

**A Study of Upward Request Emails: Managing a Harmonious
Relationship in Three Academic Discourse Communities of
Britain and China**

By

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Abstract

This study discusses and compares the way that members of three discourse communities in Britain and China manage harmonious relationships with one another by managing rapport and doing relational work in making upward requests through emails. The three discourse communities differed from each other in terms of their cultural and linguistic composition. A total of 187 request emails to university instructors and the same number of questionnaires were collected from 65 Chinese-speaking postgraduates (CSs), 45 British English-speaking postgraduates (ESs) and 45 Chinese English-speaking postgraduates (CESs). The ways of rapport management were revealed by mainly exploring choices of rhetorical strategies and the selection of various rapport-management moves (i.e. the discourse domain); the employment of requestive strategies in head acts of request (i.e. the illocutionary domain); and the linguistic realization of some moves and head acts (i.e. the stylistic domain). The performance of relational work was assessed by pattern evaluation of linguistic behaviour in the emails and several case studies. Both similarities and differences in the way the three discourse communities managed rapport and carried out relational work were found among and within the three discourse communities. The similarities and differences are subsequently explained with reference to socio-psychological factors, mainly involved in interactional goals, face sensitivities, and rights and obligations from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives. In terms of an in-depth investigation of these emails, the study may contribute to the ever-growing body of cross-cultural pragmatics research. It develops a more synthesized theoretical framework, which integrates some updated politeness models, like rapport management by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) and Locher and Watts' relational work (2005), into a new area of cross-cultural genre study. Empirically, a comprehensive insight has been gained into the nature and difference of email communication from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives.

(290 words)

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Abbreviations

CC	Conversational Contract
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project
CD Strategies	Conventional Direct Strategies
CES	Chinese English-speaking
CESs	Chinese English speakers
CID Strategies	Conventional Indirect Strategies
CofPs	Communities of Practice
CP	Cooperative Principles
CS	Chinese-speaking
CSs	Chinese speakers
D	Distance
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
EFL	English as a foreign language
ES	English-speaking
ESs	English speakers
FTA	Face-Threatening Act
GSP	Grand Strategies of Politeness
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
L1	The first language
L2	The second language
NCID Strategies	Non-Conventional Indirect Strategies
NCM	National Cultural Modal
NSs	Native speakers
NNSs	Non-native speakers
P	Power
PD	Power Distance
PDI	Power Distance Index
R	Ranked size of the imposition
SIPs	Social Interactional Principles

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The current study, as indicated in the title, mainly focuses on how three discourse communities in Britain and China manage harmonious relationship in terms of using strategies of rapport management in their upward request emails. To introduce the study and its significance generally, this chapter is delivered in terms of four sections. Section 1.2 explains the theoretical, empirical and practical motivation behind the present study. In terms of the motivation, it briefly introduces the study and highlights its significance. Section 1.3 sketches the research purposes, followed by three major research questions under examination. Finally, Section 1.4 presents an overview of the thesis.

1.2 Motivations and General Introduction of the Study

This study is motivated by two factors. A more synthesized theoretical framework, which integrates the discursive politeness models such as rapport management by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008), and relational work by Locher and Watts (2005), is called for in a new area of cross-cultural pragmatics study. Empirically and practically, a comprehensive insight needs to be provided into the nature of request emails from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives. To offer a global picture of the study, the two motivations are generally described in what follows, though they will be discussed in detail in the literature review of Chapters 2 and 3.

1.2.1 Theoretical motivations

From a theoretical perspective, the current study is primarily driven by the latest research trend of cross-cultural pragmatics, which regards communication as a “complex and dynamic phenomenon with a multiplicity of variable and factors” (Hernández López, 2008, p.61). However, a large body of existing cross-cultural pragmatics research has built upon traditional politeness theories, especially on Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) framework of linguistic politeness. The framework has only accounted for communication in terms of positive or negative politeness, which

may thus have played down the complexity and dynamics of communication. To address the limitation, more studies in the cross-cultural pragmatics field are required to apply the multi-theoretical perspectives which were proposed to refine the traditional models of politeness (e.g. Arundale, 1999, 2004, 2006; Haugh, 2007; Locher, 2006; Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 2005; Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008).

In particular, following the latest research trend of cross-cultural pragmatics, this study operationalizes and adapts Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2008) theory of rapport management into the theoretical and analytical framework. The application of this theory is expected to go beyond the face-concept research field, which is covered by much literature of communication studies. According to Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008), rapport management refers to maintaining or threatening harmonious social relations. It accounts for three bases of rapport, which involve not only face considerations as interpersonal needs, but also sociality rights and obligations as social expectancies, and interactional goals which might be transactional and/or interactional. Depending on the three bases of rapport, other factors, namely sociopragmatic interactional principles, conventions on speech act realizations, and the relationship between participants, etc., were argued to influence communication. All these factors will be managed in interaction and give rise to "rapport enhancement, rapport maintenance, rapport neglect and rapport challenge orientation" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 28).

In terms of the above description, the rapport management framework is much broader than that of Brown and Levinson and other traditional theories of politeness. It is expected to fully take account of language function which is involved in interpersonal (or relational) dimensions of communication (Brown & Yule, 1983). Or in other words, it falls into the interpersonal metafunction area proposed in Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar. With this framework, the tenor of discourse (emails in the present study) is expected to be fully revealed.

Moreover, the rapport management framework employed here for request-email genre analysis is expected to expose a fuller picture of the cultural differences and pragmatic contextual variables inherent in making request emails than the studies under Brown and Levinson's framework and some recent studies under the famous Cross-Cultural

Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework. Spencer-Oatey (2000, pp.19-20) distinguishes five domains of rapport management: the illocutionary domain, the discourse content domain, the participation domain, the stylistic domain and the non-verbal domain. By investigating these domains, this study goes beyond the treatment of the illocutionary domain of rapport management which Brown and Levinson's framework is mainly concerned with. On the other hand, it can be supplementary to the CCSARP framework which was initiated by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper in 1989, for it permits a comprehensive method analyzing emails beyond syntactical and lexical levels.

At the same time, this study is also built upon Locher and Watt's politeness model of relational work. According to Locher and Watts (2005), relational work refers to the work that individual invests in negotiating relationship with others, which is composed of impolite, non-polite, polite and over-polite behaviours. This definition rebuts the dichotomy of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) who divide social behaviour into politeness and impoliteness. Among the four taxonomies of relational work, the non-polite and polite behaviours are categorized into appropriate/politic behaviour. As Locher (2006) describes, the appropriate behaviour is in the lay person's perception and thus is named as first-order politeness. Politic behaviour is a second-order politeness term because it is not in everyday use. In this way, she claims that they have formalized a more comprehensive notion of face than the notion proposed by Brown and Levinson. It also brings about a more restricted view of politeness.

The two models are simultaneously employed in the current study because they are argued to have "some useful overlap" (Locher, 2010, p.528). Even though Spencer-Oatey (2007) considers that 'relational work' is much narrower in application than 'rapport', Locher (2010) argues that "what Spencer-Oatey defines as rapport management is equal to our understanding of relational work", because both definitions include "not only the negotiation of harmonious relations" but also mismanagement of relations (p. 528, emphasis mine). This study follows Locher's argument and regards the two definitions, rapport and relational work, as interchangeable. In relation to the participants' own perceptions of rapport orientation (specified in Section 4.5.1), the two

definitions refer in particular to harmonious relationships between email writers and recipients.

More importantly, the two politeness frameworks are complementary to each other and thus could be used to address different aspects of the investigation of request emails. As Locher (2010) reviews, the framework of rapport management adds further important insights into the framework of relational work because Spencer-Oatey is especially concerned with judgements of rapport management. The judgement is based on the three bases of rapport, as mentioned above, which are interconnected with other factors. These factors outline the relational concern at the very beginning and thus help to locate which predicator variables may lead to different communicative strategies in different domains of request emails like the illocutionary domain and the discourse domain. On the other hand, the model of relational work has an evaluative character (Locher & Watts, 2005). It is valid in unveiling idiosyncratic performance in request emails and provides a more practical framework for the researcher to evaluate the appropriate relational work in different discourse communities (cf. Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion on the two frameworks and their applications in the study).

The discursive models of politeness proposed by Spencer-Oatey, and Locher and Watts, have been widely quoted or adopted in existing research (Baruti, 2008; Hernández López, 2008). However, in contrast to a large amount of empirical research which was built on the traditional politeness framework, the two politeness models, to the best of my knowledge, have been under-explored in the literature of research on communications or emails in particular. Likewise, only a few studies, like Ho (2011b), combine the two models into one study. Therefore, more empirical studies on communication, and specifically on emails, are needed to test the validity of the two models.

In conclusion, this study is motivated by the current trends of cross-cultural pragmatics, together with the necessity of combining the two models of politeness in one study. The incorporation of the two models could serve the principal goal of the research, which is to reveal how email writers (university postgraduates under study) employ appropriate linguistic strategies at discourse and clause levels to manage rapport and do relational

work for ultimately achieving request compliance from the recipients (university instructors).

1.2.2 Empirical and practical motivations

Empirical and practical motivations of this study come from four aspects: 1) studying the speech act of request with discursive politeness frameworks; 2) application of the discursive politeness models to develop research on academic email communication in linguistics studies; 3) investigation of pragmatic competence of Chinese English speakers in performing academic request emails; and 4) developing a new genre-analysis framework to show how rapport/relational work are cultural concepts which may give rise to different communicative strategies in request emails. The motivations are generally introduced below.

Firstly, making requests, as a directive speech act (Searle, 1979), involves the speaker's attempt to get the hearer to do something in response to what he/she says. Though the speech act request has been defined in different ways (e.g. Bach & Harnish, 1979; Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1996; Goffman, 1971), it is generally regarded as a 'face-threatening act' (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to both sets of participants. Speakers need to use wide ranges of strategies, such as "syntactic, lexical and phrasal downgraders" (Blum-Kulka, et al, 1989, p.19), to reduce such face threats. Therefore, making requests is generally regarded as a difficult speech act for language learners and especially for second language (L2) learners. To successfully realize a high level of appropriateness when making a request, language learners should have substantial cultural and linguistic knowledge (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). In addition, requests are practically widely used in everyday communication for various aims like seeking information, help or cooperation from others. As such, requests have attracted considerable attention in linguistics, particularly from the 1980s. However, most of the previous studies on requests were conducted using the framework of traditional politeness theories. Not much research has been performed on the speech act of request in terms of politeness models like the combined model of those by Spencer-Oatey and Locher and Watts. More notably, almost no research has been done on requests with

these new models across British and Chinese culture. Hence the present study has been undertaken to address this gap.

Secondly, nowadays it is universally accepted that different cultures structure discourse in different ways (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008). Therefore, it is very important to understand differences in cross-cultural genre writings in intercultural communication studies. For this concern, the electronic mail (email), as an important and a relatively new medium, is pinpointed in the current study because it is widely and commonly employed by people for communication (Bafoutsou & Mentzas, 2001). As Crystal (2001) points out, email is a crucial medium for both interpersonal and institutional communications. It is especially used in academic and business institutions because it can transmit information at higher speed and with more convenience than traditional written letters.

At universities and colleges, email has assumed many functions in communication. Among them, emails have been widely employed by university students to make requests related to academic issues to staff and teachers. However, similar to the situation of research on the speech act of request, insufficient studies have employed new models of politeness to investigate emails in different levels. Considering these factors, this study attempts to analyze and compare Chinese and English academic request emails to understand the cultural differences manifested in the email genre.

Third, the research aims to identify some possible areas of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic problems in comparing the genre used by Chinese non-native speakers (NNSs hereafter) with that of British native speakers (NSs hereafter) at some level. This is because, as Chen (2006) points out, emails cannot be written by student writers easily, even though this technology is widely used in the world. People may write emails to their colleagues who have same social status in a relatively flexible way. However, they may find it difficult to write emails to receivers who have higher status than them in the work place, in order to achieve different communicative purposes (Baron, 1998, 2000; Murray, 1995). As for second language learners, they might find it even harder to write such emails, which demand that the writers have sufficient pragmatic competence, high linguistic ability and familiarity with the norms and values of the target culture (Chen,

2006). L2 learners are thus very likely to produce emails which contain some inappropriate language uses and even to generate a negative impression for the email recipients.

To achieve the goals mentioned above, the research needs to develop a reliable theoretical and analytical framework which will facilitate our understanding of the writing practice of request emails in different cultures from multiple perspectives. While wide-ranging theoretical modelling of genre analysis can be found in linguistic studies, little work has been done to integrate discursive politeness models into an in-depth cross-cultural comparison of genres. Given this issue, the study incorporates the notion of genre analysis by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004) with the models of politeness by Locher and Watts (2005) and Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008). It thus echoes Spencer-Oatey's (2002, p.530) recommendation that 'linguistic politeness needs to be studied within the situated social psychological context in which it occurs'. A specific illustration of this framework is given in Chapter 2.

With this holistic modelling of genre analysis, the relevant communication purposes and socio-cultural knowledge of email writings across cultures are deemed to be revealed. It is hoped that a full picture of genre analysis, which involves identifying the strategic functional choices of the emails such as the choices and order of the moves, the linguistic features employed to realize them in different levels, will be exposed.

1.2.3 Summary and intended research contributions

To conclude, this study is to implement a new model for genre analysis and comparison, to document the appropriate strategies of rapport management and relational work by Chinese and British students in their request emails to university instructors. Therefore, the study is intended to make some contributions to linguistics research. From a theoretical perspective, it is projected to contribute to the explorations into cross-cultural communication related to making appropriate request emails. It is also hoped that it will contribute to a new region of cross-cultural pragmatics by developing a new theoretical framework which integrates the discursive politeness models. From a practical and empirical perspective, it is intended to help us to understand culturally the

possible knowledge construct related to the writing practice of emails, i.e. a contrastive pragmatic study of the writing practice between NSs of Chinese and English. In addition, through a comprehensive analysis of the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic of Chinese learners of English, i.e. an interlanguage pragmatic study of the performance of NNS, it can provide effective guidelines for courseware designers and language teachers.

1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions

Driven by the motivations named above, the study conducts a contrastive analysis of three sets of authentic data: Chinese request emails written by Chinese-speaking postgraduates (referred as Chinese speakers [CSs] hereafter) and British English-speaking postgraduates (referred as English speakers [ESs] hereafter), as well as English request emails written by Chinese English-speaking postgraduates (referred as Chinese English speakers [CESs] hereafter). The postgraduates were from a Chinese university and a British university, who are argued to form three discourse communities. Demographic information on these participants will be specified in Chapter 4.

The study will explore and compare rapport-management strategies generally and individually among and within the three discourse communities. Furthermore, it aims at exploring the underlying factors of rapport management from a socio-psychological perspective, i.e. the three bases of rapport management (i.e. face sensitivities, rights and obligations and interactional goals), together with other social-cultural contexts like power, distance, etc. More specifically, the purposes of the research are: 1) to attempt to adapt and enrich an existing socio-psychological framework for probing request emails across cultures; 2) to unveil how email writers employ request strategies in different domains of emails to manage rapport with recipients in order to achieve request compliance; 3) to investigate and compare the specific components of the three bases of rapport and other social-cultural contexts which may lead to similarities and differences among and within the three discourse communities; 4) to reveal the pragmatic competence of the CESs; and 5) to explore the implications of the research for cross-cultural studies of emails, and to provide a deep insight into the nature of communication from a multi-cultural perspective.

These research purposes are accomplished through reviewing and synthesizing the existing literature in a series of related research fields, in addition to an empirical study of three groups of authentic emails. The first research purpose will be achieved with the construction of a theoretical framework of the study in the next chapter. The fifth research purpose will be fulfilled with discussions of the implications of the research findings in Chapters 7 and 8. The other three research aims are achieved through an empirical study which addresses the following three major research questions (Q):

Q1. How does each discourse community generally manage rapport in request emails? The major research question, namely comparison of the rapport management strategies in different domains among the three discourse communities, is guided by four sub-questions (SQ):

- 1a. What is the rhetorical structure in the emails of the three communities?
- 1b. What are the general features of openings and closings in these request emails for the three communities?
- 1c. What requestive strategies are used by each community in the head acts of requests in the emails?
- 1d. For the ESs and the CESs how do the two communities use syntactic and lexical modifiers in the head acts of requests?

Q2. How is the appropriate relational work performed in each discourse community?

Q3. How do individuals construct and contribute to the discursive relational work in emails within each discourse community?

The thesis in the following chapters seeks to answer the research questions in terms of probing socio-cultural contexts, adapting and constructing a theoretical framework for analysis and conducting a comprehensive analysis of the collected emails. These are further outlined in the next section.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

The remaining part of the thesis falls into the other 7 chapters. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are devoted to a review of the former theoretical and empirical studies which are mainly on politeness studies, requests and emails. In Chapter 2, some fundamental theoretical

constructs relevant to the framework are identified and explained, focusing on cultural dimensions (such as cross-cultural pragmatics, and some issues relevant to interlanguage pragmatics), politeness, face and identity specifically linked to British and Chinese cultures. Later on, a paradigm shift from traditional politeness theories to discursive politeness models is documented. In terms of this, models of rapport management and relational work related to the current investigation are rationalized, for the two models have some useful overlaps but are, more importantly, complementary. Finally, on the basis of the theoretical constructs and the literature review, the theoretical framework guiding the current study is presented. In Chapter 3, empirical studies on requests and particularly on request emails are reviewed. Furthermore, previous empirical studies which built on frameworks of rapport management and doing relational work are pinpointed. Research gaps are identified therein, which provides the motivation for the current study.

Chapter 4 describes and justifies the research methodology. It details the research design which includes subject selection, instruments for collecting data (i.e., background questionnaire, task of providing authentic emails and structured questions to be answered) and procedures for collecting and analyzing data. Some validity issues and ethical considerations of the data are discussed.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 present the findings of the research. Chapter 5 provides a pattern analysis of the collected data, pinning down the ways rapport was managed by the three discourse communities in their request emails. Three domains of rapport management, i.e. discourse, stylistic, and illocutionary domains, were mainly involved in the analysis. Meanwhile, some contextual and socio-psychological factors, such as requestive aims of the emails, perceived imposition of the requests, and perceived importance of the five Social Interactional Principles (SIPs), are demonstrated. Chapter 6 extends and expands the data analysis of Chapter 5. It provides an evaluation to the identified realization patterns of rapport-management strategies within the three discourse communities. It attempts to differentiate unmarked behaviour and marked behaviour from these strategies in terms of observed frequencies. In addition, the chapter highlights member idiosyncrasy in the genre of emails and studies the individual's realization of rapport-management strategies.

Chapter 7 makes further discussion and interpretation of the research findings presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. It compares the research findings among the three discourse communities and explores some possible reasons, especially in terms of the three bases of rapport management in different socio-cultural contexts, to account for the research findings.

Chapter 8 is a summary of the findings emerging out of the study. It suggests possible contributions of the findings to cross-cultural pragmatics studies, along with the strengths and limitations of the study. Directions for future research are suggested at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework for the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is structured into five sections. Section 2.2 reviews the key theoretical constructs on which this study is grounded: cultural dimensions and culturally related constructs (e.g. cross-cultural pragmatics, intercultural communication, etc.). These key constructs are operationalized from British and Chinese perspectives. Section 2.3 briefly and critically discusses foundational theories of politeness (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983) at first. It then illuminates discursive politeness models by Locher and Watts (2005) and Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008). It is argued that the two models, i.e. rapport management and relational work, are of some useful overlap and complementary to each other. Moreover, it illustrates how these two models are adapted and combined for the current study. Section 2.4 presents a guiding theoretical framework for the study, based on the definition of genre proposed by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004), together with the theoretical constructs and the discursive approaches reviewed above. Finally, Section 2.5 summarizes the present chapter.

2.2 Cultural Dimensions

As mentioned earlier, cultural dimensions are highly significant because this study falls into the research field of cross-cultural pragmatics. In other words, cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g. Blum-Kulka, et al, 1989; Wierzbicka, 1985, 1991) will shed light on the current study in terms of the comparison of rapport-management strategies across cultures. Meanwhile, theories of Spencer-Oatey and Locher and Watts, which are built upon by the current study, criticize previous politeness theories, such as Brown and Levinson's model, for ignoring the factor of culture as an explanatory variable. For example, Spencer-Oatey stresses that rapport management lies in "contextual assessment norms" (2000, p.42), and culture is an important factor of context. Therefore, it is necessary to define the concept of culture at this stage.

2.2.1 Defining ‘culture’

The definition of culture is very problematic. In this study, the distinction between culture with small ‘c’, or subjective culture, and Culture with a big ‘C’, or, objective culture (Bennett, 1998) is accepted. The small ‘c’ culture refers to the psychological features that define a group of people. Therefore, the small c-culture is subjective, which stresses “informal and often hidden patterns of human interactions and viewpoints” (Alatis et al, 1996, p.148). This is in contrast with the objective big C-culture, which refers to institutions and other cultural artefacts (Bennett, 1998).

Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.4) proposed the following definition of culture:

Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural conventions, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member’s behaviour and each member’s interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.

In terms of this description, it could be easily seen this definition is much concerned with the subjective small c-culture, which, according to Meier (2004), is mainly concerned with underlying cultural values and beliefs. And the small c-culture informs linguistic expectations, interpretations, and choices. Therefore, the exploration of linguistic behaviour, like strategies of rapport management and relational work in the current study, falls into this definition. The subjective culture is thus an aspect of culture which is pertinent to the present study.

Taking the above definitions of culture into consideration in the current study, several issues need to be highlighted:

Firstly, this study agrees with Spencer-Oatey (2000) that culture is group-oriented. However, culture is a ‘fuzzy’ concept in that no absolute set of features can distinguish definitely one cultural group from another. On the other hand, members within one group could not share absolutely identical sets of beliefs, attitudes and so on. They can only show ‘family resemblance’.

Secondly, this study does not ignore the role of big ‘C’ culture, which is used as a theoretical starting point for current cross-cultural research. In other words, the study is

also designed to test theoretical predictions about similarities and differences in behaviour across cultures (Gudykunst, 2000). Therefore, the study is firstly operationalized in terms of national cultures. It treats national culture as a theoretical variable, i.e. British culture and Chinese culture, which is detailed in Section 2.2.4. It analyzes and compares the linguistic behaviour in request emails of graduate students from China and Britain. In this way, culture is provisionally defined from an essentialist perspective such as Hall's (1977) and Hofstede's (1980) cultural models which categorize culture by the nation. Patterns of linguistic behaviour in the emails by members of the discourse communities from China and Britain will be to some extent generalized to test some pan-cultural theories.

At the same time, this study addresses some criticism of cultural essentialism and integrates Holliday's small culture paradigm to the investigation. As Holliday (1999) argues, the approach of cultural essentialism, which he defines as a large culture, is a culturist reduction. In his view, the large culture approach will lead to an exaggeration of differences between national cultures and thus "reductionist overgeneralization and otherization of 'foreign' educators, students and societies" (pp.237-238). To address this problem, he puts forward a notion of small culture which "attaches culture to small groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour" (p.237). In relation to the present study, it is acknowledged that there is an interrelationship between big culture and small culture, and that national culture is created and maintained by its people. However, culture is dynamic and different groups or individuals in the same nation may have different cultural tendencies. The small groups, which are composed of postgraduates from China and the UK, are argued to form three academic discourse communities (detailed in Chapter 4). The investigation of linguistic behaviour in these comparable discourse communities is hence expected to reduce the risk of overgeneralization and simplification of culture view. Also, it could attach importance to the meaning construction of individuals within the discourse communities and hence explore the individual's performance of rapport management in their emails.

Finally, this study is concerned with one pair of technical terms: 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural'. According to Blum-Kulka et al (1989), the two terms seem to be interchangeable. The current study follows Spencer-Oatey's (2000, p.4.) classification.

