8
FN	15	25.4	20	32.7	18	32.7	63	41.4
No Signoff	0	0	1	1.6	1	1.8	3	0.7
No Closing	1	1.7	0	0	1	1.8	1	2
Total	59	100	61	100	55	100	152	100

Results of closing strategies indicated that learners were quite adept at utilizing different subtypes of closing strategies from the start of data collection. In other words, the token counts and frequencies remained quite stable across three phases of data collection. There were only few instances of no closings in all the emails in the corpus. In addition, comparison with baseline data suggested that learners utilized more farewell strategy (20.3% in P1, 11.4% in P2, 18.4% in P3, NS 7.2%). Chi square test was used to examine if difference between learner and NS group was statistically meaningful. Due to zero frequencies in some cells, a decision was made to collapse no signoff and no closing into one category. The statistical test revealed significant statistical difference could be observed in learner and native speaker's closing strategies across all phases when p value was set at 0.05 level (df=3, χ^2crit=7.82, P1, χ^2obs=7.89 P2, χ^2obs=12.4, P3, χ^2obs=13.8). Closer examination revealed that the difference resulted from learners' preference for letter style closings in the three step process of pre-closing, farewell and signature. This finding was also similar to what Chen (2006) observed as Ling also adopted formal letter conventions in her emails. From a developmental point of view, the linear increase in the use of farewell formula indicated pragmatic development. In addition, according to Waldvogel (2007), people construct their and others' social identity through the linguistic choices they make. Waldovegl (2007) further commented that status, social distance and gender are three important information encoded in the

choice. The findings reflected her points. First of all, since professors have higher institutional status than students, closing a email with a farewell formula or sign off with sender's signature is a way of doing deference and thus constructing the addressee as having status (Waldvogel, 2007). In addition, through regular contact in class, students usually come to some level of familiarity with professors, which contributed to increased use of farewell formula from the second phase of data collection. However, since most of the learners in this study are female, gender did not factor much in the choice of closing strategies.

To summarize, quantitative results indicated learners' acquired more complex syntactic modifier embedding. In addition, they learned to use informal opening strategy to show solidarity with the professor. However, there was not much evidence for pragmatic development in regards to message length and request strategies. Having discussed the quantitative results, the next section detailed qualitative evidence for pragmatic development in the current study.

Individual Development

Although group analysis did not indicate much pragmatic development over the three phases of data collection, content analysis revealed some individual development. In other words, although the learners' overall employment of request strategies, internal modifiers and supportive moves were similar to that of native speaker data, if we examined each individual learner, we would find variations and thus development over a

particular learner's email writing practices. Specifically, seven learners showed development of pragmatic competence from the emails in time one to time three.

Qualitatively, those students who showed pragmatic development in their emails moved from unclear purpose for request to specification of what they would like the professor to do for them. In addition, some students who projected what Chen (2006) called "needy student image" gradually learned to take the initiative of learning on their own and also learned to acknowledge the imposition on professor's time. Also student learned to make request with institutionally sanctioned reasons and to focus on just one request in an email. Further, some of them acquired new internal modifiers and most of students' message structure moved to the target norm. Table 11 summarizes these points. These issues are further explained in the following content analysis.

Table 11 Pragmatic development in email writing practices

	Phase 1 & 2	**Phase 3**
Aggravating Supportive Moves	Giving student-oriented reasons or unclear purpose of requests (pre or post) Projection of needy student image Lengthy small talk (pre)	Giving institutionally-oriented reasons (pre or post) Taking initiative and showing ability (pre or post) Concise, to the point small talk
Mitigating Supportive Move	Small talk (pre or post)	Small talk (pre)
Message Structure	Mostly inductive	Mostly deductive

Note: pre or post means before or after the request head act

Example 2 was from a learner's first email in the initial phase of data collection.

(2) Phase 1 September 24, 2005

Dear Dr. Henson

Could I get your feedback on my presentation? I think it must be challange me for my academic progress.
Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Jayoung

Although this email contained formal opening and proper closings, the main content was problematic. After opening, the student abruptly jumped to ask the professor

to give her feedback on her presentation. Although she did indicate the reason for the request, it was vague and contained a misspelled word. It was really not clear from just reading this email to know what the student really needed the feedback for.