The term ‘cross-cultural’ refers to comparative data which is collected independently from different cultural groups. In particular to this study, cross-cultural study refers to a comparison of the emails from Chinese-speaking postgraduates and English-speaking postgraduates. On the other hand, the term ‘intercultural’ refers to interactional data which is collected when people from one cultural group interact with those from the other culture group. In relation to this study, intercultural study refers to the investigation of English emails written by Chinese-speaking postgraduates to British university instructors.

In sum, the above introduction of culture definitions provides a general understanding of the research methodology of this study. In the following section, the notion of cross-cultural pragmatics will be discussed.

2.2.2 Cross-cultural pragmatics

The leading research work in cross-cultural pragmatics is exemplified by the studies conducted within the framework of the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al, 1989) and studies conducted by Wierzbicka (1985, 1991). According to Blum-Kulka et al (1989), the leading work usually builds upon theories of meaning (Grice, 1957, 1975), speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979) and principles of cooperation and politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Leech, 1983).

Furthermore, Blum-Kulka (1997) summarizes that cross-cultural pragmatics is mainly concerned with cross-cultural variation in modes of speech act performance. It also concerns a widely researched area like contrastive pragmatics, i.e. cross-linguistic comparisons of particular types of speech acts such as requests, compliments, questions, thanks, directives and apologies.

Based on Leech’s (1983) categorization of linguistic study, Blum-Kulka (1997) asserts that a cross-cultural pragmatic study of the speech act data is usually conducted in terms of two types of analysis. The first type is pragmalinguistic study of “the degree of cross-linguistic variability in strategy form, examining the linguistic repertoire available in a particular language for conveying a specific pragmatic function” (p.55). For example, in

relation to the present study, the pragmalinguistic study concerns investigations and comparisons of linguistic realizations of rapport-management strategies in Chinese and English emails. The second type is sociopragmatic study of “the degree of cross-cultural variation in the choice of strategies across different situations, examining the ways in which pragmatic performance is subjected to social and cultural condition” (p.56). In relation to the study, it concerns how the ways language is used in emails to manage rapport are interrelated with the social and situational variables in British and Chinese cultural contexts.

The leading research of cross-cultural pragmatics has some implications for the current study. Firstly, significant amount of cross-cultural pragmatic research have been done on speech acts of request and request emails. These empirical studies, which will be reviewed in Chapter 3, are argued to have informed the current study. Meanwhile, the research has also driven the current study theoretically. For example, Blum-Kulka et al (1989) propose that more cross-cultural pragmatic analysis needs to be based on discourse in social contexts because speech act theory has tended to be based on the analysis of isolated utterances. In addition, Wierzbicka (1991) criticizes the ‘anglocentric’ mainstream of modern pragmatics. She asserts that cultural differences affect the use of politeness strategies for a specific speech act. The assertion sheds light on the current cross-cultural study. She also stresses that it is crucial to study a culture from within instead of from any extra-cultural point of view. In terms of this study, an emic approach is to be performed to the email data (more detail cf. Section 6.3). In this way, arbitrariness and bias towards any particular culture can be avoided.

To conclude, cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes the examination of speech acts in a certain socio-cultural context. This work will be developed and expanded in the current study, involving analysis and comparison of Chinese and English request-email genres.

2.2. 3 Intercultural communication and Interlanguage pragmatics

In my view, intercultural communication and interlanguage pragmatics are complementary to each other. As will be discussed in what follows, intercultural communication is generally involved in communication between different linguistic and

cultural backgrounds. Interlanguage pragmatics is usually concerned with the range of differences and divergence between non-native and native speakers when performing and comprehending a speech act. Given that communication between non-native speakers and native speakers happens, the communication is obviously between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile, given that intercultural communication happens and that the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds each has, the difference and divergence of the interactants is difficult to avoid.

This following section reviews the two theoretical concepts and discusses how these concepts are applicable to the current study. In addition, some relevant concepts, such as pragmatic competence, are reviewed.

A. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is generally defined as communication between people from different national cultures (Gudykunst, 2003). It is a “transactional and symbolic process” into which people from different cultures attribute meaning (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p.17). In terms of the present study, intercultural communication is regarded as communication between different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, i.e. the Chinese postgraduates wrote English emails to British university instructors.

Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, overgeneralization needs to be avoided when such national culture group constructs are used in the present study. While acknowledging the functioning of cultural regularities or cultural patternings in large groups, it does not mean these factors absolutely decide people’s linguistic behaviour, or that they are the only factors that have an impact on people’s behaviour (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). In relation to the present study, the email communication is thus regarded as being not between ‘cultures’ but also between ‘individuals’. In this way, some other aspects which culture could not cover will thus be involved in the analysis of email genre. To be specific, such factors like contextual factors, and the pragmatic competence of the Chinese postgraduates who wrote emails in English, will also be considered below.

B. Interlanguage pragmatics

Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) maintain that interlanguage pragmatics is a hybrid of second language acquisition research and pragmatic research. Based on Levinson's and Leech's discussions of definitional issues of pragmatics, they define interlanguage pragmatics as a "study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language" (p3).

Since the early 1980s, there has been considerable research conducted in the field of interlanguage pragmatics from theoretical and empirical perspectives. After reviewing these earlier studies in this field, Kasper (1996) emphasises that the great majority of studies on interlanguage pragmatics have concentrated on describing the difference between the ways in which second language learners and native speakers perform the same speech acts, or have been focused on the pragmatic problems language learners encounter (more detail cf. Bouton, 1994; Edmondson & House, 1981; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Myers-Scotton & Bernstein, 1988; Rose, 1994). As these research aspects are mainly relevant to the investigation of pragmatic competence and pragmatic transfer of second language learners, a brief review of the concept of pragmatic competence is conducted in the following section.

C. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence constitutes a most important aspect of language learners' general communicative knowledge. It generally refers to how people in general, not necessarily second language learners, make appropriate functional choices in various situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987, Leech, 1983). However, when dealing with the specific components of pragmatic competence, the seminal works on pragmatic competence, such as those of Canale (1983), Leech (1983), Bachman (1990), and Celce-Murcia et al (1995), have not agreed on its components. Given this situation, it is necessary to elucidate this construct and illustrate how to operationalize the construct in the present study.

Bachman's framework of pragmatic competence is highlighted here as it constructs a more detailed taxonomy than others. According to Bachman (1990), pragmatic competence, together with organizational competence, is formed into language competence. Organizational competence refers to the "abilities of controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form contexts" (1990, p.87). It is composed of grammatical competence, which includes knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology/graphonology, and textual competence. The latter includes knowledge of the conventions for joining utterances together to form a text.

On the other hand, pragmatic competence is a crucial term which involves a speaker's ability to use the language to express a wide range of functions and interpret their illocutionary force in discourse according to the socio-cultural context in which they are used. Pragmatic competence is categorized into illocutionary competence which refers to "the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions," and sociolinguistic competence which refers to "knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context" (Bachman, 1990, p.90).

The subdivisions by Bachman roughly correspond to the ones by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), who put two components, pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence, under pragmatic competence. Leech (1983) describes pragmalinguistic competence as speakers' ability to infer the communicative intention or purpose of an utterance beyond the most literal meaning. In contrast, sociopragmatic competence refers to speakers' knowledge of adapting speech act strategies to the situational or socio-cultural variables in a communicative event. The two competences, for convenience of the present study, are regarded as the same as Bachman's dichotomy of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence.

Leech's dichotomy of pragmatics, i.e. pragmalinguistics and sociolinguistics, together with his dichotomy of pragmatic competence, i.e. pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence, has been adopted as a baseline for the current study

because this model, to the best of knowledge, is most widely used in pragmatics research. Moreover, the two categories of pragmatics have been adopted and developed by Spencer-Oatey (2000) into her theoretical framework of rapport management. Specifically, she points out that both pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics have conventions that can influence how people use rapport-management strategies (see also the theoretical framework in the Section 2.4). She further proposes that different languages have different pragmalinguistic conventions to convey a given different pragmatic meaning in a given context. Moreover, different rapport-management domains have different pragmalinguistic conventions for conveying given pragmatic meanings in a given context. In communications (especially in intercultural communications), if interactants cannot follow pragmalinguistic convention, their efforts in rapport management would not be enough. As a result, ‘pragmalinguistic failure’ (Thomas, 1983) might occur and hence constitute a question of pragmalinguistic competence.

At the same time, Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.39) argues that “all societies have developed social principles or ‘rules’ (sociopragmatic principles) which help to minimize the conflict that might arise from the self-centred pursuit and gratification of face needs and sociality rights”. More recently, to make the sociopragmatic principles more operational in her theory of rapport management, Spencer-Oatey (2003, 2008) asserts that the sociopragmatic principles are presented with value-laden Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles (SIPs). The SIPs, which will be specified in the forthcoming section (also in Chapter 4), are regarded as “socioculturally-based principles, scalar in nature, that guide or influence people’s productive and interpretive use of language” (Spencer-Oatey, 2003, p. 1635). They are generated on the basis of criticism of Leech’s (1983) maxims of politeness. (Comments on Leech’s and Spencer-Oatey’s sociopragmatics will be detailed in Section 2.3 of the review of politeness theories).

The construct and operationalization of these definitions is expected to facilitate the exploration of how pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic conventions influence the use of rapport-management strategies in request emails written by Chinese and English postgraduates. In this way, some cross-cultural similarities and difference are expected to be revealed.

In addition, the dichotomy of pragmatic competence could also guide “the theoretical direction for the measurement of interlanguage pragmatics” (Yamashita, 2008, p.202). In order to communicate appropriately in a target language, learners need to develop their pragmatic competence in the second/foreign language (L2 hereafter). In the present study, pragmalinguistic analysis will examine how Chinese English speakers (English learners) use rapport-management strategies to build/maintain harmonious relationships with the email receivers, whereas sociopragmatic analysis will investigate how these English learners perceive contextual variables and sociocultural concepts (SIPs) related to request emails.

2.2.4 British and Chinese culture and social relations (teacher-student)

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, this study simultaneously addresses big ‘C’ and small ‘c’ cultural aspects. It is argued that the national culture (cultural regularity/group level, i.e. big ‘C’ aspect) is a factor which influences individual’s behaviour, i.e. small ‘c’ aspect (Gudykunst, 1998). Specifically, according to Spencer-Oatey (1993), national culture has a particularly marked effect on conceptions of social relations, while social relations make a further impact on communication interaction (e.g. rapport-management strategies in the present study).

Departing from these fundamental premises of pragmatics, this part applies Hall’s (1977) and Hofstede’s intercultural theories (1991, 2001) as fundamental principles to examine general cultural differences between China and Britain. In this way, they will shed light on the understanding of the sociocultural contexts for the current request-email genre study. Furthermore, they will provide some insights into the investigations of the idea of social relations, especially that of the teacher-student relationship in British and Chinese culture.

Much research has built upon Hall’s (1977, 2000) seminal work to spotlight national-level cultures such as Japan or China, comparing them with mainstream Anglo-American cultures. Hall (1977, 2000) categorizes culture into high- and low-context types. High-context cultures are usually associated with oriental cultures like Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures. They are characterized by the use of covert messages.

Covert messages are usually transmitted indirectly because they are based on shared contexts in high-context cultures.

In contrast, low-context cultures are usually associated with western cultures, that of the United States being a typical example. British culture falls into low-context cultures, though it is not as typical as that of the US. Low-context cultures are characterized by the use of overt messages. Overt messages are usually transmitted through brief styles and expressions because they are not much based on shared context in low-context cultures. Alternatively, according to Ulijn and St. Amant (2000), indirect style is usually perceived in high-context cultures as a way of building relationship with the interlocutors; while brevity is regarded as speaking to the point in low-context cultures. Based on these assertions, it might be predicted that the emails written by the Chinese under study would be more indirect and more rapport-building oriented than those by the British.

Along with the concept of the high- and low-context cultures, Hofstede's (1991) has developed five fundamental cultural dimensions in the National Cultures Model (NCM) to understand differences between national cultures. The dimensions are: 1) Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS/FEM); 2) Collectivism versus Individualism (C/I); 3) Power Distance; 4) Uncertainty Avoidance; and 5) Long-term Orientation. Among these five dimensions, Collectivism versus Individualism and Power Distance are closely related to the present study and hence the focus of the next section.

Hofstede (2005) reanalyzed an empirical examination of national cultural differences across the five dimensions in about 70 countries. According to the perceptions of people in difference organizations, British and Chinese cultures differ greatly from each other on the two dimensions of individualism versus collectivism and power distance. British culture has the third highest individualism score (Score = 89) and a very low-ranked power distance index (PDI) (Ranked 63-65, Score = 35) out of 74 countries examined. Therefore, British culture can be classified as Low-Power-Distance and Individualist Culture. Chinese individualism and PDI scores are 20 and 80 respectively, which classify Chinese culture as a high-power-distance and collectivistic culture.

According to Hofstede (1991, 2005), collectivism and individualism are differentiated on the basis of ‘personality’ and ‘self-concept’. As an individualist culture, British culture values self-concept and upholds self-realization and emotional independence from the group. Individuals are thus expected to work to achieve their own goals. Conversely, as a collectivistic culture, Chinese culture does not value self-concept but defines many aspects of individuals’ identities in terms of group attributes. The goals of the group are typically put before individuals’ goals. As a result, cooperation in the group is thus highly valued.

Associated with collectivism and individualism is the concept of power relations. According to Hofstede (2005), there is positive correlation between the scores for collectivism and the Power Relations Index and negative correlation between individualism and the Power Relation Index. In particular, Chinese society is more likely to be hierarchical in structure than British society because its collectivistic culture is apt to exhibit a high Power Relation Index.

One unique feature of Chinese culture is that it is under the enormous influence of the greatest ancient philosopher Confucius (Kong Fu Ze around 500 B.C., who is usually called a sage in China). Chinese society has been hierarchical in structure for thousands of years. Even in modern China (after the founding of the People’s Republic of China) which is led by the communist party, this condition has not changed much. First, though the late leader Mao Zedong tried to abandon Confucianism, his own rule was actually strongly influenced by it (Hofstede, 2005). Moreover, in recent years, the Chinese government has made great efforts to preserve and promote Chinese traditional cultures, especially Confucian culture. For instance, according to a report from one Chinese official website ([www. people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn)), the Chinese government had built more than 800 Confucius Institutes (or Confucius classrooms) in more than 100 countries in the world before June, 2011. From this example, we can infer that Confucianism is still greatly influential in today’s China.

One of the basic principles of Confucianism is that the stability of society is based on unequal relationships between people (Hofstede, 2005). Confucius distinguished five basic relationships (Wu Lun in Chinese): ruler-subject, father-son, older brother-

younger brother, husband-wife, and senior friend-junior friend. These relationships involve mutual and complementary obligation. The junior partner should pay respect and be obedient to the senior partner. Conversely, the senior partner needs to give protection and consideration to the junior. In addition, as a teacher or educator, Confucius teaches that students should be definitely obedient and respectful to their teachers. In turn, Confucius demands that the teacher should care for and love his students, always being ready to answer their questions and give them the guidance they need (See *The Analects*, the translations are mine).

To conclude, the teacher-student relationship in Chinese culture is in a hierarchical structure even in today's China which has encountered Western individualism and egalitarian. In opposition to this, under the general national cultural background of low power distance and individualism, the teacher-student relationship in Britain tends to be more equal than some other societies. As Hofstede (2005) observes, students are expected to have arguments and open discussions with teachers. Teachers are supposed to treat the students as basic equals and expect to be treated as equals by the students.

Because of this key difference in British and Chinese cultures, it is anticipated that the cultural difference may have an impact on the use of language in request emails by Chinese and British postgraduates. For example, in the British individualistic culture, there might be little need to index high power distance in the request emails. In contrast, in the Chinese collectivistic culture, the high power distance may be more likely to influence language use in the emails. These cultural dimensions are thus applied to the comparison and analysis of the request email genre under study.

While the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede are used as possible explanatory factors for this cross- and inter-cultural study, I am very aware of the fact that the paradigm of national cultural differences has incurred a huge amount of criticism (e.g. Bond et al, 2000; Holliday, 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Jack, 2009; McSweeney, 2002; Oyserman et al 2002). Some criticisms, such as those by McSweeney (2002) and Oyserman et al (2002) are so fierce that they seem to demolish the validity of this model. Therefore, it is proposed that a critical review of recent work on identity and intercultural communication be carried out in order to see how these criticisms, which

have problematized Hofstede's cross-cultural paradigm, is to be addressed in the current study.

According to McSweeney (2002), Hofstede's model of national culture is implausible and even needs to be rejected. This is because, as McSweeney claims, the methodology of this model is basically faulty. Specifically, McSweeney crossed out five flawed assumptions underlying Hofstede's model. The first assumption refers to three discreet components of culture, such as national, organizational and occupational cultures. McSweeney contends that this assumption is illogical because Hofstede has assumed that the three components of culture are distinguishable in order to reach his findings. Furthermore, McSweeney argued that Hofstede's research design is problematic, which has led to the other three flawed assumptions. In other words, McSweeney believes that Hofstede's surveys of one company, i.e. IBM, cannot provide information about entire national cultures. Surveys are inappropriate for measuring cultural differences, and the data from these surveys are old and therefore obsolete. Finally, McSweeney suggests that the four or five dimensions delineated by Hofstede are not enough or not situation specific.

In comparison to the sharp criticism by McSweeney, other responses seem to be mild. For example, Oyserman et al (2002) conducted a comprehensive review of empirical studies on dimensions of individualism and collectivism. They differentiated three approaches, i.e. applying Hofstede; measuring individualism; and applying the cultural-priming paradigm, in this study. Using a meta-analysis on the first two approaches in these empirical studies, Oyserman et al revealed that they both lack convergent validity because they did not consistently disclose national differences in individualism and collectivism. As a result, Oyserman et al concluded that these two phenomena "were neither as large nor as systematic as often perceived" (2002, p.40). In other words, the importance of individualism and collectivism proposed by Hofstede as explanatory constructs in intercultural communication was challenged. Or, as Bond (2002, p.76) further commented on this judgement, "the field will in fact abandon these two overfreighted constructs [individualism and collectivism] altogether and move toward narrower theories of culture based on more specific constructs".

However, while much research has been done to criticize Hofstede's cross-cultural model, a strong counter-criticism has also grown. On the one hand, Hofstede (2002) himself responded to McSweeney's criticism on his five assumptions respectively. To some extent, he agrees with McSweeney's criticism in that nations are not the best units for studying cultures; however, he argues that nations are often the only kind of units available for cross-cultural studies. In reference to the criticism on his research design, Hofstede defends the validity of surveys in his research and argues that the country scores obtained from the investigation of the IBM correlated highly with all kinds of other data. Therefore, the IBM data can measure differences between national cultures. On the other hand, a huge number of empirical studies incorporating Hofstede's cultural framework have consolidated the counter criticism. For example, as Kirkman et al (2002) reviewed, in relation to this model, 180 studies in 40 business and psychology journals had been conducted between 1980 and 2002.

While the hot dispute on the national cultural model has been under its way, Holliday's latest research is noteworthy and, in my view, could reconcile this dispute. As mentioned in Section 2.2.1, Holliday (1999, 2005) points out that the national cultural model is constructed from an essentialist perspective and thus may lead to reductionist overgeneralization. In his latest work, Holliday (2010a, 2010b) has further elaborated this point. According to a survey on 28 interviewees from 12 nations, Holliday (2010 a) found out similarities within a complexity of cultural realities with which these interviewees were living, which was not pinned down to specific cultural types. For one thing, nationality is an important factor which provides a framing for identities of these people. For another, this factor, as an external factor, is "in conflict with a wide variety of layered cultural realities which collect around personal life trajectories (including religion, family history, community, occupation, politics and language)" (Holliday, 2010a, p.165). Therefore, Holliday (2010 b) reviewed that both essentialism, as well as neo-essentialism, which is a development of essentialism, have underpinned multiculturalism and might ignore the interculturality which everyone might possess to some degree. He thus suggests that "a cultural realism [of persons] not only acknowledges the influence of national structures but allows for the agency of the individual" (2010 b, p. 259).

In summary, while acknowledging the validity of the above cultural dimensions of Hofstede, this thesis tries to use a more dynamic and productive approach to address both support for and criticism of Hofstede's cross-cultural paradigm. The paradigm is used in my study as a theoretical starting point. Firstly, according to Williamson (2002) and Hatipoğlu (2007), these theories are still the most widely applied models in cross-cultural studies. Secondly, according to Spencer-Oatey (1993), who examines Chinese and British conceptions of tutor-postgraduate student relationships, national culture has a significant impact on social relations, and individuals' linguistic behaviour (also see Gudykunst, 1998). In other words, I accept Holliday's (2010a, 2010b) judgement that nationality is an indispensable factor, together with other multi-layered factors, which impacts on cross- and inter-cultural communication. Thirdly, adequate caution will be exercised in applying these theories to my research in this thesis. In particular, other dimensions, like the social engagement of individuals (referred to as discourse community in the thesis), which will influence the management of rapport, will also be considered, to avoid any possible over-generalizations. Finally, as an auxiliary concern, the research will address the criticism of 'narrowness of the population surveyed' (McSweeney, 2002, p.94) on the NCM, by an investigation of the postgraduate's cultural awareness in Britain and China.

2.2.5 Summary

To sum up, this section has reviewed cultural definition and its relation to pragmatics. It has identified some previous assertions on the dimensions of National Culture Models (power, individualism vs. collectivism, etc.). This provides a starting point for an investigation into how cultural variables will impact on some socio-psychosocial factors and further on rapport-management strategies in different discourse communities under study. Furthermore, it has emphasized how to avoid over-generalization of these cultural models. In addition, this section has reviewed some culture-related constructs such as cross-cultural pragmatics, which may further our understanding of the guiding theoretical framework.

2.3 Politeness Theories

In the past three or so decades, theories of linguistic politeness have attracted great attention in the research practice of linguistics. They are also a major component of pragmatic theorizing. However, despite a huge amount of research having been directed at the politeness research field, there is still no consensus on the definition of politeness and research from a politeness perspective in linguistics. This section first attempts to define politeness from multiple perspectives. It then reviews some earlier politeness theories, i.e. the maxim/rule-based view and the face-management view, because these theories have been adapted as a basis for some discursive politeness. The discursive politeness theories, i.e., theories of rapport management and relational work, which are labelled as ‘post-modern’ politeness theories, in contrast to the above reviewed ‘traditional’ politeness theories (Terkourafi, 2005), are particularly focused on. They are argued to overlap usefully and to be complementary to each other. Finally, a synthesis of the reviewed politeness theories is made for the current study of the thesis.

2.3.1 Defining politeness

The phenomenon of politeness has been the subject of protracted and heated discussions in the field of linguistics research, however, the nature of politeness is still not agreed upon. For example, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) explain politeness in terms of face. For them, speakers use politeness to mitigate face-threatening speech acts such as requests, offers and compliments. Leech (1983) and Gu (1990) propose several maxims to explain politeness. Fraser (1990) argues that politeness entails the upholding of a conversational contract. In terms of Locher and Watts (2005), politeness is appropriate but marked behaviour.

As Spencer-Oatey (2000) reviews, in spite of all the differences, all these politeness definitions are related in some way with harmonious/conflictual relations, which she labels rapport management. According to Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009, p.102), rapport refers to “people’s subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relationships”. Accordingly, rapport management refers to “the ways in which (dis)harmony is (mis)managed”.

The English word “politeness” is approximately equivalent to the Chinese word “Limao 礼貌”, which is developed from the old Chinese word “Li 礼”. *Li* is a complex notion formulated by Confucius, which does not mean politeness but refers to the social hierarchy and order of the slavery system (Gu, 1990); or, in other words, it means “rites”, “social rules”, and “respects” (Gou, 2002). Therefore, *Li* is not only involved with appropriate communication, but also with the performance of rites in front of the spirits of ancestors and other ritual aspects (Kádár, 2007). Corresponding to the present study, *li* is only discussed in terms of its communication aspects.

Gu (1990) further states that, the Confucian Classics, like *the Analects* and *Book of Rites* (*Liji*), reveal that *li* means a person’s need to denigrate oneself and elevate the other in the deferential communication. This thus becomes polite behaviour in Chinese traditional culture which expresses and helps maintain social hierarchy and order.

The Confucian politeness ideology has been the official state ideology since it came into being. Though it was challenged from time to time, it gained its final shape as the dominant ideology of the state from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) to the early 20 century (Pan & Kádár, 2011). However, after the People’s Republic of China was founded, the Confucian politeness ideology was challenged by the Chinese Communist Party, which started a series of societal reforms to demolish it. This has resulted in some great changes in the practice of politeness in modern China, such as the “gradual disappearance of honorifics and other polite lexical items which boosted the application of discursive strategies in interactions” (Pan & Kádár, 2011, p. 11).

However, Pan and Kádár (2011) further point out that, despite the effort to overthrow traditional politeness ideology in modern China, the ideological view regarding hierarchy did not undergo a fundamental change. Therefore, some form of politeness is still needed to signal social hierarchical relations. This assertion confirms the previous one by Gu (1990, p.239) that these forms of politeness are needed to “enhance social harmony and to defuse interpersonal tension of conflict” in modern China.

To summarize, it is easily seen that, in Chinese culture, individuals are supposed to subordinate themselves to the group or the community (collectivist culture, as we

described above). Therefore, the Chinese concept of politeness (Limao) embraces some special characteristics, which are proposed to have four underlying basic notions: respectfulness, modesty, a warm attitude, and refinement (Gu, 1990).

While this study acknowledges the diversity in defining politeness, it tries to build diversity into definitions of rapport management and relational work. This is because, as will be detailed in what follows, both definitions have encouragingly extended the scope of politeness conceptualization and brought many hidden facets of the understanding of politeness to the fore. With regards to the two definitions, politeness is not static, but a contextual judgement about social appropriateness. Social appropriateness is not only situation-bound and culture specific, but it may be influenced by personal values and tastes (Spencer-Oatey, 2005).

Since politeness makes up the backbone of the current study, a detailed review of politeness theories will be conducted in the next section, which will deal with why and how to utilize rapport management and relation work.

2.3.2 Traditional politeness theories

Traditional politeness theories, considered to follow the same research paradigm - static speech act theory (Terkourafi, 2005) - involve a Rule/Maxim-based view on politeness, mainly by Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983), and a face-management view, mainly by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Among the three politeness theories, there is no doubt that Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is the most influential work and has triggered a largest variety of research work. Therefore, more weight is placed on the review of Brown and Levinson's work in what follows. It is also expected that highlighting Brown and Levinson's work will facilitate our understanding of the two discursive politeness theories employed in the current study.

2.3.2.1 Maxim-/Rule-based view on politeness

The maxim- /rule-based view on politeness, in spite of some difference among them, has the same theoretical departure as Paul Grice's (1967) pragmatics theory on the

Cooperative Principle and a number of conversational maxims. Pfister (2009) suggests that many researchers such as Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), Kingwell (1993), Davis (1998) and Kallia (2004, 2007) agree that maxims of politeness are required. In this part, I will focus my review and discussion on Lakoff (1973), because she was the first linguist to initiate research into politeness, and Leech (1983) because his theory of politeness is thought to be the most important one (Fraser, 1990). More importantly, the theories have been partly built upon by the theory of rapport management, i.e. pragmatic principles and conventions as socio-psychological factors of rapport management.

A. Robin Lakoff's rule-based view on politeness

Robin Tolmach Lakoff is called “the mother of modern politeness theory” (Eelen, 2001, p.2) because her seminal paper calls for a pragmatic approach to politeness. Her politeness theory was mainly drawn from Grice (1967). Grice (1967) argues that conversationalists are rational individuals who principally seek cooperation with other interlocutors for effective communication. Because of this, the conversationalists must follow the Cooperative Principle (CP) to achieve a “maximally effective exchange of information” (Grice, 1989, p.28). The CP consists of four maxims: maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. According to the maxims, the conversationalists are supposed to try to be ‘informative’, ‘truthful and relevant’, and to ‘avoid ambiguity’, in conversations for effective communications. The CP, as Grice assumes, is always observed. However, the conversationalists may also at times apparently violate the maxims (“flout” in Grice terms) to give rise to implicature.

Grice's maxims do not take in concerns about politeness. However, the theory has triggered a lot of research which has argued that, aside from CP, a maxim of politeness is also needed for a rational conversation. According to Lakoff (1979, p. 64), politeness is described as “a device used in order to reduce friction in personal interaction”. The politeness rule is opposite to Grice's essential “being clear” rule. The rule is adapted by Fraser (1990, p.224) into the following three sub-rules:

1. Don't Impose (used when Formal/Impersonal Politeness is required).
2. Give Options (used when Informal Politeness is required).
3. Make the other feel person good - be friendly (used when Intimate Politeness is required).

As Lakoff (1973) asserts, each of the three rules is used by the speakers to make the listener feel good. In addition, the speakers could choose from the three sub-rules in terms of their situation judgement. Taking a “request for opening the door” as an example, if the speaker judges the situation as requesting Informal Politeness, he/she will say “can you open the door?” However, the speaker will say “open the door” if he/she thinks of the situation as requesting Intimate Politeness.

Lakoff (1990) further defines Rule 1 as a strategy of Distance; Rule 2 as Deference; and Rule 3 as Camaraderie. She also points out that different cultures have different interpretations of the definition of politeness. Therefore, different cultures have different tendencies in relation to the three sub-rules of politeness. For example, Asian cultures prefer to be Deferential, while European cultures tend to be Distancing.

As mentioned earlier, Lakoff made a great contribution to politeness research because she was one of the first to examine politeness from a “decidedly pragmatic perspective” (Eelen, 2001, p.2). However, it has suffered from a lot of criticism, especially from sociological perspectives. The criticism will be reviewed together with that of Leech’s model in what follows.

B. Geoffrey Leech-Principles of Pragmatics (PP)

Like Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) also adopts Grice’s Conversational Maxim approach to politeness. However, unlike Lakoff (1973), who focuses her research on the politeness of the form of sentences, Leech (1983) favours studying politeness within the domain of a rhetorical pragmatics. He puts forth the Principles of Politeness which constrain Grice’s Cooperative Principles. The relationship of the CP and the Principle of Pragmatics is stated by Leech (1983, p82) as follows:

The CP enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other participant is being cooperative. In this the CP has the function of regulating what we say so that it contributes to some assumed illocutionary or discursal goal(s). It could be argued that the PP has a higher regulative role than this: to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place.

Based on this assumption, Leech (1983) proposes six Interpersonal Maxims to account for the ways in which language is used for maintaining social equilibrium and friendly

relations. The six maxims are: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim, and Sympathy Maxim. Furthermore, each of the maxims has a set of scales, such as a cost-benefit scale and optimality scale, which are supposed to be consulted by the hearer.

Leech's Principles of Pragmatics are not free from criticism. Fraser (1990, p. 227) thinks that the principles set by Leech are too abstract, for "there is no way of knowing which maxims are to be applied, what scales are available ...and so forth". Moreover, the maxims are unclear, overlapping, and/or of different statuses (Thomas, 1995).

The biggest problem of the rule/maxim-based view of politeness by both Lakoff and Leech lies in the fact that we do not know how many rules are needed to account for the politeness phenomenon (cf. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1990). As Brown and Levinson complain, there are too many maxims. If maxims are allowed to be coined every time for regularity in language use, there will be countless maxims. In addressing this problem, Brown and Levinson put forward their face-management view on politeness which I will illustrate in the next section.

Before moving onto a review on Brown and Levinson's view on politeness, it is worth reviewing Leech's recent work on this subject. In addition to his common principle of politeness (1983, 2003), Leech (2007) proposes a Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP), further providing a pragmatic framework for studying linguistic politeness. The GSP encompasses two constraints, a major constraint and a minor constraint, for the speakers to follow if they want to be polite. Specifically, the speaker needs to put a high value on what is related to the addressee and put a low value on what relates to himself/herself.

The main purpose of Leech's recent work is to rebut the large amount of criticism of his principles, which says that they are western biased. With some evidence supporting the GSP, Leech (2007) argues that it is not necessary to construct a different theory of politeness in order to account for the East and West differences because politeness is scalar in nature and sensitive to context.

In my view, Leech's latest work does not deviate from his early framework of politeness. It is still a rule-based theory. However, as Leech (2007) himself points out, the GSP puts more emphasis on the incorporation of cognitive and societal explanations to explain pragmatic politeness. Politeness has a psychological function (serving face) and a social function (serving communicative concord). This notion, to some extent, has been employed in the current study.

2.3.2.2 Face-management view on politeness

Up to now, the best-known politeness theory, which has also been used most widely in linguistics, is possibly Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) account of politeness as positive politeness and negative politeness. The theory was built upon Goffman's (1967) notion of 'face' derived from Durkheim (1915), which has been very influential and has inspired the other politeness theories employed in the present study. Goffman (1967, p.5) labels face as follows:

The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approval social attributes-albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession of religion by making a good showing for himself.

In terms of Goffman, it appears that face is inherently attributable to individuals, but its precise configuration is a public image which individuals have to earn from society. Therefore, individuals need to perform 'facework', which is aimed at two aspects: a defensive orientation towards saving their own face and a protective orientation towards saving other's face, to secure the image.

On the basis of Goffman's face theory, together with "the English folk term of face", Brown and Levinson (1987, p.61.) define face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 61). They argue that speakers join in the conversation with two seemingly conflicting 'face wants' (p. 13): a negative face want and a positive face want. Positive face refers to the need by all humans to be appreciated, while negative face is the desire not to be imposed upon. Drawing upon these definitions, speakers ideally conduct themselves in order to honour others' needs. However, in practice, satisfying one's individual desire usually causes one to perform acts that inevitably threaten both one's own face and other's face needs. For example,

certain illocutionary acts, such as compliments, apologies, offers, suggestions and request are inherently positive or negative face-threatening. Therefore, the speakers need to use some appropriate linguistic strategies to mitigate such kinds of face-threat and hence be polite.

The degree of polite linguistic strategies used to mitigate face threatening acts (henceforth FTAs), as further proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), is decided by judgement on the seriousness of FTA in terms of three factors: the relative power (P) between the speaker and hearer; the social distance (D) of them; and the absolute ranking (R) of the imposition in a particular culture. These variables could be used to assess the weightiness of an FTA (the seriousness or the estimate of risk of face-loss). The weightiness of FTA is calculated as: $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$. (W_x means the 'weightiness'; $D(S,H)$ means distance between the speaker and the hearer; $P(H,S)$ means relative power between the speaker and hearer; R_x means absolute ranking of the imposition). Based on this formula, Brown and Levinson claim that the degree of face threat is positively correlated with the weightiness of the speech act. In other words, the greatness of weightiness will lead to a high degree of face threat and ultimately cause the speakers or writers to choose high-degree polite linguistic strategies to make speech acts. Furthermore, besides the whole holistic effect of the three variables, each variable plays a role independently in the choice of polite linguistic strategies.

Based on the calculations, Brown and Levinson (1987) further proposed a series of possible strategies for acting upon FTAs which result in the following decision tree:

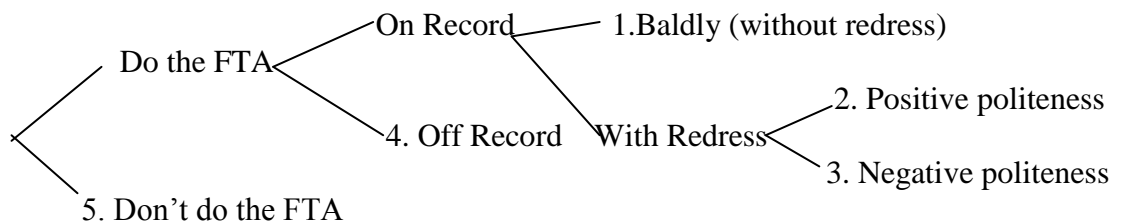


Figure 2.1 Communicative choices (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 69)

As the figure indicates, five possible communication choices are available to the speakers. Strategies from the first to the fourth commit FTAs, but the fifth strategy does not commit FTAs at all. Depending on the “weightiness” illustrated above, a speaker

could make a choice of the first four strategies, ranging from strategies without mitigation (Strategy 1); positive strategies (Strategy 2); negative strategies (Strategy 3); and off-record strategies (Strategy 4).

To be more specific, I take an illocutionary act of “requesting/suggesting a rest” in a general context to illustrate the four strategies. The speaker could perform an act on record baldly without any redress such as “Have a rest”. Otherwise the speaker could perform an act on record with redress to mitigate the FTAs. The redressive actions could be performed through Positive Politeness (trying to express solidarity, e.g. “Since both of us are tired ...”) and Negative Politeness (trying not to impose too much on the listener, e.g., “I wonder if you could allow me to have a rest?”). Furthermore, the speaker could use off-record strategies which require the listener to make more complicated reference such as “It is hot, and I am tired”.

The main contributions of the model lie in the fact that it posits that all speech acts are face-threatening. There is a correlation between the weightiness of FTAs and polite speech acts. In terms of these points, it provides a feasible framework for linguistics research. There is no wonder, as Meier (1995) noted, that a huge amount of research adopted this model, focusing on “linguistic carriers of politeness (e.g. speech act, syntactic constructions, lexical items, etc.), seeking to quantify them, to compare them across cultures and genders, and to identify universals” (p.345).

However, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has also been criticized by many researchers from different cultural backgrounds. The criticism centres on three main aspects: the contentious term of ‘politeness’; the claim of universality of face wants; and the relationship between indirectness and politeness. The criticism is detailed sequentially in the following.

First, the treatment of politeness by Brown and Levinson has always been considered to be controversial (e.g. Fraser, 1990; Locher & Watts, 2005; Meier, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2000; Watts et al., 1992; Wierzbicka, 1985). From its outset, the theory of Brown and Levinson was criticized for its ethnocentrism (i.e. its Anglo-centrism), regarding form, functions and politeness, and directness (Wierzbicka, 1985). As mentioned above,

Brown and Levinson distinguished two types of politeness strategies (i.e. negative and positive), which function to address FTAs. However, some researchers, such as Schmidt and Richards (1980) and Kasper (1990), criticised Brown and Levinson's view on politeness for being too pessimistic and negative in terms of human social interaction, because human social interaction is not always face-threatening (also see Gu, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) argue that Brown and Levinson's framework is not a theory of politeness but rather is more accurately described as a theory of facework. In the same vein, Spencer-Oatey (2005) argues that politeness is a subjective judgement, which is not only influenced by face sensitivities but also by behaviour expectations and interactional goals.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson claim that positive politeness and negative politeness are mutually exclusive. Negative politeness is likely to be more polite than positive politeness because negative politeness is usually manifested in indirectness. Therefore, according to Brown and Levinson, universality in the principles governs the realization of indirect speech acts and there is a linear relationship between indirectness and politeness. However, many researchers do not agree with this judgement. Taking some research on such languages as Chinese (Wong, 1994), French (Held, 1989), the Israeli Sabra culture (Katriel, 1986), Spanish (Mir, 1993) and Polish (Wierzbicka, 1985) for example, Meier (2004) concludes that these studies show that directness can be the appropriate or polite way to make a request. These results hence defy the posited linear relationship between indirectness and politeness.

Second, Brown and Levinson's propagation of face also incurs much criticism from researchers who identify an Anglo-Western bias in this conceptualization (e.g. Gu, 1990; Ide, 1989, 1993; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989; Strecker, 1993). These researchers point out that Brown and Levinson's model fits a bias towards individualism in western culture which highlights individual territorial rights. The model is not compatible with traditional eastern culture which highlights collectivism. Within this culture, individuals have their places by obligations and rights in relation to others. For example, Matsumoto (1988, 1989) points out that the Japanese are more concerned with their relation to others rather than their own individual territory. Ide (1993) also illustrates that the Japanese concept of *wakimae* or 'discernment' is needed

to explain Japanese socially-constrained politeness or *teineisa*, a problem which Brown and Levinson's model cannot solve. Likewise, Gu (1990) asserts that Brown and Levinson's politeness concept does not correspond to the Chinese concept of *Limao* or to the Chinese perception of what constitutes a threat to negative face. Mao (1994) similarly argues that Brown and Levinson's concept of 'face' is quite different from the Chinese concepts of *miànzi* and *lian*.

A recent conceptualization of face is by Spencer-Oatey (2007) who explored some identity theories to provide a potential understanding of face. This proposal breaks away from Brown and Levinson's face theory that is limited to consideration of individuals. On the basis of social psychological theories like Simon's (2004) self-aspect model of identity and Brewer and Gardner's (1996) theory of levels of identity, she believes that both face and identity are related to an individual's attributes. Face and identity are similar from a cognitive perspective because both of them have to do with the self image of people. For that reason, different factors that constitute a person's identity are also likely to contribute to the constitution of a person's face. To illuminate this idea, Spencer-Oatey proposes that face analysis should be conducted from three perspectives - individual, relational, and collective perspectives. The approach, as He and Zhang (2011) point out, is especially suitable for analyzing and reconceptualising *Mianzi* in Chinese culture, which is multifaceted and thus demands research from multiple perspectives. Based on the collected data from a modern Chinese drama, He and Zhang (2011) give their support to Spencer-Oatey's face proposal that the Chinese concept of face is a holistic term which can be categorized into individual, relational, and group *Mianzi*.

Third, Brown and Levinson's distinction of the three factors, P (power), D (social distance) and R (ranked size of the imposition) that determine the degree of the FTA, and hence the politeness strategy needed, has also suffered from much criticism. Even Brown and Levinson (1987) themselves admit that the formula $W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$ is too simple. Some researchers (e.g. Holtgraves & Yang, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, 1993) have questioned the suitability of the model. For example, Spencer-Oatey (1993) finds that the 'weightiness' (combining social distance and tutor superordination and assuming the imposition is held constant) of the relationship between tutor-postgraduate

student is conceived to be greater by the British than the Chinese. This indicates British students will consider the relationship to be more face threatening than Chinese students. Following Brown and Levinson's model, the British are supposed to use more face-redressive or 'polite' strategies. However, as Spencer-Oatey argues, both groups of participants believe that Chinese students will be more concerned with redressive actions than British students. This finding thus adds doubts to the formula. It also suggests that, while approving the three variables might influence a speaker's choice of politeness levels, some other variables also impact on politeness. This suggestion is further confirmed by other researchers like Holtgraves (2005). In considering this problem, this study applies a broader model to study linguistic behaviour which incorporates more variables than Brown and Levinson, such as interpersonal relationships; contextual factors like cost-benefit considerations; interactional roles and communicative activity; and pragmatic conventions (cf. the guiding theoretical framework of the study).

2.3.2.3 Summary-Critical thinking on the traditional work

The three traditional perspectives on politeness are typically regarded as alternative explanation to the reasons why politeness occurs (because of social rules/maxims and face needs) (Fraser, 1990). They have some main common features which have incurred much criticism. First, all the three theories of politeness, to a high degree, have taken up Grice's Co-operative Principle as their theoretical departure. These politeness models are thus generally focused on politeness from a rational and predicative approach (Watts, 2010) which ignores the speakers' constructive roles. As Hatfield and Hahn (2010) note, traditional politeness theories, especially like the classic Brown and Levinson's model, "fail to show how language is not simply a reflection of social context but in fact actively constructs the context itself" (p.2). This shortcoming has been dealt with through discursive politeness theories, especially such as 'rapport-management' theory, and 'doing relational work' theory, which will be detailed in the following section.

Second, as Fraser (1990) points out, the traditional theories are insufficient in terms of their speech act focus, which hunt for politeness at the level of individual utterances (e.g. Brown and Levinson's focus on 'illocutionary acts'). Therefore, the traditional theory

could not sufficiently investigate the other face-related mechanisms manifested in discourse, such as the request emails under study.

Thirdly, as was mentioned above, the traditional theories of politeness have been criticised for ‘anglocentrism’ (Terkourafi, 2005, p. 240). Politeness studies, therefore, should be conducted on the basis of something beyond ‘anglocentrism’. This consideration has triggered a large number of studies to test the universality of politeness which is defined by the traditional theories. However, we need to be cautious about the static and absolute differentiation of cultures, such as western culture and eastern culture, and British culture and Chinese culture. It is obvious the differentiation treats culture as pan-culture, which may thus ignore different groups within it. According to Eelen (2001), politeness is never a stable concept and involves extremely different, discontinuous meanings within different discourses and participants working from within different discourses (discourse communities in the study, cf. Section 4.2.2).

Finally, the traditional theories of politeness implicitly or explicitly divide linguistic behaviour into two aspects: polite or impolite behaviour. Behaviour that is not considered polite is then implicitly interpreted as impolite. This view does not leave open the option for a type of relational work that is unmarked, i.e. neither being polite nor being impolite.

It is at these points that we should conduct research on politeness from alternative perspectives. Discursive politeness theories, which develop traditional theories, are thus employed for the current studies. It is necessary to emphasize here that the employment of discursive theories for the current study means traditional theories are still of high value. Theoretically, traditional theories have provided the terminology for discussing and exploring politeness phenomenon to discursive theories, such as “the cultural and historical relativity of ‘politeness’ [and] the concept of ‘face’ as a basis of politeness theory” (Watts, 2010, p.49). Practically, these traditional theories, like rule/maxim-based theories and face wants, could be used to interpret the rapport-management strategies in emails under study (cf. the guiding theoretical framework).

2.3.3 Discursive approach to politeness

Almost at the same time that the traditional view on politeness became popular, another approach to politeness developed out of a criticism of that traditional view (e.g. Escandell-Vidal, 1996, 1998; Fraser, 1975, 1990; Watts, 1989) in terms of a dynamic discourse approach. Though this research “has not had any impact comparable to that of the traditional theories on the politeness market” (Terkourafi, 2005, p.257), it has stimulated research on politeness from an alternative perspective. It has also provided some implications for the theories of rapport and management and relational work which are employed in the current study.

The conversational-contract (CC) view on politeness by Fraser (1975, 1990) and Fraser and Nolen (1981) is described here, for it is related to the current study. Similar to Locher and Watts’ theory, the CC view believes that politeness is norm-based. Fraser and Nolen assert that participants take part in an interaction with a ‘conversational contract’, i.e. the expected rights and obligations of the participants and encounters. The conversational contract is not static, but can be revised in the process of interaction. Within this framework, politeness is “operating within the then-current terms and conditions of the CC” (Fraser, 1990, p.233). It is the norm that is not noticed by the conversation participants. Being polite is not involved in making the hearer “feel good” as Lakoff and Leech claim, nor is it involved in making the hearer not “feel bad” which is asserted by Brown and Levinson. However, similar to the traditional politeness theories, the CC approach is still a dualistic view of politeness: politeness is the norm and is not commented on, while impoliteness, which constitutes a breach of this norm, is remarked on by interlocutors (Fraser, 1990).

In recent years, a coherent and powerful challenge to the traditional view of politeness has emerged from several researchers (Arundale, 2004, 2006; Eelen 2001; Locher 2004, 2006; Locher & Watts 2005; Mills 2003; Watts 2003, 2005). As Haugh (2005) points out, while these researchers study politeness from slightly different approaches, they employ a broadly similar paradigm of dynamic discourse to conduct politeness research. They are united in the following move in politeness research put forth by Watts (2005, p. xix):

A shift in emphasis away from the attempt to construct a model of politeness which can be used to predict when polite behaviour can be expected or to explain post-factum why it has been produced and towards the need to pay closer attention to how participants in social interaction perceive politeness.