However, after a year's study in the target language community, her email writing practice improved markedly, as seen in example 3.

(3) Phase 3 May 12, 2006

Dear Dr. Henson

I hope you have a good summer time. I am wondering if I could invite Dr. Quentin as a co-chair as well as you. Since her specialty is quite simliar to my dissertation interest. I'd appreciate your advice.
Sincerely,
Jayoung

Small talk and internal modifiers embedding and aspect appeared in this learner's data. From the quantitative result section we found that aspect were rarely found in the learner data. Furthermore, the stated reason was related to her request and she also employed an appreciation token as a supportive move. Therefore from this student we found not only the acquisition of new modifiers but also overall improvement in message structure (request first, then explanations for the request).

Students' emails also indicated development from needy to independent predisposition. Example 4 illustrates the case.

(4) Phase 1 November 29, 2005

Dear Dr. Henson
How are you? I think that things with you are fine.
I will go to the potluck and I would like to bring a dish. I called Arzu and told her that I am going to drive and she can show me the direction. Li Mu Hung will go with us.

Dear Dr. Henson, I need your help for one thing. I am looking for a group of ESL learners who are similar as my dissertation research subject for writing my final paper of SOCI 624 qualitative method. I requested Dr. Moss in ELI and she does not think it's a good idea that I observe ELI classes. However, I need a group to observe for doing my assignment. Could you help find a group for me, please? I don't know if there are any ESL classrooms in College Station or in Texas?

I appriciate that you guide my ESL study.
Have a nice day!

Regards,
Agnes Yi Chia Yu

In the opening sequence, the student employed small talk. However it is wordy and full of personal details. In addition, in the main body, the student directly asked the professor to help find a school for observation and the justification was that she did not know where to find a suitable school for study. Although it is acceptable to ask professor questions, usually the questions must be specific and reflect students' effort in trying to solve the question first (Gee, 2002). However, this student just posed a question without making an effort on her part to find the answers herself. The fact that she is a doctoral student compounded the case because it is assumed Ph.D. student needs to learn to conduct independent research. Finally, this email was unusually long. This is what Chen (2006) referred as the projection of "needy student image". Chen (2006) explained that Asian students may feel professors are obliged to help them as Scollon and Scollon

observed, "the teacher and student relationship is felt by Asians to be as permanent and all-pervasive as that between parents and children or that between elder and younger brothers" (1991, p. 121). Therefore learners may show a high level of deference to professors while taking faculty's help for granted.

However, when we contrasted her third email with the first one, we could clearly find the student taking initiative to solve a question by herself, as example five indicated.

(5) Phase 3 November 12, 2006

Dear Dr. Henson

How are you?

I would like to make an appointment and talk about my communication strategies. For answering questions you gave in my writing prilim, I learned many classifications of communication strategies. Moreover, from Ansarin and Syle's 5 tasks, I hand-made many teaching materials of training. Could you allow me to share them with you when you have time. And, you can give me more suggestions. I appriciate that you support my PHD study.

Wish you a very nice day!
Sincerely,
Agnes

As this email indicates, the student took time and effort to learn different communication strategies. Her reason for appointment was for the professor to offer her advice on this topic. In addition, the small talk was concise, not like the small talk in the first email. Therefore although there was no evidence of acquisition of new internal modifiers, the data still showed some pragmatic development as this learner's identity projection moved from a needy to an independent and competent student.

Finally, some students initial emails showed sequencing issues. According to Chen (2006), the norm for American email writing practice is a deductive structure, which the sender would make request first then move on to supporting details for the request. On the other hand, Asian email writing practice favors an inductive structure, in which the sender starts from reasons and justifications for the request then finally makes the request. However, this inductive approach would often render learners' emails long and verbose, as example six indicates

(6) Phase 1 April 25, 2011

Dear Dr. Henson,

Thanks a lot for your timely response!