From this quotation, it can be seen that a new view on politeness emerges as result of challenging the basic premises of the traditional view. These theories offer an alternative paradigm to approaching politeness as a social as well as a pragmatic phenomenon (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2010). Politeness is not prescriptive. It is process-viewed and evaluated in situational conversation. Nobody can predict the impact of linguistic expression until they understand the specific context where the linguistic expressions are used. Therefore, politeness is a dynamic concept (cf. Arudale, 2006; Haugh 2005). In considering these situations, researchers need to conduct qualitative studies for setting up empirical regularities in a bottom-up fashion.

The alternative paradigm approach to politeness is labelled as a “discursive approach to politeness” by Locher (2004, 2006), Locher and Watts (2005) and Watts (2003, 2005). As Locher (2010, p.520) concludes, the discursive approach “highlights the discursive notion of the concept of *politeness* ... and claims that politeness is a comment on relational work in a particular social practices or *communities of practice*”. According to Wenger (1998, p.73), a Community of Practice has three dimensions – “mutual engagement, joined enterprise, and a shared repertoire”, while in this study the participants are argued to form into three discourse communities (cf. Section 4.2.2) instead of communities of practice. This is because discourse communities have much in common with communities of practice in terms of their relatively voluntary nature of membership (Pogner, 2005). More importantly, I have chosen this approach because this study is focused on discourse analysis, “the aspect of a common discourse developed in order to be effective in the domain in question, rather than on ‘practice’, i.e. the aspect of common practice developed in order to be effective in the domain” (Pogner, 2005, p. 9).

At the same time, this study also labels the rapport view by Spence-Oatey (2000, 2008) as a discursive approach to politeness. This is because, as described in Section 1.2.1, the two theories are matching in some part, and more importantly, complementary to each other. Moreover, the rapport management framework “provides a useful set of tools to

help analyse (im)politeness from a discursive politeness perspective” (Mullany, 2011, p.141). The two discursive approaches are further discussed in the following part of this section.

2.3.3.1 Rapport-management view on politeness

In a series of research papers, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2008, and 2011) proposes and details how politeness could be examined from a rapport-management view. To gain a fuller understanding of this view, the review commences with the exploration of the definition of ‘rapport’.

Generally, rapport refers to “a friendly agreement and understanding between people” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2003). It plays a key role in social interaction because the occurrence of a high degree of rapport between persons can generate “powerful interpersonal influence and responsiveness” (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990, p.286).

It is widely acknowledged that rapport plays a significant role across all walks of life. For example, Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) describe how clinicians endeavour to develop rapport with patients; sellers make use of it to do a deal; and new friends make use of it to predict a future relationship with one another. LaFrance (1990) also highlights the importance of rapport to hypnotists, teachers and trainers, politicians and public physicians. In addition, the importance of rapport in education has been widely regarded (e.g., Cothran & Ennis 1997; Ehrman 1998; Ramsay 2005; to name just a few). As Cothran and Ennis (1997) emphasize, "the interactive nature of the teaching process is built on a social relationship between teacher and students" (p. 542).

The terminology of rapport has also been significant for linguistics studies in recent decades. In the eyes of some linguists, language is not only used for information transmission, but also for maintenance of social relations (e.g. Brown & Yule, 1983; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Brown and Yule (1983), language has transactional and interactional functions. The transactional function is for achieving concrete objectives. The interactional (or relational) function is for reaching

interpersonal goals. In a similar way, Halliday (1994) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) emphasize that people are social beings who use language not only to communicate facts but also to shape their identity in relation to their interactional partners. The interactional function is at an 'interpersonal' level of communication, which is opposed to the 'ideational' level of communication. In other words, interactional speech is aimed principally at managing social relations (i.e. rapport), as it makes it possible for interlocutors to construct their relationship and create an agreeable communication environment.

The interactional/interpersonal dimension of communication was defined by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2005, 2008) as 'rapport management', which refers to "the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p.3). The framework of rapport management follows Goffman's notion of face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [sic] by the line others assume that he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman, 1972, p.5). It develops the politeness theories of Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987). As Spencer-Oatey (2000) claims, the term 'politeness' is, on the one hand, confusing because politeness is a social judgement in the context, while it is often "interpreted as referring to the use of relatively formal and deferential language" (p.2). For example, as Spencer-Oatey illustrates, from the perspective of politeness, a sentence such as "Would you mind passing the salt?" would be classified as "more polite" than "Pass the salt, will you?" However, there are many occasions when it is more appropriate to use "Pass the salt, will you?" than "would you mind passing the salt?" (at home, to a family member, for example). Therefore, politeness is a social judgement, and speakers are judged to be polite or rude, depending on what they say in context. On the other hand, the term 'politeness' only accentuates the harmonious aspect of social relation, while the term of 'rapport management' involves the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations.

In addressing these problems, Spencer-Oatey (2000) proposed that rapport management is composed of two major elements: "the management of face and the management of sociality rights" (p.13). Face is separated by Spencer-Oatey into two interrelated aspects: 'quality face' and 'identity face' (p.13). Quality face refers to people's desire to

be positively evaluated by others according to their personal qualities. It is thus comparable to Brown and Levinson's positive face. On the other hand, identity face refers to "our desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles" (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p.14). Meanwhile, sociality rights consist of two components: 'equity rights' and 'association rights'. Equity rights refer to people's primary belief that they are entitled to personal consideration from others and to be treated fairly. Association rights are described as people's fundamental belief that they are entitled to be associated with others and in keeping with the type of relationship that they have with others.

In 2008, Spencer-Oatey refined the rapport management theory, adding other major element-interactional goals, which can be transactional and or interactional, into it. Therefore, rapport management is based on three major elements (bases) which are always dynamically negotiated by participants in the interaction: face sensitivities, sociality rights and interactional goals. It is evident that the framework of rapport management covers a broader area than the previous politeness theories. It addresses the criticisms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory from Matsumoto (1988) and Gu (1998). The criticisms are twofold: "that they have ignored the interpersonal or social perspective on face, and they have overemphasized the notion of individual freedom and autonomy" (Spence-Oatey, 2000, p.13). The framework of rapport management has thus endeavored to solve the two problems by an integration of a social or interdependent perspective to relation management and a distinction between face needs and sociality rights.

To sum up, the framework of rapport management is "more applicable to a wider variety of circumstances [of politeness research]" (Graham, 2007, p. 742). Moreover, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) has attached great importance to the major impact of cultural difference in language on choices of rapport-management strategies. She argued that one feature of the framework of rapport management lies in "contextual assessment norms" (2000, p.42), namely how people from different cultures assess different role relationships. Furthermore, cultural variations may occur in areas such as 'contextual assessment norms', 'sociopragmatic conventions', 'pragmalinguistic conventions', 'fundamental cultural values' and 'an inventory of rapport-management strategies'. And

these variations, which will be built into the theoretical framework, may be a major potential source to influence rapport-management resources.

In term of the present study, the framework of rapport management is believed to be especially fit for the analysis of the ways that email writers deal with potentially rapport-threatening requests because, as Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.15) maintains, it addresses both “face needs (where our sense of personal/social value is at stake), and sociality rights (where our sense of personal/social entitlements is at stake).” In the current study, face needs and sociality rights of interlocutors may be challenged by the request emails. This is because, on all occasions, there is an asymmetrical power relationship between students and university instructors (with instructors having higher status than students). The requests might cause the instructors to feel that they are being unduly imposed upon because of the students’/email writers’ lower ‘position power’ (Einstein & Humphreys, 2002, p.16). The request act would thus pose a threat to the recipients’ equity rights, which is believed by Spencer-Oatey (2008) to be a ‘base of rapport’. As a result, the email requests thus challenge rapport, which may force the email writers to work out how to maintain/enhance a harmonious relationship with the recipients. The email writers should select appropriate requestive strategies to attend to interlocutors’ face needs and to negotiate their mutually interwoven sociality rights. For example, the email writers might use indirect requestive strategies in head acts of request, which were realized by some typical syntactic and lexical mitigation modifiers like *I was wondering if you could...?* (more detailed analysis of the data cf. Sections 5.3.5 and 5.3.6). These strategies, as rapport-management strategies in illocutionary and stylistic domains, would mitigate threats to recipients’ ‘equity rights’ and upgrade their hierarchical ‘identity face’.

Meanwhile, the employment of the framework of rapport management could contribute a deeper and fuller understanding of rapport-management strategies in request emails. As Spencer-Oatey (2000) points out, politeness strategies, i.e. positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), mainly concern the illocutionary domain. Such a domain is only one of the five domains which construct the framework of rapport and its management. The five inter-related

domains of rapport management are described below (cf. Section 4.5 for detailing how to operationalize the first three domains in the study).

1) Illocutionary domain: it involves the rapport management implications of performing speech acts, such as apologies, requests, compliments and so on. As the example in the above paragraph indicates, the email writers could choose indirect or direct requestive strategies to make requests.

2) Discourse domain: it involves the content and structure of interactional discourse, such as the organization and sequencing of interactional content, incorporating topic content, switch, transition, and the inclusion or exclusion of topics. In relation to the current study, it involves how and what moves are preferred by email writers; and what rhetorical discourse structures are preferred.

3) Stylistic domain: it involves stylistic aspects such as choices of tone, genre-appropriate lexis and syntax, address terms and honorifics. As examples in the above paragraph show, the email writers in this study might prefer to use mitigating syntactic and lexical modifiers to soften their request. In addition, email writers might be expected to choose appropriate address terms and honorifics to address the recipients' hierarchical 'identity face'. For example, in Chinese cultural context, email writers would prefer to use the honorific *you* to address their teachers.

4) Participation domain: it concerns procedural aspects, such as turn-taking, the inclusion or exclusion of parties in discussions, and the [non-] use of back-channels. This domain is not closely relevant to the study, for the emails are regarded as monographs. It is thus not focused on, though it is touched on slightly when an exploration of requestive perspective is conducted.

5) Non-verbal domain: it relates to aspects such as proxemics, gestures, etc. Since emails are presented in written forms, this domain is not closely relevant to the study.

In line with the definitions of the five domains, it is observed that, if an individual wants to create or maintain a harmonious relationship with the other interlocutor, he/she can

resort to other ‘rapport-management strategies’ catering for other domains rather than only for the illocutionary domain. For example, an individual could rely on the use of honorific address terms falling into the stylistic domain, or deductive rhetorical structure in the discourse domain, to build or maintain a harmonious relationship with the other interlocutors.

2.3.3.2 Relational work view on politeness-Locher and Watts

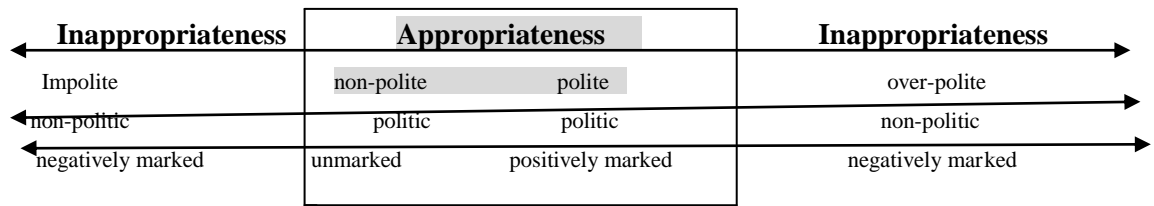
The following section is focused on reviewing the relational work perspective on politeness proposed by Locher and Watts. Besides Locher and Watts, many other researchers also use the term ‘relational’ to examine politeness (e.g. Arundale, 2006, 2010; Holmes & Marra, 2004; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005). These scholars take different stances in spite of the same term ‘relational’. For example, Holmes and Marra (2004), and Holmes and Schnurr (2005) concentrate their attention on the ‘relational practice’ explicitly in working contexts. This view, as Spencer-Oatey (2011) remarks, puts too much weight on reporting authentic data but ignores constructing a conceptual framework for their approach. Arundale (2006) defines the term ‘relational’ as “indexing the dynamic phenomena of relating as they emerge dynamically in person-to-person communication (p.202). He further defines ‘relational’ as a connection and/or separation of interlocutors. It is at this point that Spencer-Oatey (2011) criticizes Arundale because she thinks the definition is too narrow and overlooks the evaluative or affective reactions that interlocutors experience.

A comprehensive ‘relational’ view on politeness is proposed by Locher (2004, 2006), Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) and Watts (1989, 2003, 2005), who take a discursive approach to politeness. In their view, ‘relational work’ refers to “all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice” (Locher & Watts, 2005, p11). The key contribution of the definition lies in the fact that it rectifies the binary cutting of linguistic behaviour into politeness and impoliteness by most literature on this subject (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987; Escandell-Vidal 1996; Fraser 1975, 1990; Fraser & Nolen, 1981; Meier, 1995). As Watts (1989, 2003) explains, human beings do not restrict themselves to forms of cooperative

communication in which face-threatening is mitigated, i.e. politeness. They will adapt their relational work to what is considered appropriate according to the kind of verbal behaviour in which individuals engage. Therefore, the implicit or explicit dichotomy of politeness by the previous studies, as Watts (1989, 2003) maintains, has left out the type of relational work which is unmarked, i.e., neither polite nor impolite out of consideration. According to Watts, this behaviour which is neither polite nor impolite is just as appropriate to the current interaction.

The other great contribution by Locher and Watts is the distinction between first-order and second-order politeness (or politeness 1 and politeness 2). The distinction was first drawn by Watts (1992) that first-order politeness is regarded as the understanding of lay persons, while second-order politeness refers to the constructs of theoretical politeness models proposed in the literature. Therefore, politeness 1 is a people's everyday definition and meta-linguistic judgement, which would thus cover specific cultural-norms. Politeness 2 is a "technical term which covers face-saving/constituting behaviour irrespective of whether this would be so classified by the non-initiated" (Terkourafi, 2005, p.240). According to this distinction, the terms such as 'impolite', 'polite' or 'appropriate' are inherently evaluative and normative rather than being imposed by second-order principles. Spencer-Oatey (2005) also agrees that "the behavioural conventions, norms and protocols" (p.99) can provide a fuller insight into politeness understanding.

Locher and Watts (2005) and Locher (2006) proposed four spectrums of relational work, which developed Watts' (1989, 2003) original proposal that there are three spectrums of relational work: impolite, appropriate (politic) and polite behaviour. In the new proposal, they added a spectrum to the relational work, i.e. over-politeness which is inappropriate/non-politic. Figure 2.2 in next page shows the aspects of the spectra of relational work with respect to judgements on (im)politeness, appropriateness, and markedness.



The continuum of relational work

Figure 2.2 Relational work with respect of judgements on (im)politeness, appropriateness, and markedness (adapted from Locher 2006, p.256)

As Figure 2.2 indexes, relational work is composed of two broad categories: appropriate behaviour to the ongoing social interaction which is regarded as politic; and inappropriate behaviour to the ongoing social interaction which is regarded as non-politic. Here appropriateness is a first order concept because it is in the lay person’s perception; in the current study it refers in particular to the email writers’ perception of the relational work under study. Politic behaviour is a second-order politeness term because it is not in everyday use. As this study is basically concerned with judgement of the linguistic behaviour in terms of email writers’ perception of appropriateness in emails, the distinction between appropriateness and inappropriateness governs our understanding of the different kinds of relational work.

As Locher (2006) further points out, behaviour that matches with participants’ normative expectations is recognized as unmarked and goes largely unnoticed. This kind of behaviour is labelled unmarked/politic/appropriate (Column 2, Figure 2.2), and this behaviour might not undergo evaluation and comments by interactants since it is the norm. Behaviour that breaches normative expectations is noted as marked and can be perceived in three ways: as being negative/violating social norms when it is judged as impolite/inappropriate/non-politic (Column 1, Figure 2.2), or when it is judged overly polite/inappropriate/non-politic (Column 4, Figure 2.2), and as being polite/appropriate/politic (Column 3, Figure 2.2) when it is positively judged. Moreover, the lines with bi-directional angles in the figure indicate that assessments of relational work that need to be made by participants are dynamic and negotiable. In other words, the assessments can “shift considerably, reflecting the different norm of appropriateness in different social events and speech communities, as well as changes over time” (Locher, 2006, p.256).

According to Haugh (2007), the fourfold categorization seems not to be clear because researchers may feel that it is hard to find whether the categorization corresponds to participants' perception (i.e. first order politeness) or is utilized as an analytical framework for researchers (i.e. second-order politeness). However, Locher (2010) and Watts (2010) are more likely to support research into participants' judgements of politeness because they emphasize the benefits of a first order approach.

2.3.3.3 Summary

To summarize, discursive theories of politeness incorporate social-theoretical insights and social-psychological constructs into their study (Terkourafi, 2005). More specifically, this discursive approach to politeness can be summarized as being

...concerned with the contextual analysis of the participants, including both speaker and hearer, whether the participants themselves classify the utterance as polite or impolite, how they come to make those judgements, and what information and cues inform those decisions about whether someone has been polite and impolite. Thus, it can be seen that there has been a shift from analysing politeness as a system of rational choices made by a model speaker, to an analysis of the way that choices about what counts as politeness or impoliteness are made in a particular context. This discursive approach is much messier than the Brown and Levinson system, but the analysis is more able to penetrate the intricacies involved in culturally-situated communicative behaviour (Linguistic Politeness Research Group [eds.], 2011, p.5).

Rooted in the criticism of the traditional view on politeness, the discursive politeness theories, nevertheless, are not immune from criticism either. Some criticism, which will be detailed in Section 2.3.4, is very sharp and can even undermine the foundation of these theories. In addition, due to their novelty, these theories still have not been theoretically elaborated in all their aspects. Moreover, compared to the copious amount of empirical research carried out to test traditional politeness theories, there is far less empirical research building on these discursive politeness theories (cf. Chapter 3 on empirical research). These problems are illuminated in the following sections.

2.3.4 Synthesizing politeness theories for the current study

The following part reviews some key problems existing in the two theories of politeness, especially in Locher and Watt's theoretical framework. To address these problems, it is necessary to take the more unusual aspects of each treatment and adapt these accounts

for the current study because they are argued to be complementary to each other. The combination of these two theories into the study is thus expected to address the problems existing in the two theories respectively. Finally, the adaptation and combination of these two theories into the present study is proposed.

2.3.4.1 Rethinking the criticism of discursive politeness theories

The most acute criticism of Locher and Watts' theories of politeness is on the distinction of politeness 1 and politeness 2. Terkourafi (2005) and Xie et al (2005) criticize the fact that the theory puts too much emphasis on politeness 1, i.e. the lay person's perception of politeness. They ignore politeness 2 which belongs to researchers, scholars or even experts expressing politeness. This "runs the danger of becoming an exercise in the lexical semantics of the lexeme 'politeness', rather than in any way enhancing our knowledge about the phenomena we wish to study" (Terkourafi,2005, p.242). Furthermore, Xie et al (2005) criticize the distinction of politeness 1 and politeness 2 because they claim it is very hard to draw a line between 'lay person' and 'expert'.

In my view, politeness 1 and politeness 2 are complementary to each other and thus should be treated in a balanced way. As a researcher, we firstly pay attention to discovering the actual participants' understanding and concerns of linguistically appropriate behaviour in interactions. This will help the researchers to present the participants' face meaning and actions, not the analysts' (Arundel, 2006). Therefore, the linguistically appropriate behaviour will be judged by the researcher in terms of the norms and expectations of the individuals at a local level (the discourse community proposed in the present study) rather than universally. Furthermore, the existing politeness theories (often regarded as politeness 2) could hence be used to evaluate politeness 1. In this situation, it is possible that the participants' perception/realizations of politeness in emails (politeness 1) might not correspond to the existing politeness theories (politeness 2) (more detail cf. Chapter 7). In this case, the research follows Hatfield and Hahn's (2010) advice that the researcher should try to make the participants' perception a priority when interpreting their linguistic behaviours.

The other major criticism of Locher and Watts' theory of politeness lies in the way they seem to claim that a predictive theory of (im)politeness is impossible (e.g. Watt, 2003). As Terkourafi (2005) noted, it is impracticable to reject a predictive theory of politeness because prediction is actually constitutive of any theory. A prior denial of a predictive theory is to deny the possibility of theorizing about politeness at any level. The politeness 1 level will not be exceptional. Anyway, we cannot expect the interlocutors to answer our metalinguistic questions, i.e. judgement on politeness, if they do not have a folk prediction of politeness.

The solution to this problem, in my view, is to admit the function of prediction in building up politeness theories. While we appreciate Locher and Watts' research is structured from bottom to top to discover linguistic norms, we can also predict that there are some factors, i.e. face sensitivities, and behaviour expectation in Spencer-Oatey's terms, which might be cultural and give rise to discursive struggling and norms of politeness (cf. the theoretical framework in Section 2.4)

The way to overcome the problems in Locher and Watts' theory is to combine Spencer-Oatey's ideas in the study. In what follows, a comparison between the two theories is made. It is argued that Spencer-Oatey's framework can be complementary to Locher and Watts' in spite of slightly different approaches taken up by them. Therefore, they can be reconciled and hence be adopted simultaneously for the current study.

2.3.4.2 A comparison between Spencer-Oatey's and Locher and Watts' theories

Both Locher and Spencer-Oatey admit that their theories overlap to some extent. Spencer-Oatey (2011) focuses her concern on the affective quality of relations which she labels as 'rapport'. She also believes that her rapport management approach to linguistic behaviour is similar to Locher and Watts' approach, for both of them stress the importance of participants' perceptions. Additionally, Locher (2010) also argues that Spencer-Oatey's definition of rapport management is the same as their understanding of relational work because both definitions include "negotiations of harmonious relations" (p. 528). Moreover, she especially appreciates Spencer-Oatey's research framework concerned with the perceptions and judgements of rapport

management. As mentioned earlier, Spencer-Oatey (2008) posited that these judgements are based to a large extent on three key elements: face sensitivities, sociality rights and obligation, and interactional goals.

While the rapport-management theory is generally identified with the theory of relational work, it is easily seen that this theory is more balanced than Locher and Watt's for the way it adopts many ideas from traditional politeness theories. For example, she extends face constructs into a wider field, i.e. quality face and identity face. Moreover, she argues Brown and Levinson's politeness model only deals with one of her five rapport-management domains. All these characteristics, in my view, have made this theory fuller and more workable than the other discursive politeness theories.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Spencer-Oatey's approach is immune to criticism. Spencer-Oatey (2011) herself reflects that her approach to studying rapport management is different from Locher and Watts' relational work in that she focuses on conceptualisation and attends less to the detailed analysis of discourse. Specifically, she focuses her concern on "the affective quality of relations", which is labelled as 'rapport' referring to "people's subjective perceptions of (dis)harmony, smoothness-turbulence and warmth-antagonism in interpersonal relations" (p.3). Furthermore, contrary to Locher and Watts' concentration on interlocutors' assessments of other participants' linguistic behaviour, Spencer-Oatey focuses on the interlocutors' assessments of "the affective quality they subjectively and dynamically experience in their relations with others" (p. 3). In other words, Locher and Watts emphasize hearer/receiver's perception of linguistic behaviour, while Spencer-Oatey shows more concern for the speaker/writer's own perception of linguistic behaviour.

2.3.4.3 Conclusion-Incorporating Spencer-Oatey's and Locher and Watts' theories into the current study

In considering the advantages and disadvantages of Spencer-Oatey's and Locher and Watt's theories, I will integrate and adapt both into the theoretical framework of the present study. On the one hand, this study highlights the 'work' that individuals invest in negotiating harmonious relationship with others. Therefore, the study of politeness 1

is placed firmly within social contexts. Politeness aspects are thus to be accounted for as a social phenomenon, rather than as only pragmatic phenomenon. In the light of these points, the idiosyncratic nature of request emails and factors behind their differing linguistic behaviours will be focused on and investigated. To address these aims, Locher and Watts' relational work is obviously suitable to build on.

On the other hand, while Locher and Watt's theory is employed for the study, it is necessary to pay attention to some aspects that this theory cannot fully tackle. As mentioned above, to deepen our understanding of linguistic behaviour from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives, the individual's conceptions of appropriate behaviour should be generalized and abstracted. In this way, the shared norm rather than contested norm needs to be concluded. Also, it is necessary to use some predictive factors to interpret the linguistic behaviour. Spencer-Oatey's rapport-management framework, as discussed above, could be used to tackle these issues. Specifically, her proposal of five interrelated domains of rapport management can be used to fully investigate the linguistic behaviour in the emails under study. Furthermore, her proposal of the series of predictive factors (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2005, 2007) could be used to interpret linguistic behaviour in emails from both social and pragmatic perspectives. Finally, in this study, due to some operational difficulties of authentic data collection, I accept Spencer-Oatey's argument that linguists should show more concern for the speaker/writer's own perception of linguistic behaviour. Therefore, I will focus my attention on the email writers' perception of the linguistic behaviour in emails, rather than the perceptions of email recipients. However, as a linguist, I will also make some evaluation of the observed linguistic behaviour in terms of the continuum of relational work proposed (also cf. the guiding theoretical framework).

2.3.5 Summary

This section reviews and compares traditional theories and some discursive politeness theories and evaluates their advantages and disadvantages. Both of them have deepened our research insights into politeness. The considerable variation of approaches to politeness from the two camps has motivated the current study. As Watts (2010) points out, although discursive politeness theories are "high on the research agenda", "we are

still far from a paradigm change” from speech act theory to discursive theory (p.6). Therefore, this study aims to provide some support to these discursive politeness theories. Furthermore, it adopts a balanced approach, i.e., the combination of two discursive politeness theories, to study linguistic behaviour in request emails, which is thus expected to compensate for the shortcomings of each of them alone.

To gain a holistic picture of how the two discursive politeness models are incorporated in the current study, a guiding theoretical framework is constructed and illuminated in the following section.

2.4 The Guiding Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework guiding the study is proposed to fill the gap of previous genre analyses that have seldom integrated discursive politeness models. As described in Chapter 1, a framework needs to be developed to facilitate our understanding of the writing practice of request emails in different cultures from a multi-layered perspective. It is attempted on the basis of the notion of genre analysis by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993, 2004) and presents a holistic dimension to the study of communicative purposes as a central task. Meanwhile, by synthesizing the frameworks of rapport management and relational work, the main factors which will influence the email writers’ choices of rapport-management/relational-work strategies will be disclosed. It also provides a way for linguistics to evaluate these strategies. The model of genre analysis on the request emails in the study is displayed in the following page.

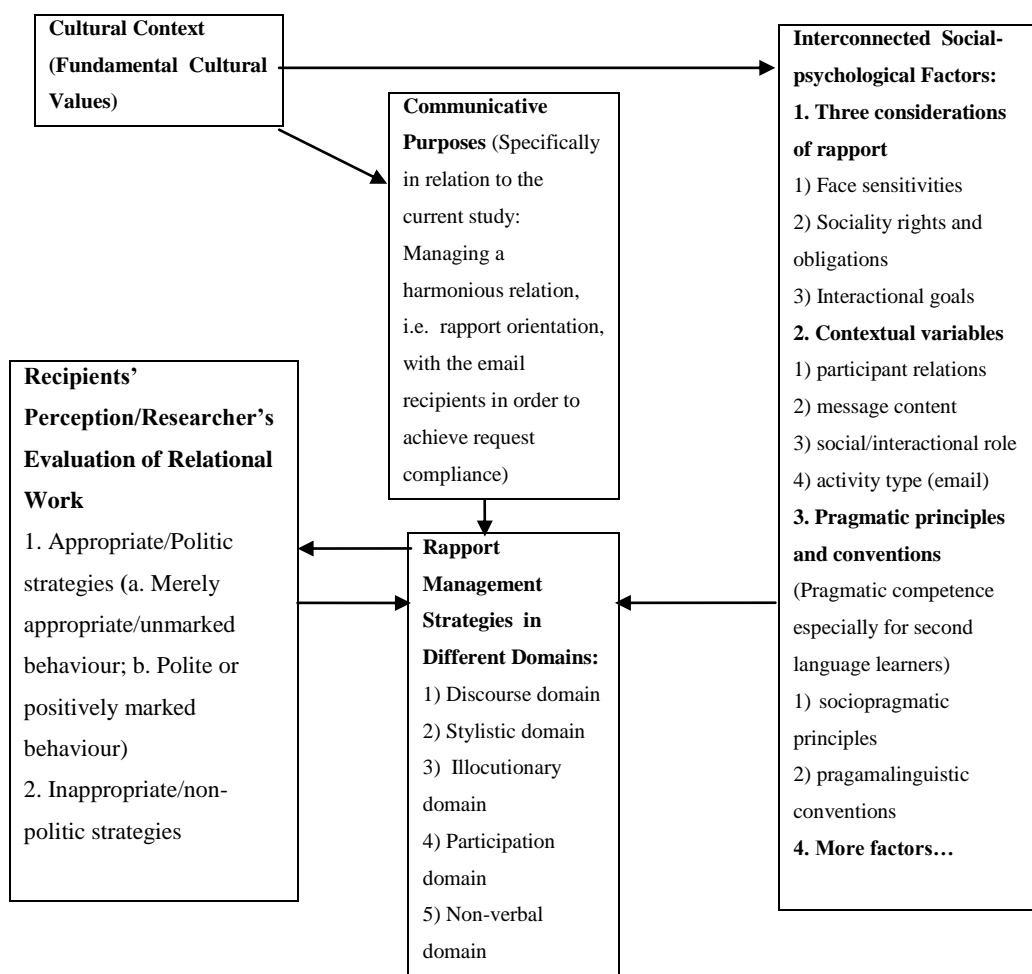


Figure 2.3 The model of genre analysis on request emails

As Figure 2.3 shows, the theoretical framework comprises five related components which formulate the following process: Cultural Contexts, i.e. fundamental cultural values (Component 1), which could shape the choices of Communicative Purposes (Component 2) and Interconnected Social-psychological Factors of rapport management (Component 3); Component 2, together with Component 3 which will further influence Rapport-management Strategies lying in five interrelated domains (Component 4); the performance of rapport management which provides a protocol for Recipients' Perception/Researchers' Evaluation of Relational Work (Component 5), or, in turn, recipients and researchers could provide a perception or evaluation of relational work in the performance. A more detailed description of the theoretical framework is made below.

First of all, Swales' (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) approach to genre study informs this theoretical framework. Requestive emails under study are regarded as a genre which is a "recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs" (Bhatia, 1993, p.13). Furthermore, according to Swales (1990), communicative purposes can be realized in different layers of a text, such as moves, steps and linguistic realizations. A move is regarded as a communicative event, and a step is a lower unit under a move. In relation to the diagrams for the theoretical framework, moves and steps fall into Component 4, i.e. rapport-management strategies.

Specifically in relation to the email data collected for the current study, the communicative purposes of the emails are mainly involved in managing a harmonious relationship between writers and recipients in order to achieve request compliance. The communicative purposes can be realized by rapport-management strategies in five interrelated domains: discourse domain; stylistic domain; illocutionary domain; participation domain; and non-verbal domain (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). The discourse domain involves the discourse content and discourse structure of emails, which, according to Swales and Bhatia, are mainly concerned with moves (steps) analysis. The stylistic domain is mainly concerned with choices of tone, choices of genre-appropriate lexis and syntax and choices of address terms, all of which roughly involve linguistic realizations of the moves (steps). The illocutionary domain is mainly concerned with speech act realization, which is also involved in linguistic realizations of the special move-head acts of request in emails. The participation domain mainly concerns the procedural aspects of an interchange such as turn taking. Finally, the non-verbal domain concerns non-verbal aspects of an interchange.

The investigation of the emails under study is mainly focused on the first three domains (more detailed discussions cf. Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). These are actually a reflection of Swales' top-down analysis of various layers of a genre, i.e. from moves to steps and finally to linguistic forms. Secondly, the model shows that the communicative purposes are conditioned by cultural contexts. For example, members from different cultural contexts might not have the same concern for each component of rapport, i.e. face

sensitivities, and sociality rights and obligations, though they do have the general aim of managing a harmonious relationship with the recipients.

Thirdly, the communication purposes, together with the interconnected socio-psychological factors, which are also conditioned by culture, give rise to specific realization of genres. In terms of this study, the realization is fulfilled through rapport-management strategies in different domains. The socio-psychological factors are primarily in relation to the central argument by Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 13) that “rapport management entails three main interconnected components: the management of face, the management of sociality rights and obligations, and the management of interactional goals”. Depending on the three bases, email writers might develop rapport-management strategies in different ways. For example, if someone requests a reference letter from their teacher to apply for a job, (s)he may have different judgements on the teacher’s sociality rights. (S)He might or might not believe the teacher has obligations to write such a reference. Depending upon their judgement of the sociality rights, (s)he might use different rapport-management strategies in her/his emails.

At the same time, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) acknowledges the complexity of rapport management in communication. Interconnected with the three bases, other factors like context variables (i.e. participant relations, message content, social/interactional role and activity type); pragmatic principles and conventions (i.e. sociopragmatic principles and pragmalinguistic conventions); and some other more variables (i.e. gender, these variables are not considered in the study), also play important roles in influencing rapport-management use. More specifically, as Spencer-Oatey (2008) shows, a great number of empirical studies have proved that power and distance are key variables to participants relations, which further influence requestive strategies/rapport-management strategies under study. Furthermore, in the study, the message content, which refers to the requestive aims of the email, together with the teacher/student role and the place of the communication, i.e. email, are interconnected to influence choices of rapport-management strategies. Finally, some sociopragmatic principles such as people’s perceived sociality rights and obligations, and pragmalinguistic conventions like performance of speech acts in different cultural groups, also influence choices of

rapport-management strategies. In relation to the CESs under study, their knowledge of pragmatic principles and conventions/pragmatic competence will influence their choices.

Finally, as shown in the left-bottom column (Component 5) in Figure 2.3, the realization of these strategies (or moves and steps and linguistic forms) might undergo a perception or evaluation by emails recipients and researchers of linguistics. Linguists could make an evaluation of the emails to judge the relational work, i.e. to differentiate unmarked/appropriate and marked linguistic behaviour. According to Locher and Watts (2005), linguistic behaviour is to be judged as appropriate to the ongoing social interaction which is regarded as politic; and inappropriate to the ongoing social interaction which is regarded as non-politic. In the present study, all the participants judged that their request emails were appropriate. Therefore, the evaluation work is mainly concerned with judgements on which linguistic behaviours are open to recipients' interpretation as polite depending upon the factors considered above, relative to those perceived as merely appropriate/politic linguistic behaviour (more detail cf. Chapter 6).

To sum up, based on the literature review of theoretical constructs, i.e. cultural dimensions, and politeness theories, Figure 2.3 summarizes the set of factors that interact to provide a framework for interpreting the work that goes into sending and receiving emails. It argues that socio-psychological factors are cultural concepts and play important roles in the concept of genre. It develops a new genre-base model to analyze, explain and evaluate rapport-management/relational-work strategies in the request emails.

2.5 Summary

In addressing research necessities described briefly in Chapter 1, this chapter has detailed cultural dimensions and politeness theories for building a theoretical framework for the current study. It has explained that communication is a very complicated process to actualize specific purposes. The study will focus on an investigation into the interactional (relational) aims of request email. The aims, together with some interconnected socio-psychological factors (three bases of rapport, other

contextual factors, etc.), are cultural concepts that will give rise to different rapport-management strategies. Furthermore, the chapter has dealt with the operation of the two discursive politeness theories, rapport management and relational work, to illustrate their special contribution to the theoretical framework.

In the next chapter, a further review is conducted on requests and request emails, together with looking at Spencer-Oatey's and Locher and Watt's politeness theories from an empirical perspective. The review is expected to strengthen the validity of the theoretical framework constructed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 Empirical Research Context

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews previous empirical studies on requests and particularly on request emails. Meanwhile, to deepen our understanding of the relevant empirical studies, it provides some research background on requests and request emails. The review provides much insight into the current study. In addition, the chapter explores previous studies which built on frameworks of rapport management and doing relational work. Through this exploration, further insight is generated on why and how the two frameworks are employed in the present study.

3.2 Research on Requests

In the research tradition, requests are predominantly investigated from the perspective of speech acts, especially from the speech act theory of Searle (1969, 1979), and from face-view politeness theory (cf. Kasper, 2006). All these studies have provided a baseline for the present study. Therefore, this section first discusses the relationship between requests and politeness. In addition, it reviews previous research on requests and politeness in the English and Chinese languages. Finally, this section draws out some implications from the review for the present study.

3.2.1 Requests and politeness

Request behaviour is regarded as a face-threatening act (FTA) (Brown and Levinson, 1987). As mentioned in Chapter 2, face is categorized into positive and negative face. Positive face is defined as the need by all humans to be appreciated, while negative face is the desire not to be imposed upon. Scollon and Scollon (2001) have developed Brown and Levinson's face theory, because they considered that it overemphasizes individuals' freedom and autonomy (also see Matsumoto, 1988). They define face from social or interpersonal perspectives and hence redefine the two face aspects as involvement face and independent face. Involvement face refers to a person's right and need to be considered as a normal, contributing, or supporting member of society. In contrast, independence face emphasizes the individuality of the participants, which means

individuals have the right not to be completely dominated by group or social values, and to be free from imposition by others.

Making a request, according to Chen (2001), mainly poses a threat to the hearer's negative face because the speaker is imposing his/her needs on the hearer. It may also pose a threat to the speaker's positive face as it might reduce the speaker's positive image. Alternatively, the speech act might pose a threat to the hearer's independent face and the speaker's involvement face (identity face and quality face respectively, in terms of Spencer-Oatey (2000)). Therefore, the speaker should try to minimize the threat to the hearer's negative (independent/identity face) or their own positive (involvement/quality) face to realize his/her request goal.

Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987) assume that politeness is generally positively correlated with indirectness. Put another way, an increasing degree of indirectness generally leads to an increase in politeness; or to increases in the level of politeness equal to increasing degree in indirectness. According to this assertion, in the following two sentences selected from the emails under study, the first sentence is obviously more polite than the second, for the first one gives an option to the university instructor not to act and thus minimizes the negative face threat.

1...., *but I was wondering if you would add me to the MOLE list so I...* (ESs, NO.4)

2. *I do hope I could meet you sometime next week.* (CESs, NO.1)

As indicated in Chapter 2, the degree of politeness in the request required in reducing the threat to the face is principally decided by three factors: the relative power (P) of the speaker and hearer; the social distance (D) of them; the absolute ranking (R) of the imposition; and the holistic effect of the three variable in a particular culture (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987) For example, it is assumed that a higher power status of the hearer will lead to a higher degree of indirectness in making requests by the speaker. In the same vein as Brown and Levinson, some other researchers have made some slight modifications to this framework. For example, Leech (1983) regards that social distance is composed of a series of psychologically real factors such as age, gender, status, degree of intimacy, social class, occupation and ethnicity. These factors could be

combined together to determine the overall degree of respectfulness in a given speech situation, i.e. the speech act request under study. Thomas (1995) adds one more factor to Brown and Levinson's formula: the relative rights and obligations between interlocutors.

3.2.2 Empirical studies on requests

As Yeung (1997) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010) review, Brown and Levinson's conceptual framework of politeness has been the most useful in generating empirical speech acts research, especially the speech act of request. Based on the three variables (P, D, R), an extensive amount of empirical research has been conducted to provide evidence for the nature of the relationship between politeness and indirect requests across a range of languages. Moreover, a lot of research has been conducted in the Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) field to investigate whether learners of English can understand and use indirectness/politeness in performing the speech act of request in the same way as native speakers of English,

Landmark research on the linear relationship was conducted in the CCSARP by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), who utilized the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in five different situations to examine the level of (in)directness of the requests made by native speakers of different languages (Argentinean Spanish, Australian English, Canadian French, German and Hebrew). They found that choices of (in)direct requestive strategies are closely related to the speakers' cultural background. The Australian native-English speakers tend to use conventionally indirect requestive strategies, while native speaker of Hebrews or other languages do not have the same kind of tendency. This finding partly supports Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) assumption, in that indirectness is positively correlated with politeness in Greek and English, but not necessarily in Hebrew.

For the English language, it is generally assumed that there is a linear relationship between politeness and indirect requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), though this assumption needs to be made with some caution (cf. Blum-Kulka, 1987; Wierzbicka, 2003). English culture is commonly characterized as a culture with a negative politeness

orientation which stresses avoiding impositions and redressing threats to face (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2003, 2004, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 1983; Sifianou, 1992, 2001; Wierzbicka, 1991). In general situations, English speakers prefer to express requests more elaborately and indirectly. They usually place very high restrictions on bald-on-record requestive strategies. However, in some special contexts, the assumption of the one-to-one relationship between politeness and indirectness in English can be invalid.

With respect to Chinese, research into the speech act of request, in particular to their linguistic expressions, is nevertheless limited (Kasper & Zhang, 1995; Wong, 2000; Zhan, 1992; Zhang, 1995a, 1995b). It has been found that the speech act is greatly different in its manifestation from that in English because it is to some extent “a projection of Chinese culture and the psychological features of the Chinese people” (Zhan, 1992, p.7). After examining requests from Chinese novels, Zhan (1992) found that native Chinese speakers prefer to make direct on-record requests, i.e. using few internal modifications but many external modifications in requests. This is opposite to English requests in which the internal modifications seem to be obligatory while the external modifications are optional (Faerch & Kasper, 1989).

Zhan’s findings were confirmed by later research on other sources of request data (e.g. Zhang’s (1995b) and Wong’s (2000) study on requests collected from DCT). Chen (2001) gives an interpretation to the manifestation of the Chinese speech act of request. She points out that this is a noteworthy phenomenon influenced by Chinese culture, in which Chinese indirectness in polite requests is not realized with syntactic structure at sentence level. It is usually marked with a series of supportive moves at the discourse level. This indirect and inductive way of requesting in Chinese is regarded as showing speakers’ respect and consideration for the hearer (also cf. Gu, 1990). This manifestation will be specified in the next section when dealing with the rhetorical structure of emails.

A relatively new research trend falls into the area of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) which has been extensively investigating the ability of learners of English to understand and use indirectness and politeness in performing the speech act request (Hendriks,

2008; Trosborg, 1995). The research in ILP has primarily been concerned with probing the learners' use of pragmatic competence and, to a lesser extent, learners' development of pragmatics competence (Hendriks, 2010). Most of the research is based on the CCSARP framework (e.g. Hendriks, 2002; Trosborg, 1995). These studies have achieved similar findings, namely non-native speakers perform differently from native speakers in performing requests, such as non-native speakers using fewer lexical and syntactic modifiers than those of native speakers. In addition, it is found that non-native speakers may feel it difficult to adjust the level of politeness to situational variations in requesting behaviour.

All these studies have shown that non-native speakers may exhibit not only pragmalinguistic failure but also sociopragmatic failure. Similar findings were also yielded by studies which compared the strategies and the corresponding linguistic forms of oral and written requests made by Chinese learners of English. For example, Kirkpatrick (1991) finds that Chinese learners of English have different performances of the speech act requests from those of native English speakers. The Chinese have no clear preference for direct or indirect request strategies in head acts, but they have a high preference for indirect sequence.

3.2.3 Summary and implications for the present study

Previous studies, which are mainly based on speech act theory and Brown and Levinson's politeness framework, contribute a lot to the present study. First, the above-reviewed studies, following the CCSARP framework, have distinguished three dimensions of request modification which may contribute to the politeness values of linguistic action. They are: directness; external modification of the core request (supportive moves such as pre-requests and justifications); and internal (mitigating and aggravating) modification, which can operate both on the core request and on external supporters. The three dimensions have provided a baseline for researchers to compare the requestive strategies across different languages. At the same time, they will be used by the current study for investigating rapport management strategies in different domains of emails. More specifically, external modification corresponds to rapport-

management strategies in discourse domain. Directness and internal modification are relevant with rapport-management strategies in illocutionary and stylistic domains.

Furthermore, the association of politeness and indirectness has been revealed to vary cross-linguistically and even across different groups within a language. It is this point that will motivate more research on the speech act request in different languages and cultures. This point is also of particular interest in the present study. Finally, as reviewed earlier, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, especially their formula for the calculation of Weightiness, is employed by most of the studies, particularly for investigating the association between language use and the contextual variables power, distance and imposition. These have formed an effective starting point, as they enable us to become familiar with how the social variables can influence people's choices of requestive strategies. However, there are some inadequacies inherent in the empirical studies reviewed above. They are discussed below:

Firstly, in terms of research methodology, most studies, especially the studies on requestive strategies by Chinese speakers, are mainly collected through discourse-completion tests (DCT) (e.g. Lee, 2004a, 2005; Wong, 2000). Relatively little research on requests has been performed in a natural spontaneous context. The DCT, as Kasper (2000) points out, has practical methodological and theoretical advantages over the field study because it can collect a large sample and a prototype of the variants occurring in the individual's actual speech. In addition, it is contended by Kasper and Rose (2002) that the DCT could provide useful information about speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms and about their sociopragmatic knowledge, if the DCT could be carefully designed. However, despite these advantages, the DCT has suffered extensive criticism (e.g. Bou-Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2005; Mey, 2004), especially in relation to the construct validity of such tasks for exploring discourse features of pragmatic performance. For example, under DCT circumstances, research participants might be expected to base their responses upon stereotypes of the recipient.

The key problem of the DCT may be that participants' behaviour in elicited situations is not that of real situations because the stakes are so low, or absent (Weasenforth &

Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002). In considering this problem, pragmatics researchers must find ways to collect and examine authentic data as much as possible.

In addition, a closer look at previous studies on speech act of request finds that research into the requests made by Chinese native speakers is very limited. In addition, while existing studies are predominantly focused on the linguistic forms of requests in the Chinese language (e.g. Kasper & Zhang, 1995; Wong; 2000; Zhan, 1992; Zhang, 1995b), few studies like Lee (2005) and Lin (2009), have focused on lexicogrammatical features of request. Moreover, few studies have compared the strategies and the corresponding linguistic forms of requests made by native English speakers and Chinese English speakers.

To sum up, previous studies on the speech act request have predominantly taken the speech act theories and traditional politeness theories as a theoretical departure. Most of the studies have followed the coding schema and the method design of the CCSARP from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives. These studies, as we reviewed above, have achieved important findings and are likely to benefit future studies. However, several inadequacies have also been found from the review and thus are to be addressed.

3.3 Request Emails

This section first describes previous studies on emails from multiple perspectives and the importance of emails as an interpersonal communication medium, especially its use in academia. Furthermore, it focuses on reviewing previous studies on request emails between students and university instructors. Finally, on the basis of the review, this section points out some inadequacies of previous studies on emails, with particular attention paid to request emails between students and university instructors.

3.3.1 Studies on email communication

Electronic mail (email), as one of communication systems of computer-mediated communication (CMC), has been the most widespread and commonly used tool for electronic communication from the end of the 20th century (Bafoutsou & Mentzas, 2001). It has become a very important medium for both interpersonal and institutional

communication, particularly in academic and business institutions, due to its high transmission speed and less “intrusive” nature than traditional letters (Crystal, 2001). Moreover, at universities and colleges, email assumes more functions besides communication, including the delivery of materials as well as course management (Haworth, 1999; Worrels, 2002). In a word, it has largely taken the place of written memos and much telephone and face-to-face interaction and become a “fact of life in many workplaces” (Waldvogel, 2007, p.456).