There is only one core course *602-Cultural foundations of education* that I haven't taken. And it will be instructed by Dr. Patricia Larke (face to face class) and also Dr. Lynne Walters (online course) which one would you recommend me to take?

And may I know which course are you going to teach in the coming Fall semester? I really enjoy your class very much!^^

By the way, I have decided not to change my degree from MS to Med, because I think there is a "must" and also a "need" for me to write a research paper and to experience an authentic academic research processing in my interested area. Hope that you can do me a favor!^^

Thanks very much
Sincerely,
Tingyu Chang

The first issue related to this email is wordiness. The second issue is in one email the student made three different requests, some of which may be better solved in a face-

to-face meeting. In addition, the justification provided was a personal reason. Although students may express his or her willingness to write a thesis, ultimately it is the professor who decides whether to supervise the student. Thus this student seemed to elevate her rights and obligations as a student, as Chen (2006) also found in Ling's early emails. However the most serious issue was message sequence. Except for the second request head act, the other two requests followed the inductive structure of reason then request. Chen (2006) reported Ling's using inductive structure for the sake of indirectness. However, this kind of structure may be considered ineffective because emails are read quickly in institutional context. In fact, Crystal (2001) cautioned that information located at the end of the message may not be read at all if the recipient simply decided not to scroll down any further. In addition, faculty members often receive and have to respond to large amounts of emails in a single day. Therefore, emails with lengthy details are considered particularly taxing on faculty's time.

However, if we examine the email written at the last phase of data collection, we can clearly find the student's learning the target culture norm of writing.

(7) Phase 3 February 21, 2013

Hello Dear Dr. Henson,

Would you please let me know your available time for my oral exam? Maybe you can give me two or three available time so that I can balance the time conflict of the other two members.

Thank you very much. I'm looking forward to your reply.
Sincerely,

This email clearly indicates the student acquired the target language norm of making the request first then offering reasons and justifications for the request. In addition, the message was concise and contained an institutionally-sanctioned reason. Furthermore, the student acquired new and more complex internal modifier embedding, which most learners underused. Also she focused just one request in one email, unlike the first one with three requests. These evidences indicated the development of pragmatic competence for this learner.

Summary of Results

Although quantitative results did not indicate much evidence for pragmatic development, individual learners did show pragmatic development through more concrete reasons for making requests. In addition, although quantitatively the learners' employment of internal modifiers were comparable to the native speaker group, their data showed a lack of more complex and elaborate lexical and syntactic modifiers like aspect and subjectivizer. However, some learners did acquire these two modifiers at the last phase of data collection. Furthermore, the message structure moved from inductive to deductive structure, which is the target language norm. Finally, some students showed their understanding of target culture norm of independent student by taking initiating in solving their questions before making the requests. Taken together, although quantitative

evidence did not evidence much pragmatic development, content analysis did reveal some learners' development of pragmatic competence.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

The study in this thesis presented and analyzed nonnative graduate students' development of pragmatic competence as evidenced in their employments of request strategies, internal modifiers, supportive moves as well as opening and closing strategies in requestive emails written to a faculty. Results indicated that although students did not show much pragmatic development in regard to request strategies, internal and external modifiers, evidence for development of pragmatic competence could be found in their employment of opening and closing strategies. In addition, content analysis revealed individual learner development such as clearer and institutionally sanctioned reasons for request, taking initiative in their learning and move from inductive to deductive organization of email messages. The findings of this study mostly replicated what Chen (2006) found in her case study but enlarged the participant pool from one student to thirty. In addition, this result also supported the validity of collecting natural data and analyzing the data through speech event approach (Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2013; Merrison et al., 2012). In fact, as Merrison et al. (2012) remarked that "the limited employment of orientation or solidarity moves in the requests elicited through DCTs found in this study (Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010) seems to us to be most likely an artifact of a methodology which does not employ naturally occurring e-mail

data (where students have a very real investment getting stuff done) rather than reflecting differences between the cohort of participants in our study and theirs " (2012, p. 1080). Although elicited data could inform us what students would do under the particular request scenarios, ultimately we can only infer what they would have done in real life situations. Therefore natural data, in the form of emails, may offer more valid reflection of nonnative speakers' pragmatic competence.

Limitation & Future Research

There were a number of limitations that needed to be taken into account for interpretation of the findings in this study. First, the emails were from one professor, who is a female, nonnative senior faculty member. An understanding of the professor's expectations may partly contribute to nonnative graduate students' deliberate employments of different types of modification devices. The results may have been different if emails from male native professor who is tenured or female native professor who just came to the university were collected. In addition, the learners' English proficiency level may contribute to the lack of development found in regards to request strategies and internal and external modification. Furthermore, the relative low numbers of emails that mainly contained low imposition requests (e.g. request for information or request for appointment) harvested may have biased the results. Also, some categories had to be combined due to zero or low frequencies in some cells for chi square analysis.

If more emails which contain requests with varying levels of imposition can be harvested, the results may be different.

Undoubtedly, the area of developmental interlanguage pragmatics has much room for future research. Following Merrison et al.'s (2012) and Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch's (2013) lead, it is important to collect natural data, in the forms of emails and account all the elements found in a given email message. This kind of analysis may offer a better reflection of nonnative students' pragmatic competence and allow researchers better understanding of nonnative learners of English's pragmatic development.

REFERENCES

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning*, *49*, 677-713.

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

Bergman, M. & Kasper, G. (1993). Perception and performance in native and nonnative apology. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 82-107). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Bickmore, T., & Cassell, J. (1999). *Small talk and conversational storytelling in embodied interface agents*. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Fall Symposium on Narrative Intelligence*.

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

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

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Investigating crosscultural pragmatics: An introductory overview. In S. Blum-Kulka, S. House & G. Kasper (Eds.) , *Crosscultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 1-36). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Bou-Franch, P. (2006). Solidarity and deference in computer-mediated communication:

A discourse-pragmatic analysis of students' emails to lecturers. In P. Bou-Franch (Ed.), *Ways into discourse* (pp. 61-79). Granada, Spain: Comares.

Bou-Franch, P., & Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2008). Natural versus elicited data in cross-cultural speech act realisation: The case of requests in Peninsular Spanish and British English. *Spanish in Context*, *5*(2), 246-277.

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

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

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. (6th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

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

Duthler, K. (2006). The politeness of requests made via email and voicemail: Support for the hyperpersonal model. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *11*, 500-521.

Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. (1993). Expressing gratitude in American English. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 64–81). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

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

43, 3193-3215.

Ellis, R. (1992). Learning to communicate in the classroom: A study of two language learners' requests. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *14*, 1-23.

Eslami-Rasekh, Z. (1993). A cross-cultural comparison of the requestive speech act realization patterns in Persian and English. In L.F.Bouton & Y. Kachru (Eds.), *Pragmatics and language learning, monograph series, volume 4* (pp.75-90). Urbana, IL: Division of English as an International Language, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Eslami, Z. R. (2008, April). *Native and nonnative graduate students email requests*. TESOL 2008 convention, New York, NY.

Faerch, C., & Kasper, G. (1989). Internal and external modification in interlanguage request realization. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 221-247). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Felix-Bradsdefer, J. (2007). Pragmatic development in the Spanish as a FL classroom: A cross-sectional study of learner requests. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *4*(2), 253-286.

Felix-Bradsdefer, J. C. (2012). E-mail requests to faculty: E-politeness and internal modification. In H. Woodfield & M. Economidou-Kogetsidis (Eds.), *Interlanguage request modification* (pp. 87-118). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Formentelli, M. (2009). Address strategies in a British academic setting. *Pragmatics*, *19*(2), 179-196.

Gains, J. (1999). Electronic mail–a new style of communication or just a new medium?: An investigation into the text features of e-mail. *English for Specific Purposes*, *18*(1), 81-101.

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

Gimenez, J. (2000). Business e-mail communication: Some emerging tendencies in register. *English for Specific Purposes*, *19*, 237-251.

Gimenez, J. (2006). Embedded business emails: Meeting new demands in international business communication. *English for Specific Purposes*, *25*, 154-172.