Along with its wide application in communication, email has attracted wide-ranging research interest into its various aspects during the past few decades. For example, some studies have been conducted on the characteristics of email language (Baron, 1998, 2002, 2003; Crystal, 2001; Herring, 1996); some studies have been done to examine its discourse/generic structure (Ho, 2009; Nickerson, 2000; Virtanen & Maricic 2000); some studies have focused on its pragmatics such as the speech act of requests (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002, 2006, 2007; Duthler, 2006; Ho, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b); and some studies have focused on communication topics and communication strategies in emails, especially by students writing emails to professors in academia (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005; Collins, 1998; Malley, 2006; Martin, et al., 1999; Payne, 1997).

In terms of language and styles, email exhibits features of written language and of oral speech (Baron, 1998, 2002, 2003; Crystal, 2001; Herring, 1996). Baron (1998) describes email as a “hybrid medium” which resembles informal letters and telephone conversations. For one thing, email language is considered to be as dynamic, interactive, and ephemeral in nature as that of speech (Danet, 2001). For others, email message cannot be regarded as speech because participants cannot see or hear each other (Collot & Belmore, 1996). However, neither speech nor writing can easily substitute email as a system of communication because of its convenience, “marginal cost, speed of transmission and flexibility” (Baron, 2000, p.243).

Concerning the hybrid nature of email, some studies have found that email tends to be extremely informal (Baron, 2003; Gimenez, 2000) while others have found that email tends to be formal (Danet, 2001; Davis & Brewer, 1997). Among them, Gains (1999) examined a corpus of data of authentic emails drawn from commercial and academic

environments and reported that the commercial emails tend to be more formal for they have followed the linguistic conventions of standard written business English. However, the academic emails tend to be more variable than commercial emails. They have shown a pseudo-conversational form of conversation. Similarly, in an academic setting, Biber and Conrad (2009, p.180) found that email as genre is “interactive, but less directly so than conversation. It can refer to shared personal background information but is less obtrusive than communication in a completely shared setting”. In a business setting, Gimenez (2000) explored the language and style of business emails between companies in the UK, observing that these emails were informal and personalized. The emails have a great tendency to be in a more flexible and unplanned register due to the spoken nature of electronically mediated communication. As a result, Gimenez argues that the style of emails needs to be informal and flexible if it is expected to convey message efficiently. Conversely, Danet (2001) finds that emails are more likely to be formal when addressed to recipients with greater authority. The formality of emails thus complies with traditional expectations.

Much research has been done on emails between a variety of senders and recipients and for various communicative purposes, i.e. between native and non-native speakers, or between university students and teachers. As Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008) review, emails have been generally used to respond to information, maintain contact, make requests, chat, promote, enquire, direct, and to have fun (also see Gains, 1999). With regards to communicative functions of emails written by students to professors, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) reviews that the previous studies have found these emails exhibit similar facilitative and academic functions: “building a relationship, getting information/advice about course materials and quizzes, addressing late work, and missed classes, challenging grades, showing interest in and understanding of course materials, and getting on the instructors’ good sides” (p. 61) (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2000, 2005; Bloch, 2002; Collins, 1998; Gee, 2002; Marbach-Ad & Sololove, 2001; Martin, Myers & Mottet, 1999; Payne, 1997; Poling, 1994).

Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, p.83) reveals that, similar to other emails, emails from student to faculty also display “a wide stylistic range, from greatly informal to overtly ceremonial”, as demonstrated from examples from Biesenbach-Lucas’ (pp. 83-84) study:

Please advise.
Any comments?
I would appreciate your feedback.
I'd now like to request your approval to do a research paper on fossilization.

However, these requests, as Biesenbach-Lucas interprets, might be inappropriate in term of their levels of directness, particularly for non-native speakers of English. Since these emails are used to make power-symmetrical (upward) requests, they are expected to be more mitigated and less direct.

The upward emails, i.e. towards someone with greater authority, are thus regarded as more pragmatically demanding and complex and therefore requiring greater pragmatic skills, especially on the part of non-native speakers. Therefore, the coming section will concentrate on a review of previous studies on request emails from students to university instructors/professors.

3.3.2 Request emails from students to university instructors -previous studies

The wide use of the email medium as discussed in the above review, however, does not necessarily mean that email medium is easy to use. People may write emails to peers in any manner they prefer, but may find it difficult to write emails to those perceived as higher in status in the workplace because such status-unequal emails involve various face-threatening acts (Baron, 1998, 2000; Murray, 1988, 1995). It is quite possible for writers to spend much time planning and composing such status-unequal emails.

According to this situation, it is imaginable that non-native speakers may find it even more difficult to compose status-unequal emails, which demand the writers have sufficient pragmatic competence, high linguistic ability, and familiarity with the norms and values of the target culture (Chen, 2006). Therefore it is possible that L2 learners may often produce emails which contain some inappropriate language use. As a result, relating to request emails, the inappropriateness might even have a negative impact on the aim of achieving request compliance.

Due to these reasons, emails from students to university instructors are supposed to have attracted more attention from researchers in linguistics field. However, in contrast to the huge number of studies of speech act of request which may rely on data collected through the uses of discourse completion test or oral role play, only a small number of studies on request emails, in particular, student-university instructor request emails, have been carried out due to ethical and privacy restrictions (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006). Moreover, most of the existing research has been conducted on emails which were sent to the researchers themselves.

One of the earliest studies on student-teacher emails is Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) investigation into the effect of email requests written by NSs and NNSs to two university instructors. The researchers compared how international graduate students and U.S. graduate students made email requests to instructors. They found that international students used fewer mitigating forms and downgrades in their request emails than the NSs, which produced negative assessments from instructors. They further revealed the reasons underlying this situation. International students acknowledged imposition on the faculty members less often than U.S. students. They used institutional explanations less frequently for their requests and mentioned their personal needs and time frames more often. The authors concluded that all these elements were due to the international students' assumption of the faculty's greater obligation to comply than the faculty member assumed.

Some similar studies have also been done to investigate effects of emails by non-native speakers. Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2001) explored a larger number of participants' assessment on students' email request and got analogous results to those of Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996). The email requests by the non-native speakers were rated with the lowest acceptability in that these emails contained many unreasonable demands on the faculty. This may be due to the fact that the email writers evaluated the level of request imposition inappropriately and did not follow the norms in making upward requests like native speakers. In addition, a more recent study by Hendriks (2010), which investigated the effect of email requests written by Dutch learners of English, produced comparable results. Specifically, some native speakers of English were invited to assess the comprehensibility of the emails and the personality

dimensions of the email writers. They judged that the email writers underused elaborate lexico-syntactic modifiers such as subjectivisers and tense/aspect, i.e. *I was wondering if...* As a result, the underuse was not evaluated positively by native speakers of English, who further pointed out that this might be perceived as unacceptable by emails recipients.

In the vein of the traditional research on requests, most of the few available studies on request emails have applied the well-known coding framework of CCSARP developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) to investigate differences in speech act requests in emails from a cross-cultural perspective (e.g. Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; Weasenforth & Biesenbach-Lucas, 2001). These studies are mainly aimed at comparing the requestive strategies chosen by NSs and NNSs and have produced similar results. Specifically, Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2000) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2002) found that the differences in the directness of the head act of request between NSs and NNSs were comparatively small. However, the NNSs opted for more direct requests than the NSs. In addition, the NNSs used less syntactic modification than the NSs. Moreover, Biesenbach-Lucas (2004) and Weasenforth and Biesenbach-Lucas (2001) found that the NNSs' selection of lexical modification strategy was not as flexible as those of NSs. The NNSs relied more on using "please" as lexical downgrader in making requests. In addition, these studies found that, as for supportive moves, the NNSs had different options (e.g. apologies) and presentation orders from those of the NSs. The NNSs were found to use more supportive moves compared to the NSs. Finally, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) explored how native and non-native English-speaking graduate students made low- and high-imposition email requests to the faculty. She found that most requests, whether by the NSs or the NNSs, were realized by direct request strategies. However, in high-imposition request (extension) emails, the NSs resorted to conventional indirect requestive strategies more often than the NNSs. Moreover, in relation to request modification, the NSs exhibit greater resources in creating 'e-politeness' to the faculty than the NNSs.

With particular regards to how Chinese-speaking students make email requests to professors in English, the few existing studies (Chang & Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2001, 2006; Lee, 2004b) have similar findings to those of the above studies. Specifically, the

Chinese English learners were unable to express themselves in appropriate linguistic forms and rhetorical strategies. They employed request strategies in emails that were different from those by English-speaking students. For example, using the CCSARP coding framework, Chang and Hsu (1998) investigated differences in English request emails formulated by Chinese English learners and native American English speakers. They found that Chinese English learners tend to regard email communication as either formal letters or telephones conversations, while American English speakers treat email communications as more like written memos, i.e. “putting explicit and relevant titles alongside the subject line which is already provided in most existing computer e-mail systems” (p. 128). In addition, they found that Chinese English learners tended to structure their request emails in an indirect sequence using many pre-request supportive moves. They placed the request act at the end, and the linguistic forms of the request acts were more direct with fewer lexico-syntactic modifications (e.g. use of past tense and modals like *possible*, *I was wondering if*, etc.). In contrast, the American English speakers structure their request emails in a rather direct way and expressed the head acts of requests indirectly. Due to this, some of the request emails written by Chinese English learners were judged to be impolite and thus inappropriate by the native English speaking evaluators.

These findings were further confirmed by Chen (2001) and Lee (2004b). The requestive strategies employed by Chinese English learners are interpreted and explained in the two studies by culture-specific notions of politeness and the students’ social-cultural identities as reflected in their emails. Chinese-speaking students probably transfer the request strategies that they normally use in Chinese. These studies thus concluded that the transfer may possibly make Chinese students unable to use English email requests appropriately and effectively in the institutional unequal-status communication.

Finally, the fact that few studies, like Chen (2006), have undertaken a longitudinal study on request emails needs to be highlighted. In terms of a case study on one Taiwanese student making requests to her American professors via emails, Chen observed that the student’s ability to make email requests appropriately had improved over time. Specifically, the student’s early emails primarily contained many want statements, unclear and delayed purpose of statement, and shared a tendency for lengthiness and

irrelevant details. These demonstrate the student's weakness and put her at a disadvantage because she tended to over-emphasize her right as a student to make requests to professors. Later on, the student used more preparatory requestive strategies and revealed more politeness through lexical-syntactic modifications. As Bisenbench-Lucas (2007) reviews, this study is fascinating because it investigated NNS's motivation for selecting direct over indirect forms.

To summarize, all the studies reviewed above, no matter whether they employed the CCSARP coding framework for the analysis or not, have disclosed some interlanguage problems for learners. The problems involve not only pragmalinguistic types such as external modification of requests (supportive moves) and internal (polite) modification, but also sociopragmatic types such as "status congruence, politeness realization, and identity construction"(Chen, 2006, p.38). The studies thus reveal that, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) argued, the NNSs' pragmatic competence is not at the level of fluent NSs. Moreover, these studies support research in pragmatics that has found that NNSs could not easily acquire sociolinguistic conventions, even though they have had a relatively high level of grammatical competence.

3.3.3 Implications and inadequacies in the empirical studies

The existing empirical studies on request emails from students to faculty (university instructors) have successfully uncovered some similarities and differences in emails by NSs and NNSs. Also, they have revealed some characteristics of politeness in students' emails to the faculty (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007). However, taking a closer look at the empirical studies reported above, we can easily identify some issues which the current study will go on to address.

Firstly, as was shown earlier, so far there has not been enough research focusing on either politeness or on requestive strategies in emails by NSs or NNSs students to university instructors. Moreover, the majority of existing studies have focused on the email message sent to one faculty member or the researchers themselves (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Therefore, it is worthwhile to make the effort to overcome the existing ethical hurdles in order to collect more emails sent to different faculty members to

examine more social factors, such as the members' social status, gender and social distance with senders, which might influence the students' formulation of emails.

Concerning the email senders, more emails written by students from more varieties of language backgrounds need to be further studied. Specifically, the participants in existing studies are American English speakers, not native English speakers from other English-speaking countries such as UK, Canada, or Australia. In term of Chinese English speakers as NNS groups in these studies, few studies on the request emails produced by mainland Chinese English learners have been conducted. The Chinese subjects in these studies were commonly from Taiwan and Hong Kong. They cannot be assumed to straightforwardly represent subjects from the Chinese mainland, which has a different socio-cultural context.

Moreover, the few existing studies have focused on written English in emails rather than a broader spectrum of languages, in particular Chinese. There has been no research, to the best of my knowledge, conducted on emails written in Chinese by Chinese-speaking students. As a result, it is hard to know the cross-cultural difference in request emails by native Chinese-speaking and native English-speaking students. Meanwhile, this deficiency has also weakened the validity of the few available studies on request email by Chinese English learners. To be specific, studies such as Chang and Hsu (1998) and Chen (2001) claim that the interlanguage problems in the emails by Chinese English learners are possibly due to a transfer from their native language use or the application of Chinese cultural knowledge into English emails. However, these claims are based upon existing studies on speech act requests in DCT data or written letters. It is hence very hard to say that Chinese speakers would conduct the speech act requests or organize the discourse structure of emails in a way similar to those in DCT data or written letters, due to the special characteristics of authentic emails. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a cross-cultural comparison between Chinese and English authentic emails.

Secondly, while request emails have been the focus of a number of studies, little work of which we are aware has been conducted, like Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2008), on analysing the generic structure of the standard email elements (i.e., supportive moves).

The majority of previous studies have mainly involved examining the request head acts and politeness devices like syntactic structures and lexical elements (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006). Therefore, there is no comprehensive account of the politeness of the emails than “the presence or absence of greetings and signatures, as well as the nature of the virtual envelope” (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, p.76).

The greetings, signatures and the virtual envelope (the subject line of the study, cf. Chapter 4) are formulated into openings and closing in emails, which actually play a very important social role in emails as in other interaction forms (Waldvogel, 2007). They are also regarded as politeness markers because they attend to the recipients’/addressees’ ‘face needs’ (Goffman, 1967). Therefore, as they resemble other politeness markers, openings and closings can help to construct and maintain social relations between email writers and recipients. Moreover, openings and closings become more complex in emails due to user-related aspects that interact with other factors such as technological, social and interactional influences (Bou-Franch, 2010). For these reasons, email writers might find it very hard to formulate openings and closings. For example, as for address terms in the openings, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) points out that it is often one of the most difficult choices for the email senders to make an appropriate choice of address terms to the recipients.

In terms of these factors, openings and closings in emails need to be further studied within a broader sociocultural context. For example, more studies could follow the ones by Bjørge (2007) and Formentelli (2009), which have focused on openings and closings in emails within the academic setting.

In order to provide a fuller account of the email studies, it is necessary to conduct a study on the generic structure of the standard elements in addition to the request head acts and politeness devices. To meet this research demand, the CCSARP coding framework, which has been widely applied to the speech act requests in the emails, is inadequate for the current study and needs to “be re-examined to accommodate request realizations found in naturalistic email communication” (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007, p.76). For one thing, the CCSARP coding framework divides the request sequence into three parts: alerter, supportive moves and head act. It is thus not full enough to include other

types of rapport-management strategies in the emails under study. For example, as Spencer-Oatey (2000) points out, rhetorical structures could function as rapport-management strategies in the discourse domain. More specifically, the deductive rhetorical structure could function as independent strategies in managing rapport. And the inductive rhetorical structure could be used as involvement strategies (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). However, the CCSARP framework cannot address these (cf. Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 for detailed rapport-management strategies). Another problem is, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) points out, that the CCSARP coding framework is challenged in coding emails. Some linguistic realization in head acts of requests in emails include structures, like direct questions (e.g. *When do you have time?*), which have no previous equivalent in the CCSARP framework. At the same time, some of the categories identified in the CCSARP framework such as obligation statement (e.g. *You must/should give me an extension.*) cannot be found in email data. Therefore, Biesenbach-Lucas proposed a new coding framework including some new coding categories in her study in emails, which is also used in the current study (cf. coding framework in Chapter 4).

Thirdly, as early as 2006, Chen points out some limitations of previous studies on student-professor emails by L2 learners. One big problem lies in the fact that nearly all the studies are descriptive rather than explanatory. This situation, to the best of our knowledge, has not been improved much until recently. The limitation also exists in cross-cultural studies on emails. Specifically, these studies focus on the identification and descriptions of deviations or problems in L2 learners' language use or the differences in making requests in emails among different cultures. The deviations of L2 learners or the difference between different cultures are then interpreted from researchers' perspective rather than from participants' viewpoint (i.e. an etic approach). Consequently, these studies might ignore how language use is "an agentive choice made from multiple socio-cultural resources and discourse resource available to the language users" (Chen, 2006, p38). This etic approach might thus not reflect the email writer's own perception of their writings. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct research on the use of discourse features and request strategies, i.e., rapport-management strategies from language users' own perspectives (i.e. an emic approach). In other words, it is important to explore the language users' socio-psychological factors affecting their

language use via this email medium in relation to contextual variables, rapport bases, pragmatic conventions, and culture-specific ideologies (see theoretical framework in Chapter 2).

Finally, few studies, which are to be reviewed in Section 3.4, have applied discursive politeness theoretical framework such as rapport management or doing relational work into empirical research on emails. Moreover, none of the studies except Ho (2011b), to my knowledge, have simultaneously drawn upon these two politeness theories to explore the student-professor request emails from cross-cultural or interlanguage perspectives. The majority of the available studies on emails, intentionally or unintentionally, have applied traditional politeness theories, especially Brown and Levinson's politeness model, to investigate the (im)politeness or the (in)directness of the speech act requests in the emails. However, as reviewed earlier, the traditional frameworks cannot be applicable to a wider variety of circumstances like the discourse of request emails under study. Therefore, to fill the research gap and to explore the dynamics of the newer models of politeness theories, more empirical research is needed to build upon the newer models to explore rapport-management strategies in request emails.

Considering the inadequacies illustrated above, it is necessary to carry out the present study in order to focus on the points that have never been explored or have been under-explored by the previous studies.

3.3.4 Summary

To summarize, email, as a much widely used medium, has attracted much research interest from multiple perspectives. In addition, the bulk of the research on emails has been carried out between students and professors. However, these studies are seen not to provide a full insight into the overall discourse of emails. In addition, these studies were mostly descriptive. They did not explore the motivation of linguistic performance in broad socio-cultural contexts and within discourse communities.

In short, these empirical studies suffer from methodological problems and have only addressed a small number of the issues involved in email studies. Nevertheless, this leaves more vistas for later research to open up. This situation has thus motivated the present study, which aims to go beyond the scope of previous studies to study rapport-management strategies in request emails as a genre.

The two compatible and complementary theories, rapport management and doing relational work, will be built upon in the present study. In the following section, the empirical studies which have been undertaken on the basis of the two theories, despite the small number of them, will be reviewed, in order to provide some valuable insights for the current study.

3.4 Empirical Studies Building upon Theories of Rapport Management and Relational Work: Implications for the Current Study

Theories of rapport management and relational work have been widely cited and discussed in politeness and cultural studies. However, these two theoretical frameworks have not been widely applied in empirical studies. The rapport management framework has been mainly applied in the context of business (Planken, 2005; Spencer-Oatey, 2000, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003; Campbell et al, 2003; Campbell & White, 2007), together with in the contexts of medical services (Hernández López, 2008; Campbell, 2005), and email communications (Ho, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a). It is also applied in the examination of rapport in oral, face-to-face interactions between individuals and groups (Fant, 2006; Goldner, 2006; Lorenzo-Dus, 2005; Schnurr & Chan, 2010). Moreover, the relational work framework has been applied in fewer cases from an empirical perspective. Besides the contributions appearing in the books or papers where the theory is published and illustrated (Locher, 2004, 2006, 2010; Locher & Watts, 2005; Watts, 1989, 2003), few contributions (Hatfield & Hahn, 2010; Hoi-Kwan Ng, 2008; Kaiser, 2011) have come from other empirical studies, to my knowledge. Finally, even fewer cases have applied both theories in one study (e.g. Graham, 2007; Ho, 2011b)

This section reviews some empirical studies named above which built upon theories of rapport management and relational work. Implications of these studies are drawn out for the current study.

3.4.1 Empirical studies in application of rapport management framework

Spencer-Oatey and Xing (2000) discussed rapport (mis)management by Chinese business delegates and members of British company. The Chinese delegation was made up of six business people who made a ten-day visit to the British company. During this visit, both groups believed that rapport was challenged in various ways. For example, the visiting Chinese delegates felt that their due respect had not been given by the host delegates in consideration of not arranging equal-status seating for them (the non-verbal domain). What's more, during the meeting, the Chinese delegates were not given a chance to deliver a return speech or to introduce themselves after the British delegates finished their welcoming speech. This made the Chinese delegates feel that their due respect was not given once more (discourse domain).

The study has thus provided some implications for face theory/rapport management theory. It supports the idea that “social identity can be an important face issue” (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2000, p. 286). In reference to this study, Chinese business people belong to a society with high power distance, in which status differences usually need to be explicitly acknowledged. Therefore, in terms of the situation mentioned above, rapport was threatened because the Chinese delegates felt that their identity face was threatened. In addition, this study supports the importance of taking participants’ relationships into consideration in rapport management. In this study, the British delegates were not familiar with the rights and obligations of the host-guest relationship and thus caused the Chinese delegates to think “the British had failed in their responsibility as hosts” (p. 285)

The importance of integrating identity face and the rights and obligations in social relationships into rapport-management framework was confirmed by another study on business-related work. Planken (2005) explored the way rapport is managed in intercultural sales negotiations in order to achieve interpersonal goals. Two groups of

sales negotiators were involved in this study: professional negotiators and aspiring negotiators (students of international business communication). She investigated and compared the two groups of data in terms of some rapport-management strategies in English as lingua franca, such as the occurrence of interactional talk and of personal pronouns (within the discourse domain and participation domain) as indications of the negotiator relationship. As a result, she found only professionals could engage in safe talk frequently, and the aspiring negotiators engaged in safe talk sporadically. Furthermore, the study found the aspiring negotiators could not maintain professional distance and create a professional identity within the negotiation event as successfully as professionals. Therefore, the study concluded that the aspiring negotiators' professional pragmatic competence appeared problematic.

Both studies reviewed above indicate that rapport management plays a very important role in the process of business. As Hernández López points out (2008), rapport management facilitates understanding and improving negotiation of business. Moreover, in relation to the current study, the two studies consolidate the necessity to employ the rapport management framework because it is easily seen that the framework is “a tool for knowing how to manage relations” and thus “goes a further step forward in comparison to Politeness Theory by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) which...is [only] a descriptive theory of one aspect of communication-face” (Hernández López, 2008, p.59). To get a full communication in emails, the framework of rapport management can be used to meet the demand. Moreover, from the two empirical studies, it could be said that rapport might be threatened in all the domains and thus might need to be managed in each domain. This finding has thus further confirmed the necessity to investigate rapport-management strategies in different domains of emails. Finally, the two studies have shown that cultural differences (mainly in Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2000) and pragmatic competence (mainly in Planken, 2005) are very important factors in deciding choices of rapport management strategies to achieve successful communication. This finding thus highlights the necessity of the present study to investigate how cultural differences and pragmatic competence influence rapport management strategies by Chinese and British individuals in emails.

Besides the application in the context of business, the theory of rapport management has been applied in other areas of studies. For example, Campbell (2005) has applied the theory in investigating doctor-patient interactions. She believes that it is a central concern for professionals, like physicians under her study, to build relationships with their clients because relationships can promote trust and loyalty from the patients. In applying the theoretical framework, the study explains how the physicians succeed or fail to build relationships with clients in terms of their verbal communication.