Golato, A. (2003). Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics*, *24*(1), 90-121.

Goy, E., Zeyrek, D., & Octu, B. (2012). Developmental patterns in internal modification of request: A quantitative study on Turkish learners of English . In H. Woodfield & M. Economidou-Kogetsidis (Eds.), *Interlanguage request modification* (pp. 51-86). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Hartford, B., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1992). Experimental and observational data in the study of interlanguage pragmatics. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, *3*, 33-52.

Hartford, B. S., & Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). "At your earliest convenience:" A study of

written student requests to faculty. *Pragmatics and Language Learning, 7*, 55-69.

Hassall, T. (2001). Modifying requests in a second language. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, *39*, 259-283.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences. differences in work-related values.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Holmes, J., & Stubbe, M. (2003). *Power and politeness in the workplace*. London, UK: Longman Publishing Group.

House, J. (1989). Politeness in English and German: The functions of please and bitte. In S. Blum-Kulka, J., & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 96–119). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

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

Kasper, G. (2000). Data collection in pragmatics research. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp. 316-342). New York, NY: Continuum.

Kasper, G., & Dahl, M. (1991). Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 13,* 215–247.

Kasper, G., & Schmidt , R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *18*, 149-169.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell.

Lightfoot, J. M. (2006). A comparative analysis of e-mail and face-to-face

communication in an educational environment. *Internet and Higher Education, 9*, 217-227.

Lorenzo-Dus, N., & Bou-Franch, P. (2013). A cross-cultural investigation of email communication in Peninsular Spanish and British English: The role of (in)formality and (in)directness. *Pragmatics & Society, 4(1)*, 1-25.

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

Octu, B., & Zeyrek, D. (2008). Development of requests: A study on Turkish learners of English. In M. Puetz & J. Aertslaer (Eds.), *Developing contrastive pragmatics: Interlanguage and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 265-299). Berlin, Germany: Mouton De Gruyter.

Pullin, P. (2010). Small talk, rapport and international communicative competence: Lessons to learn from BEFL. *Journal of Business Communication*, *47*(4), 455-476.

Rose, K. (2000). An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *22*, 27-67.

Rose, K. (2009). Interlanguage pragmatic development in Hong Kong, phase 2. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *41*, 2345-2364.

Schauer, G. (2004). May you speak louder maybe?: Interlanguage pragmatic development in requests. *EUROSLA Yearbook*, *4*, 253-272.

Schauer, G. (2006). The development of ESL learners' pragmatic competence: A longitudinal investigation of awareness and production. In *Pragmatics & language learning*, Bardovi-Harlig, K., Felix-Bradsdefer, C., & Omar, A. (eds.) 135-163. Manoa, HI: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center: University of Hawaii.

Schauer, G. (2007). Finding the right words in the study abroad context: The development of German learners' use of external modifiers in English. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *4*(2), 193-220.

Schauer, G. (2008). Getting better in getting what you want: Language learners' pragmatic development in requests during study abroad sojourns. In M. Puetz & J. Aertslaer (Eds.), *Developing contrastive pragmatics: Interlanguage and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 265-299). Berlin, Germany: Mouton De Gruyter.

Schauer, G. (2009). *Interlanguage pragmatic development: The study abroad context*. London, England: Continuum.

Schmidt, R. (1993). Conscious learning and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21-42). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. (1991). Topic confusion in English-Asian discourse. *World Englishes*, *9*, 113-123.

Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, *4*(2), 91-112.

Waldvogel, J. (2007). Greetings and closings in workplace email. *Journal of Computer-*

Mediated Communication, *12*, 122-143.

Woodfield, H. (2008). Problematising discourse completion tasks: Voices from verbal report. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, *21*(1), 43-69.

Woodfield, H., & Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2010). 'I just need more time': A study of native and non-native students' requests to faculty for an extension. *Multilingua*, *29*, 77-118.

Woodfield, H. (2012). "I think maybe I want to lend the notes from you": Development of request modification in graduate learners. In H. Woodfield & M. Economidou-Kogetsidis (Eds.), *Interlanguage request modification* (pp. 9-49). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.