In another example, Schnurr and Chan (2010) examined how subordinates in the workplace respond to two types of humor from their superiors: teasing and self-denigrating humor. The humour was regarded as potentially face-threatening, so the study focused on the subordinates' strategies to "resolve this tension and to manage sociality rights as well as to do face-work by considering interlocutors' quality and identity face" (p.16). The study found that the subordinate under study employed different rapport-management strategies to achieve different interactional aims simultaneously. Furthermore, the subordinates in different work places, i.e., different interlocutors' communities of practice (CofPs), were found to use different rapport-management strategies.

The two studies in other contexts rather than in business confirm a previous claim by Graham (2007, p. 742) that the framework of rapport management is supposed to "be more applicable to a wider variety of circumstances". More importantly, according to Schnurr and Chan (2010), studies on rapport management strategies should not only attach importance to the general social-cultural context in which the studies happen, but also to the specific norms and practices that differentiate CofPs. In relation to the present study, it means that analyses of rapport management strategies will not only take into consideration national socio-cultural contexts but also the specific norms and practices of the three discourse communities (detailed in Chapter 4).

Though the theory of rapport management has begun to be applied in a wider context, few systematic attempts have been made, like Ho (2010a, 2011b, 2011a, 2011b), to our knowledge, to apply the framework of rapport management into email studies. Ho's (2010b) study explored how the leaders of some English teachers from an institute of

Hong Kong constructed different personal identities for themselves. To realize this aim, the study analyzed request emails sent to the participants' subordinates at both clause levels and discourse levels. The leaders' management of the relationship with their subordinates was examined in respect to the constructs of rapport management. As a result, the study drew the conclusion that the participants under study constructed the identity as understanding, considerate and polite leaders in terms of managing rapport and doing politeness work. Moreover, Ho (2011a) directly discussed the management of rapport in the request emails by a group of English teachers, who were divided into two subgroups: core members and peripheral members in a community of practice (CofP). Consequently, it was observed that the two subgroups weighed rapport differently and thus managed rapport in a different way. This was represented in manipulating the macro-structure of the email discourse differently.

To sum up, the framework of rapport management has been adopted in some empirical studies. These studies, as reviewed above, have stressed the importance of building/maintaining interpersonal relationship in communications. Furthermore, it has been found that rapport needs to be managed in different domains. Rapport-management strategies need to be considered in general socio-cultural contexts and special communities.

However, in contrast to the huge amount of empirical research built upon the traditional politeness theories, the research which is built upon the rapport management framework is far from enough. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, the application of this framework into upward request emails has not been undertaken yet. The aim of this study is to fill the gap and thus to echo the appeal made by Spencer-Oatey (2000) herself that the research community needs to do much more empirical research on the various potential sources of variation on the rapport management outcomes in cross-cultural pragmatics. It is expected to extend the previous studies into more socio-cultural contexts, i.e. in British and Chinese socio-cultures, and into more communities, i.e. postgraduate students who are argued to form three discourse communities.

3.4.2 Empirical studies building upon the framework of relational work

Since the term ‘doing relational work’ was proposed by Watts in 1989, it has generated hot discussions and been supported in a large number of studies from theoretical perspectives, especially after “the post-2000 turn in politeness studies” (Kádár, 2010, p.1). Moreover, the existing empirical studies, even though the number of them are very small, could provide a deeper insight into the theoretical description of this theory in Chapter 2, and more crucially, to provide some implications for the current study.

As early as 1989, Watts explored the social activity of a family gathering from dual perspectives, i.e. British and German Swiss. He found that there was a marked decrease in overt politeness strategies in intimate groups under study. To account for this phenomenon, Watts proposes the notion of politic behaviour, which is taken to be a universal form of behaviour. Politeness behaviour is a subset of politic behaviour, which is regarded as explicit and marked. People will adapt their relational work to what is considered polite/marked and unmarked/politic behaviours according to the kind of verbal behaviour in which individuals engage. Therefore, the study has provided evidence that this framework is broader than traditional politeness theory, which cut linguistic behaviour into a binary: politeness and impoliteness. Furthermore, with this broad framework, Watts argues that “cross-cultural differences may be observed in social activities whose speech events do not necessitate a high level of conventionally polite verbal behaviour” (p. 131).

In the later research work done by Watts and his collaborator Locher, the notion of politic behaviour has been further illustrated and strengthened by other authentic linguistic data. For example, Locher and Watts (2005) made a closer reading of five examples from their collection of family discourse. They found that much of what has commonly been regarded as ‘politeness’ is perceived by the participants as the kind of behaviour appropriate to the current interaction, i.e. politic behaviours. Meanwhile, some non-mitigating and challenging behaviour, which was usually interpreted as impolite in traditional politeness theories, is evaluated by the participants as “appropriate, non-polite and politic behaviour” (p.21). According to these observations, Locher and Watts provide a wider frame of relational work, including impolite as well

as polite or merely appropriate behaviour, which acts as a practical tool to investigate the discursive struggle over politeness.

The discursive and norm-oriented concept of politeness has been supported by Hoi-Kwan Ng (2008). In examining some extracts from two movies, Hoi-Kwan Ng found that some direct speech acts could be interpreted as appropriate/politic behaviours rather than impolite ones. Based on this, this study thus highlighted the importance of norms and expectations of interlocutors as factors in assessing linguistic behaviours.

Apart from English, the framework of doing relational work has also been applied in analyzing interaction in other languages such as Korean (Hatfield & Hahn, 2010) and Spanish (Kaiser, 2011). These two studies have achieved similar findings to that of Hoi-Kwan Ng. Hatfield and Hahn (2010) found that the crucial factors such as norms of expectations, out of Brown and Levinson's three predicative factors, i.e. power, social distance, and severity of the act, have also played a key role in deciding the politeness of Korean apologies. Using the framework of doing relational work, they explicate why Korean persons apologize and why they choose the apology that they do. They found that Koreans did not choose apology strategies in line with the weight of a face threatening act, while in reality they manage and create expectations for behaviour in a relationship.

Kaiser (2011) found that directness may be interpreted as appropriate/politic behaviour in examining pragmatic strategies Uruguayan women use to negotiate refusal sequences in family-oriented situations. The directness might relate to management of sociality rights. In contrast, indirect refusals are also regarded as appropriate/politic behaviour, but open for an interpretation as polite. They are used to mitigate face threat in sensitive topics and situations or to increase social distance with men.

The few available empirical studies have provided some support to the theory of doing relational work. More significantly, one key problem in application of this framework in empirical studies is worth highlighting here, which will also provide much insight into the current study.

It is noted that, besides the main application of this framework appearing in analyzing the authentic data of dialogues, the framework has also been applied in analyzing the authentic data of emails (e.g. Graham, 2007; Ho, 2011b). The application in the emails has proved that the framework could be more applicable than what has been predicted. It addresses Kádár's (2010) anxiety that the definition of relational work might "exclude much research work on monologic genres and devotes unreasonable importance to dialogue" (p.4). This is because, as we discussed in Chapter 2, the theory emphasizes that relational work is a discursive struggle between speakers and hearers (politeness 1), which seems not to happen in emails because emails could be regarded as monologic interactions.

One possible alternative to address such anxiety might be treating emails as delayed dialogues. For instance, researchers like Graham (2007) collected both senders' emails and recipients' response emails. Specifically, Graham investigated how members of a ChurchList community of practice negotiated their expectations of (im)politeness through email communications. It has found that the norms of interaction within the community, together with the norms of interaction of email medium, has contributed to a unique set of expectations for what constitute polite behaviour.

However, due to ethical difficulties and technical problems, it is very hard to collect both senders' emails and recipients' response emails simultaneously, and to collect a large number of such kinds of personal email dialogues as those in Graham's studies. Moreover, as for the request emails, especially the ones between graduate students and university instructors under study, it is hard to find negotiations of politeness between email writers and recipients. In terms of these reasons, this study could only collect emails from a single party of senders and treated them as monologues.

However, treating emails as monologues does not mean they cannot be analyzed within the framework of doing relational work. As proposed in Chapter 2, following the research trend of Spencer-Oatey (2000), linguistic researchers can firstly focus their attention on email writers' own perceptions of linguistic behaviour of relational work (politeness 1). Based on this, linguistic researchers could abstract and generalize these

individuals' perceptions of appropriate linguistic behaviours. In this way, researchers could retain politeness both as first and a second-order terms (Kádár, 2010).

Ho (2011b) set a good example to successfully apply both frameworks of rapport management and doing relational work in his study of emails as monologues, even though his study relied on his own perception of relational work of emails (politeness 2). His study was conducted on some same-hierarchical-level request emails from single parties (email writers) among three communities of practice. On the basis of differentiating those discursive elements whose absence would not have made the current situation of request any the worse, he found both similarities and differences in doing relational work in emails among the three communities of practice.

3.5 Summary

In sum, this chapter has discussed a range of studies conducted on the speech act requests and request emails. While most studies of the speech act requests relied on the elicited DCT data, studies of request in emails can tackle the inadequacy. However, due to ethical and practical difficulties, studies on authentic emails, especially on emails from other languages rather than solely from English, are insufficient. Moreover, while email studies have become popular in recent years, almost no work has been carried out on the generic structure or the socio-pragmatic norms that govern emails in different discourse communities.

To fill the research gap, such traditional theories like the ones by Blum-Kulka et al (1989) and Brown and Levinson (1987), which were built upon by the majority of the previous studies, need to be updated and refined. In addition, in reviewing the few available empirical studies which built upon theories of rapport management and relational work, some implications for the current study have been addressed. The review has further confirmed the necessity and eligibility of the proposed theoretical framework in Section 2.4. Meanwhile, it has found that research into the request emails in different communities across cultures is absent. Almost no studies have combined the two theories into a current study, though they are agreed to be complementary to each other. To further test the validity of the two theories, it is better to apply the theories in

broader studies, like the present one on request emails. In this way, it can also institute a pre-emptive strike against possible external criticism of the two theories.

In a word, the relevant empirical studies have not addressed some key issues due to methodological problems. It thus leaves much scope for the present study to open up. The present study is designed to fill the research gaps. The next chapter will specify how to address these gaps in terms of illuminating research methodology.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In the light of the research purposes and research questions which are detailed in Section 1.3, this chapter describes and justifies data collection procedures and data analysis. The Chapter falls into seven sections. Section 4.2 introduces the participants involved in this study, who are argued to form three discourse communities. Section 4.3 specifies the instruments which were employed for data collection in the study (i.e., background questionnaire; task of providing authentic emails; and structured questions to be answered). Section 4.4 details the procedures of data collection. Section 4.5 describes variable operationalization and procedures of data analysis. Section 4.6 discusses some ethical issues related to data collection and protection. Finally, Section 4.7 makes a summary of the focal points in this chapter.

4.2 Research Participants-Three Discourse Communities

Three groups of postgraduate students, totalling 155, participated in this study. They are argued to form three discourse communities. The demographic information of the participants and how they form discourse communities are detailed below.

4.2.1 Participants

One hundred and fifty-five postgraduate students from three groups took part in the study. They are:

Group 1: Sixty-five Chinese postgraduate students who provided 65 emails, from a key university in Nanjing, China, referred to as native speakers of Chinese (CSs).

Group 2: Forty-five British postgraduate students who provided 60 emails, from University of Sheffield, UK, referred to as native speakers of English (ESs).

Group 3: Forty-five postgraduate students from China, studying in the University of Sheffield for more than half a year or longer, who provided 62 emails, referred to as non-native speakers of English (CESs).

In considering the concept of native speakers, Davies (2006) reflects that this category is still ambiguous. However, this study follows the general concept proposed by Davies (2006), who defined the native speaker as having six characteristics. First of all, all the participants in Group 1 and 2 were Chinese- and British- born citizens. They acquired Chinese or English as their native language in their early childhood. In other words, they are bound up with the Chinese or English in which they grew up as a child. Moreover, all the participants are graduate students, the fact of which means they have received a higher education. In terms of this fact, it is more plausible to believe that these participants could more possibly meet the other five criteria: 1) having intuitions about their idiolectal grammar; 2) having intuitions about features of the Standard Language grammar; 3) having a unique capacity to produce fluent spontaneous discourse; 4) having a unique capacity to write creatively; and 5) having a unique capacity to interpret and translate into their native language.

Participants of Group 3 are regarded as non-native speakers of English. In contrast to native speakers of English, they were born in China. According to Chinese education policy, they usually started their English learning at secondary school (at the age of 11). Most importantly, although English learning is very important, the English language is not an official language or second language in China. These two realities might indicate that they were not bound up with English in their childhood to the same extent as the native speakers of English. Due to the UK postgraduate status of these participants and their IELTS scores, these non-native speakers of English, as Davies (2006) considered, are likely to gain access intuitions about their own idiolectal grammar of English, and to the standard grammar of English. However, it might be very difficult for them to gain the discourse and pragmatic control of native speakers.

Table 4.1 summarizes the number, gender and age range of the participants of each group.

Table 4.1 Distribution of participants by group, age and gender

Participants	Total number (n=155)	Male (n= 65)	Female (n= 90)	Age Range (years old)
Group 1(CSs)	65	24	41	22-34
Group 2(ESs)	45	22	23	22-41
Group 3(CESs)	45	19	26	20-38

Group 1 consisted of 65 postgraduate students who provided 65 questionnaires which were qualified for data analysis. Their age ranged from 22 to 34, 24 of whom were males and 41 were females. They came from different areas of mainland China. Twelve students were first-year doctoral students and the other 53 were first-year MA students. Their areas specialization covered a wide range of subjects like Chinese, agriculture, plant, management, law, environmental studies, business studies and chemistry. It seemed that each of the participants preferred to provide only one email, though they were encouraged to provide more than one to the research.

Group 2 was composed of 45 British postgraduate students who speak English as their native language. They provided 60 questionnaires for the study. Their ages ranged from 22 to 41, and 22 of them were males and 23 females. Twenty of the participants were MA students, and 25 were PhD students. Among the PhD students, 13 were in year one; seven were in the second year; and five others were in third or final year of the PhD course. These participants' specializations covered a wide scope of subjects like English Linguistics and Literature, Education, Engineering, Music, and Sociology. The majority of the participants, totalling 24, were from the school of English. This was because the organizer of the data collection was a PhD student in the school. The participants seemed to be more willing to help their colleague and most of them even provided two emails for the research. In total, 15 participants provided two emails each and each of the other 30 participants provided one email.

Group 3 was composed of 45 postgraduate students coming from mainland China who were studying in an English university. They returned 62 questionnaires for data analysis. Nineteen of them are males and 26 were females. They were aged from 20 to 38. All the participants had studied in England for at least half a year. Twenty-eight of them were MA students and 17 were PhD students. Among the PhD students, 7 were in Year 1 and the others were in Year 2 and the final year. The participants of this group also majored in a wide range of subjects like Applied Linguistics, English Literature, Medicine, Education, Physics and Biology. Due to the factor from the collector described above, 17 participants were from the English department, the number of which was far more than the number of participants from other departments. In total, 17

participants provided two emails respectively and each of the other 28 participants provided one email.

Considering the frequency of the three groups of participants writing academic emails to university instructors, the results of the questionnaire (See Appendix 1) indicated that the ESs wrote this kind of email most frequently, followed by the CESs and lastly the CSs. Nineteen of the ESs, which constituted 42.2% of the total number of the group, reported that they wrote at least one to two academic emails to university staff each week, while 15 CESs, 33.3% against the total of this group and only 4 CSs, 6.1% of this group wrote academic emails as frequently. Forty-seven of the CNSs, 72.3% of the group, reported that they seldom wrote such emails. In other words, they wrote no more than one such kinds of email each week. In contrast, only 7 ESs, 10.8% of this group, and 12 CESs, 18.5% of the group, reported that they seldom wrote such emails. For those students who reported that they wrote one such kind of email each week, the number and frequency of the ESs and the CESs were very close to each other (ESs: 19, 42.2% vs. CESs: 18, 40%), while the number of the CNSs was much smaller (14, 21.5%).

Regarding the English proficiency of the Chinese graduate students who were studying in the British university, 36 students, 80% of the total number, reported that they had taken part in IELTS and got the score which was at least 6.0. Among them, 11 students got marks of over 7.0. Of all the students in this group, 18 students self-evaluated that their English proficiency was at an advanced level, i.e., native or native-like proficiency level. All the other students believed that their English proficiency was at an intermediate level. None of them acknowledged that they were beginners as English learners. Forty-one students in this group, which amounted to 91% of the total, reported that they never composed academic emails in Chinese before sending them in English. Only 4 of the students reported that they occasionally composed such kinds of emails in Chinese before sending them in English.

4.2.2 Discourse communities

The email writers are argued to meet specific entry levels to form discourse communities. The definition of a discourse community and the way the participants meet entry levels are discussed below.

Genre analysis is usually involved in language used in discourse communities. Based on descriptions by Saville-Troike (1982) and Swales (1990), Virtanen and Maricic (2000) concluded that a discourse community comprises a group of people who are related to each other by occupations, special interests, shared knowledge, possessions and beliefs or behaviour. Members are involved in a discourse community through persuasion and relevant qualification. In other words, the membership of a discourse community is a matter of choice. The members are thus different from those in a speech community which inherits its members by birth and adoption (Swales, 1990). For example, a group of people who naturally share a language (e.g., native speakers of Chinese) in terms of grammar, lexicons and so on can form a speech community.

Members of a discourse community take part in communicative events within the discourse community in terms of discourses/genres. Therefore, different groups of members may form different discourse communities. And the difference among the discourse communities may be represented in the form and content of the discourses/texts. Conversely, the discourses/genres also help to construct, maintain or change that very discourse community (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992). In this light, it is important to know the different genres created by different discourse communities and to get to know how genre helps construct, maintain or change such communities.

According to Swales (1990), a discourse community is characterized in terms of the following points. To start with, the members of a discourse community have a broadly agreed set of common public goals and mechanisms of intercommunication. Furthermore, it needs to understand that members use this inter-communicational mechanism mainly for offering information or feedback. In addition, a discourse community uses and thus owns one or more genres in the communicative utterance of its aims. For some particular genres, some specific lexis is utilized. Finally, a discourse

community has the threshold level of its members who need to own a suitable degree of relevant content and discursive expertise.

In view of these points, it is argued that university instructors and postgraduates who used emails for academic communication form a good example of discourse community. At first, this community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals. Specifically, the members interact with each other for the same purpose, i.e. the benefit of the postgraduate' academic development in universities. Secondly, the discourse community uses emails as a participatory mechanism to interact with each other for the sending and receiving of academic information. The members may use some specific email genres for requests, apologies, discussion and queries. In this study, the postgraduates who wrote the request emails may also share some specific lexis and have a certain level of relevant content and discursive expertise.

Recalling the description of the characteristics of a discourse community, it can be concluded that discourse communities are highly established and therefore “exhibit a high level of linguistic and non-linguistic sophistication” (Abdi, et al., 2010, p.1670). Firstly, the members of a discourse community need to maintain their membership in terms of more or less similar patterns of linguistic behaviour. They hence need to make an effort to familiarize themselves with the conventions of discourse in the given discourse community. Otherwise, they may be regarded as a ‘layperson’ by the other members of the community. Furthermore, on the basis of the familiarization of linguistic conventions, the individual member can contribute to the genre of the community by adding to the dynamism of that very discourse (Virtanen & Maricic 2000).

In respect of the current study in particular, the fact of the unequal status of the members constituted in the discourse community merits close attention to. The lower-status of postgraduate student constitutes one side of the interaction of the community. The higher-status of university instructors constituted the other. Therefore, the postgraduate needs to make greater efforts to follow the linguistic conventions in the discourse community, especially rapport-management strategies, to construct, maintain or enhance a harmonious relationship with university instructors and ultimately to

achieve request compliance from them. In addition, on the basis of the conventions of rapport management in the discourse, the email writers may extend discursive efforts to manage rapport with request emails.

To conclude, this study aimed to investigate rapport-management behaviour of one side of the members of the discourse community made up of postgraduate students and university instructors from cross-cultural perspectives. It would analyze the postgraduate students' practices of rapport-management strategies and doing relational work in request emails. This is because similar discourse communities from different culture backgrounds may have different practices. Therefore, the study was expected to show the specific genre conventions of this special discourse community. As a result, it was hoped, members from different cultural backgrounds could know of and understand the different practices.

4.3 Instruments

The principal instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire, which had two versions, an English version and a Chinese version (cf. Appendix 1, 2 and 3). The questionnaire was firstly proposed in English by the researcher. It was then scrutinized by a professor of English linguistics, who was the first supervisor of the researcher, and two British English-speaking PhD students, of English linguistics and English literature. In considering the feedback from these persons, the questionnaire was revised. As a result, possible ambiguities in the questionnaire were minimized. Furthermore, the questionnaire was piloted within a small number of British and Chinese postgraduate students who were studying in the British university. In this way, the time which the questionnaire might cost the participants was calculated; and various possible ambiguities were minimized and the questions were made clearer. Some other questions which yielded unusable data were removed.

At last, the final draft of the questionnaire was translated into Chinese by the researcher, who was bilingual in Chinese and English. After that, the Chinese version was transferred back into English by another person who was also bilingual in Chinese and

English. Any discrepancies in the Chinese version were discussed and revised by the two translators. In this way, cross-cultural equivalence in meaning could be ensured.

The questionnaire was composed of three parts. They were: (1) a background questionnaire for the participants to provide their demographic information; (2) a space for the participants to paste a request email; the headline which they had sent to university instructors, i.e. lecturers, tutors, dissertation/thesis supervisors etc.; and two questions about the gender and academic position of the recipients; and (3) ten structured questions pertaining to the variables the participants considered in the process of writings. The full text is presented in Appendix 1 (English version) and Appendices 2 and 3 (Chinese version). The three parts of the questionnaire are specified sequentially in the following.

1) Background Questionnaire

A background questionnaire would make it possible to explore the impact of various demographic factors on email writing and speech act realization. Therefore, a background questionnaire was circulated at the beginning among the three groups of participants. The questionnaire was concerned with gender, age, course of study, nationality, and the frequency of writing academic emails to university instructors. As for the postgraduate students who come from China mainland to Britain, the questionnaire explored the start time when the students began their learning; the possibly relevant IELTSs mark; their self-evaluation of English proficiency and whether the participants composed their emails in Chinese before sending them out in English. The results of this background questionnaire have been presented in Section 4.2.

2) Task of Providing an Authentic Request Email

In this part, the participants were asked to copy and paste one email which had been sent to university instructors recently. The email was required to involve a variety of requests for academic purposes, so that any confidential or personal emails were excluded. They were also asked to copy and paste the headline (if there was one) in one column. The emails and the headlines needed to be original and could not be modified

at all. Meanwhile, the participants were requested to specify the gender and academic position (professor, lecturer, tutor, doctor, etc.) of the recipients of the emails.

3) Structured Questions

This part was a Likert-type questionnaire which consisted of ten structured questions. The questions were aimed at exploring the socio-psychological factors as explanatory variables which might influence specific realizations of email genre (see the theoretical framework in Section 2.4, Chapter 2). Specifically, the first two questions were concerned with contextual variables. They were devised to examine the participants' perception of social distance between email writers and recipients, i.e. participants' relations, and the rank of imposition of the requests (i.e. message content). The participants were asked to rate each of the questions on a 5-point scale for likelihood. One represents 'not close at all' or 'not big or difficult request at all' respectively, and 5 represents 'the closest relationship' or 'the biggest or the most difficult request' respectively.

The next five questions aimed at exploring the impact of cultural factors on the perception of face sensitivities, and on rights and obligations by different groups of postgraduate students. The questions were based on Kim's (1994) proposal of five conversational constraints relative to requesting behaviour. In reference to some theories of pragmatics and communication studies, Kim put forward these five constraints in order to explain the use of different conversational strategies in different cultures. The five conversational constraints are summarized by Spencer-Oatey (2003) as follows:

1. Concern for avoiding hurting the hearer's feelings (also cf. positive face of hearer by Brown & Levinson, 1987)
2. Concern to minimize imposition (also cf. negative face of hearer by Brown & Levinson, 1987)
3. Concern to avoid negative evaluation by the hearer (also cf. positive face of speaker by Brown & Levinson, 1987)
4. Concern for clarity (also cf. Maxim of Manner by Grice, 1989)
5. Concern for effectiveness (cf. successful goal achievement/ task accomplishment by Canary & Spitzberg, 1989).

(Adopted from Spencer-Oatey, 2003, p.1636)

Kim explored and compared the importance of the five concerns in making a request by three groups of people: Korean, Mainland US and Hawaiian US participants. She found the most striking difference to be about a concern for clarity among the three groups of participants. She also found some other relatively small differences in terms of a concern to avoid hurting the hearer's feeling and a concern to avoid imposition.

Spencer-Oatey (2003) replicated Kim's questionnaire in a cross-cultural study on investigating and comparing these concerns in making requests by British and Chinese respondents. She developed Kim's five constraints with a factor analysis to show whether or not this was the case rather than assuming that these five constraints were in operation. She used the results of the study to support the notion of Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles (SIPs). As a result, Spencer-Oatey argued that SIPs can take the place of the most-frequently used Politeness Principles and Politeness Maxims by Leech (1983) to explain cultural differences in pragmatics.

Following the fruitful line of the two studies, the five concerns were integrated into the questionnaire to investigate how they influence the choice of rapport-management strategies to achieve request compliance in emails by the three groups. The participants were asked to rate the five 5-scale questions for assessing the importance of the five concerns when writing the emails.

The eighth question was aimed at investigating rapport orientation when the participants formulated their request emails. The participants were asked to make a choice of three orientations, i.e. building, maintaining or enhancing a good relationship with the recipient through this email, and to rate the importance of the rapport orientation.

The last two questions were aimed at investigating the participants' assessment of appropriateness of the emails. Question 9 is concerned with the judgement of appropriateness on the language and structure of emails in realizing the goal of request. Question 10 is related to the judgement of the appropriateness of the email itself on the basis of whether the participant will use it as a model for other academic requests in the future. The extent of the two questions was also judged with a five-scale rate.

4.4 Procedures for Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed through the email web systems of the two universities involved in the study. The participants were invited to join in the research voluntarily. However, as Rose (2000) pointed out, it is a challenge in any research setting to collect data for institutions or individuals who are less willing to participate in research voluntarily. Mainland China and the UK were no exception. In addressing the possible embarrassment, an English teacher in the Chinese university, one of my previous colleagues, who was also dean of postgraduates' English department, helped me to distribute the questionnaire in the email web system in his name. In the British university, the questionnaires were distributed with word format in the university web systems. It was also put on Survey Monkey, a famous website for web-based surveys. The volunteers might choose their favoured method, the word document in emails or Survey Monkey, to join in the research. The word-document questionnaire and the link to the Survey Monkey were distributed in the names of the researcher and his supervisor within the School of English, as well as the university web system. It was thus hoped that more students, especially the students from School of English, would join in the research. In addition, the researcher also personally invited some British and Chinese friends to take part in the research. All the volunteers were also encouraged to provide two such request emails and to answer the related questions.

4.5 Variables and Proposed Data Analysis

Eighty-nine questionnaires were returned by 89 CSs. However, some questionnaires were ruled out for two reasons: firstly, due to the fact that some of these questionnaires were incomplete; secondly, due to the fact that some emails the students provided did not express any sort of requests. As a result, only 65 questionnaires were considered as eligible to the study and thus picked out for analysis. Moreover, seventy-one questionnaires were returned by 53 ESs and 60 emails were eligible. Finally, seventy-two questionnaires were returned by 52 CESs. Sixty two were picked out for this study. As a result, a total of 187 emails were analyzed for this study.

What follows describes how variables are operationalized in the study. It then illuminates the analytical procedures employed for each research question.

4.5.1 Variables operationalization

The data consisted of a variety of request emails written to university course instructors with different request purposes and a questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of several questions acting as variables which the participants might consider in the process of writing. The variables which may predict the strategies of rapport management in the emails were defined as predictor variables. The strategies of rapport management, including move structures, directness of requests in head acts and linguistic realizations of them, which may be predicted by the predictor variables, were called criterion variables.

Nine predictor variables were measured in this study. Table 4.2 sums up the predictor variables, their operationalization, range and level of measurement.

Table 4.2 Predictor variables, operationalization, range and level of measurement

Predictor Variables	Operationalization	Range	Level of Measurement
1. Groups/Discourse communities	Native language background and language used in writing emails	Three groups	Nominal
2. Social distance	Participants' ratings of the relationship with the recipients	1-5	Ordinal
3. Imposition	Participants' rating of the imposition of the request on the recipients	1-5	Ordinal
4. Rapport orientation	Participants' assessment	Three orientations	Nominal
5. Concern for avoiding hurting the hearer's feelings	Participants' assessment	1-5	Ordinal
6. Concern to minimize imposition	Participants' assessment	1-5	Ordinal
7. Concern to avoid negative evaluation by the hearer	Participants' assessment	1-5	Ordinal
8. Concern for clarity	Participants' assessment	1-5	Ordinal
9. Concern for effectiveness	Participants' assessment	1-5	Ordinal

Among the nine predictor variables which might influence choices of rapport-management strategies, the first three variables were immediate contextual factors. The following six variables were underlying factors. The first variable of groups was a

nominal one which categorized participants into CSs, ESs and CESs. The next two variables of social distance and imposition were ordinal scales of participants' ratings from one to five. The fourth variable, rapport orientation, was a nominal scale with three orientations which asked the participants selected: building, maintaining or strengthening a harmonious relationship with the recipients. The last five variables were all ordinal scales of participants' ratings from one to five. These five variables, as Spencer-Oatey (2003) argued, were three fundamental elements of sociopragmatic interactional principles (SIPs) which may influence people's use of language. The fundamental SIPs were:

- a. Concern about face/rapport
- b. Concern about rights and obligations
- c. Concern about task achievement

It is highlighted here that four variables, the three direct context factors (power and distance, and imposition), together with rapport orientation, have been controlled in the current study for the comparison of pattern performance of the emails of the three discourse communities. In other words, they were relatively stable and comparable within and across the three discourse communities. First, the power variable was not measured in this questionnaire. This was because power variables across emails within each group were relatively stable. As Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) pointed out in a similar study, the email recipients (university instructors) are in a position of relative authority over the email writers (postgraduate students) by virtue of their institutional work. Second, Biesenbach-Lucas thought that the social distance variable is also relatively stable within the groups because it can be marked as low "since students and professors typically have frequent and regular interactions in the institutional context" (2007, p. 65). This study used the same method control the variable. The email writers should at least have some regular interactions with the recipients in the institutional context. Those emails which were written to the recipients whom the writer never contacted before were ruled out. As a result, the distance among the three discourse communities was around the medium value of 3 (further detailed in Section 5.4).

Moreover, as a result of a preliminary analysis of the collected questionnaires, the imposition level among the three groups was found to be relatively stable in a highly consistent way, for almost all the three groups invariably marked their email requests as low imposition and middle imposition (imposition level ≤ 3) (cf. Section 5.2.2 for

detailed information). Finally, as for rapport orientation of the emails, all the members of the three discourse communities admitted that they wanted to manage a harmonious relationship with the email recipients. This variable is thus relatively stable, even though there was a slight difference among the members of the three discourse communities. Specifically, while most emails were judged to be oriented towards maintaining a harmonious relationship between the writers and recipients, a small number of emails were judged to be oriented towards building or strengthening a harmonious relationship.

Finally, the criterion variables in this study referred to language use in the emails. Specifically, they were rapport-management strategies involved in discourse strategies; request strategies in the head acts of email message; the type and amount of syntactic and lexical modifications; and the request perspectives. Unlike the predictor variables, which were analyzed in a quantitative way, these variables could hardly be numerically valued. Therefore, they were analyzed qualitatively. Table 4.3 summarizes these criterion variables and their operationalization.

Table 4.3 Criterion variables and operationalization

Criterion Variables	Operationalization
1. Discourse Strategies (Rapport-management strategies in discourse domain and stylistic domain)	
a. Move options	Identifying move components and numbers in different groups of data by the researcher
b. Opening and Closings of the emails	Identifying the components in openings and closings of emails by the researcher
c. The permissible order of the moves	Identifying the moves order in emails by the researcher
2. Request strategies of head acts (Rapport-management strategies in illocutionary domain)	
a. Directness Levels	Identifying the directness level of the head acts of request in emails by the researcher
b. Syntactic modifiers	Identification by the researcher
c. Lexical modifiers	Identification by the researcher
d. Requestive perspectives	Identification by the researcher

As Table 4.3 illustrates, four factors (move options; openings and closings of the emails; the permissible move orders; and the linguistic features) were involved in identifying discourse strategies. And four factors (directness levels; syntactic modifiers; lexical factors; and request perspective) were involved in identifying the requestive strategies in the head acts of the emails. Before the identification of these factors of criterion variables, a feasible coding framework had to be constructed. In the next section, a coding framework of the current study will be detailed.

4.5.2 Coding framework of the study

The coding framework was constructed on the basis of Swales (1990) and Bhatia's (1993, 2004) notion of genre analysis and the famous CCSARP coding framework (1989). In the light of Bhatia (2004, p.23), genre is a "recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s)", which could be realized by moves and steps. A move is a higher unit above one or more steps. The head act refers, according to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p.275), to "the minimal unit which can realize a request and it is the core of the request sequence." It is usually constructed with other components such as alerters and supportive moves to form a request sequence. An alerter refers to a factor which is utilized to draw the hearer's attention to the subsequent speech act like calling the hearer's name or job titles such as "professor" or "waiter". And supportive moves are external to the head acts occurring either before or after it. A speaker would usually like to mitigate or aggravate his request in using some specific supportive moves.

It is worthwhile noticing that none of the frameworks were originally applied to request sequence in emails. Furthermore, we can see that the study needs to modify and add some other communication moves to cover new rhetorical functions in both Chinese and English emails. Therefore, on the basis on the framework of Blum-Kulka, Swale and Bhatia, a modified coding framework was constructed which additionally developed Al-Ali's (2004) coding schemes on English and Arabic job application letters, Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) coding scheme on head acts of request emails, Chen's (2001) coding scheme on English request emails and Zhu's (2000) coding scheme on Chinese and English sales letters.

As a result, the email was then coded into five components which include at least one move: Subject Line, Openings, Supportive Moves, Head Acts and Closings. To illustrate these components, an email from the English data by an ESs is coded in the following:

Subject Line: Interlace Article

(Opening) Hello... (With the teacher' given name),

(Supportive Moves) I know this is a long shot, but I remember you using a really interesting article on interlace back when we did OE: Language, Texts and Culture... It had lots of lovely pictures. **(Head Acts of requests)** Can you by any chance remember who it was by?

(Closings) Thank you. All best,

(Signature with Writer's given name)

These components realize different functions and contain rapport-management strategies in different domains of the request emails. Furthermore, the Openings, Closings and Supportive Moves were usually composed of more than one move. In the following sub-section, the functions of each of the components and the related moves are identified and illustrated with the examples adopted from the corpus of the study.

4.5.2.1 Moves and their functions

In the corpus for this study, moves within each component of emails were identified. Meanwhile, their functions are explained, with some examples, in addition to the afore-quoted email correspondingly.

1. Subject Line The subject line contains one same-named move-type - *Subject Line* of the email on the first page of the recipient's inbox. The communicative purpose of this move is either to draw the reader's attention to the requestive aims, like the email exemplified above, or to give the sender's name or other relevant information.

2. Openings It functions as an identifying and/or saluting message to the target addressee, as well as identifying the addressor. It could be realized through one to two moves.

1) *Opening Salutations*. This move functions as the starting point of an email with an address and/or greetings for the recipient. It includes address forms such as *Dear (Respected) + recipients' names*, and Greetings (e.g. *Hi! How are you! Hope you are well!* Or the typical Chinese way like *Nin hao* which means *Hello, Respected you*).

2) *Identifying Self*. The function of this move is to introduce the email writer to the target addressee by including the writer's name and/or background information. It typically appears in the Chinese email corpus as *I am...(full name) with personal information*.

3. Supportive Moves The coding of this component is based on the classification of the CCSARP project and two other scholars (Byon, 2004; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008), for some additions and modifications were judged necessary to the collected data. As a result, ten moves were identified in the corpus. Among them, many were mitigating supportive moves, probably because of the non-equivalent status between the writer (low status) and the target addressee (high status). In addition, two additional moves such as an additional justification and an additional elaboration were also identified. They were truly additional because they were not merely repetitions of another move (Virtanen & Maricic, 2000). The ten moves are illustrated with the examples from the email data below:

1) *Responding to an Earlier Email*. This move is usually employed in the follow-up emails, i.e. responding to the other side's emails, such as *Thanks for getting back to me despite post-flight fatigue*. Almost all the emails collected for the current study were the first initial-unprompted emails in the series, so this move appeared in only one email by the Chinese-speaking (hereafter CS) discourse community and 3 emails in the English-speaking (hereafter ES) discourse community.

2) *Providing Background Information*. This move, according to Ho (2011b) and Mann et al. (1992), provides background information related to requests to recipients, given in order to help the recipients make better sense of the request. In this way, the recipient's ability to comprehend the request can be improved. For example, in the English corpus,

a postgraduate student needed the instructor to give some advice, and then he stated that he had a problem and made the following enquiry (The move *Providing Background Information* is italicized):

I was wondering if... *I'm writing my results up at the moment and just have a few things I'd like to talk to you about.*

3) *Request Justification (Additional Justification)*. The justification move mainly refers to some supportive reasons, explanations or justifications for the requests (Blum-Kulka, 1989; Virtanen & Maricic, 2000). The email writer usually uses this move to convince the recipients to comply with the requests (Ho, 2011b). According to Yukl (2006), the move is usually realized in the form of a number of 'influence tactics'. For example, in the email exemplified above, the writer asked the recipient for the name of the writer of an article and repeated the reason in the following:

*..I remember you using a really interesting article on interlace back when we did
OE: Language, Texts and Culture... It had lots of lovely pictures...*

4) *Preparator*. A *Preparator* is, according to Trosborg (1995), used by email writers to prepare his/her request in the following ways: 1) preparing the speech act through which the requester wants the addressee to know that he/she is to anticipate a request; 2) checking the availability which refers to an announcement of a request by asking about the availability of something or for the permission of the addressee to make the request; and 3) getting a precommitment of a request. The three types of preparators were found in the corpus with the following examples:

There is something I'd like you to help me...
Will you be in the lab tomorrow afternoon? (Checking the availability for an appointment)
Could you do me a favour...?

5) *Elaborating/Addressing Related Issue (Additional Elaboration)*. This move serves to make the request more explicit by stating the issues related with the request or "providing some additional information about the requested act to the recipient" (Ho, 2011b). For example, the writer reported their thinking or the progress of their research when they requested a guide/feedback, or they showed their availability to the addressees when they requested an appointment.

6) *Apology*. An *Apology* was made in the email as the writer thought he/she had caused some trouble for the recipient with the request. For example: *There were some embarrassing errors on my part, for which I apologise. Or I am sorry that I have to be absent from the class tomorrow* (Translation from Chinese by the researcher).

7) *Showing Gratitude/Appreciation*. This move refers to email writers showing appreciation/gratitude for the anticipated help which will be given by the recipient upon the request. In contrast to the *Thanks* move labelled in the current study, which only appeared at the very ends of emails, the move appeared relatively flexibly in emails. Moreover, it was always longer and more sophisticated than the *Thanks* move in term of sentence length and syntactical structure. For example, *Thanks for what you will do for me* (Translation from Chinese).

8) *Attending to Recipients' Situation*. This move roughly corresponds to the moves of 'disarmer' and 'imposition minimizer' named by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). It was utilized by the email writers to attend to a recipients' situation such as acknowledgement of the imposition of the request. In this way, the latent objections from the recipients were expected to be eliminated. For example, *I know you are very busy...but...* (Make an appointment).

9) *Expressing Wishes/Compliments/Promise (EWCP)*. This move was adapted from the move named *Expressing Feelings/Ideas/Emotion/Wishes (EFIEW)* in Ho's (2011b) research on the management of rapport in the request emails by a group of English teachers in Hong Kong. However, it is argued in this study that the move was not defined explicitly. For example, in Ho's study, the move was put along with the *Showing Gratitude* move. Actually, showing gratitude or appreciation is expressing a kind of feeling/emotion. Therefore, the move of *EFIEW* is very fuzzy and thus renamed with *Expressing Wishes/Compliments/Promises (EWCP)* in the current study. In this way, it avoids being too broad to name a move. In addition, a typical move in emails, such as *Making complimentary remarks/strong will/a promise*, could be revealed. For example, *Your lecture was really fantastic!* Or, I have to ask for a leave. *But I will borrow notes from other students and learn it well* (Translation from Chiense).

10) *Referring to the Document*. This move was used by the writer to refer to attached document(s) outside of the email. It served to remind the recipient to read other documents which were attached in the emails. For example: *The proposal is put in the attachment for your reading.*

4. Requesting (Additional requesting). Requesting is the ‘*Head Act*’ of request which refers to “the minimal unit which can realize a request and it is the core of the request sequence” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.275). It plays a role in getting the recipients to perform speech acts of request. Therefore, the move is regarded as the backbone of request emails because it occurs in every email (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008). It is central to the main communication purpose of the emails. Besides the *Head acts of requests* in the emails, some email writers also made additional related requests in the emails.

5. Closings The function of this component of emails is invariably to bring the email to a pleasant close. It is usually composed of one to four following possible moves.

1) *Looking forward to Further Contact*. This move might possibly borrow from print epistolary correspondence conventions like *I look forward to hearing from you (soon)* or *Hope to hear from you soon*. It is used by the writers to convey an expectation that the recipients will contact the sender at a later stage.

2) *Thanks*. This move appeared at the end of the emails. In addition to showing gratitude to the recipients, the move, which occurred at the end, may serve as a device to end the email and hence is more likely to be very short and simple. For example:

Thanks!

Many thanks!

Cheers!

Thank you for your time.

3) *Complimentary Close*. The function of this move is always to bring the email to a pleasant close. It is usually composed of two parts (steps): *Good wishes* and *Formulaic expressions* such as *Kind regards* or *Regards*. It functions to bring the emails to the end.

In Chinese emails, the writers preferred to employ the expressions from print epistolary correspondence conventions, like *End with my respect*.

4) *Signing off*. This move was also used to bring the emails to an end. The email writers may sign their given name or full name with/without their personal information. In some Chinese emails, some writers put the date after their names to end the emails.

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that the identification of moves above, especially the identification of supported moves, might not be perfect. Specifically, some moves seem not to be very strictly exclusive to each other. For example, the move *Apology* might be treated as the move of *Attending to the Recipients* because apology might be regarded as a way to attend to the recipients. However, to fully disclose rapport-management strategies, the preference for identification work was to be carried out with sensitivity.

4.5.2.2 Coding framework of requestive strategies of head acts

As has been emphasized above, the head acts of requests play a pivotal role in request emails. Therefore, much weight is attached in the current study to the analysis of requestive strategies and the linguistic realization of these head acts. Following on Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) suggestions, the adapted CCSARP framework was employed for current email coding because the email data included some strategies which were not equivalent to the coding system of the CCSARP. Specifically, categories 4, 6 and 9, i.e., *Locution derivable*, *Suggestory formula* and *Mild hints* in the taxonomy of CCSARP were not found in the students' emails. And the request act sentence *I hope you can...* was coded as *Expectation statement* in the present study.

The request acts were grouped into three directness levels following the CCSARP: Direct (D), Conventional Indirect (CID), and Nonconventional Indirect (NCID), which are further categorized into 6 subcategories according to the directness levels. These are illustrated below with examples from the data under investigation:

Coding categories in the present study:

1. Conventional Directness (CD)

- (1) *Imperatives* (e.g. *Please read it and tell me if any improvement is needed.*)
(Translations from Chinese by the researcher)
- (2) *Performatives* (e.g. *I'm emailing for your suggestion...*)
- (3) *Want Statement* (e.g. *I want to have an appointment with you....*) (Translations from Chinese by the researcher)
- (4) *Expectation Statement* (e.g. *I hope I could have the opportunity to have a word with you and have your advice on my proposal.*)

2. Conventional Indirectness (CID)

- (5) *Query Preparatory*
(e.g. *Can you check something for me on the Bodleian ms?*
Or *I just wondered if you knew of any books that set out OE dialect information from the perspective of each dialect.*)

3. Non-conventional Indirectness (NCID)

- (6) *Strong Hint* (Requestive aim: asking for proofreading. e.g., *Do you think this essay needs to be improved?*) (Translations from Chinese by the researcher)

Furthermore, within each sentence for head act in English emails, syntactic and lexical devices that mitigated the imposition of requests were identified in the present study. They are presented below with examples from the corpus:

1. Syntactic modifiers:

- (1) Interrogative sentences, such as *can/could/would you...* and *may/can I....*
- (2) Past tenses such as, *I was wondering...., could you...? Would you...?*
- (3) Progressive aspects, like *I was wondering...* and *I am wondering...*
- (4) If or whether clauses, such as *I was/am wondering if...; I appreciate if ...; If..., can/would you...; I want to know if you could...; Could I ask whether I can...*

2. Lexical modifiers:

- (1) *Please*
- (2) Downtoners: *possibly, possible*
- (3) Understaters: *a little, just,*
- (4) Hedgers: *some, any*
- (5) Subjectivizers: *I was wondering..., I want to know..., I hope...*

Besides these mitigation devices, the request perspective employed by the students in the email requests was also examined within the CCSARP framework. Four perspectives were found out and are illustrated below with an example from the data:

- (1) I (speaker)-perspective: *I want to have an appointment with you....*
- (2) You (hearer)-perspective: *Can you check something for me on the Bodleian ms?*
- (3) We (speaker and hearer)-perspective: *Shall we meet at the front of ...?*
- (4) Impersonal perspective: *Would it be possible to have a meeting to go over a draft of my essay on Caxton someday soon?*

4.5.3 Procedures for data analysis

It was proposed that the collected data be analyzed from both emic and etic perspectives. This is because “both emic and etic approaches are needed for methodologically sound cross-cultural research” (Gudykunst, 2000, p.294). At the same time, both approaches were required to be used by the research questions. Generally, the etic approach was used to answer the first and the second research questions. And the emic approach was used to answer the third question. The procedures for data analysis in terms of these two approaches are detailed respectively below.

As Gudykunst (2000) reviews, the etic approach is often associated with the use of quantitative methods of research. It is used to explore and compare linguistic behaviour among many cultures from a position outside the system. Following this approach, a top-down approach to discourse analysis was employed in the current study, i.e. exploring and comparing rapport-management strategies in different domains of emails. Specifically, at the macro-textual level, the analysis will focus on rhetorical structure (discourse domain). A move analysis will be conducted as a first step towards

investigating the discourse domain of rapport management. The differences between the three groups of requestive emails in the study will be demonstrated by (i) the moves involved in the emails and the number and frequency of moves in each group; (ii) openings and closings of the emails, which involves genre-appropriate terms of address or use of honorifics (stylistic domain); (iii) the order of the staging of the moves; and (iv) the linguistic realizations the moves involved.

At the micro-textual level, the analysis will concentrate on 1) head acts which involve directness levels (illocutionary domain) and mitigation devices (choice of genre-appropriate lexis and syntax, which belongs to stylistic domain); and 2) choices of request perspectives (illocutionary domain). The non-verbal domain will be left out of consideration as there are few non-lexical features appearing in the corpus of the study.

The above procedures were performed to answer the first research question (which embraces four sub-questions), which is mainly concerned with a cross-cultural study on the rapport- management strategies in the request emails (more detail for addressing the first research question, cf. Chapter 5). In addition, a pattern evaluation from outside of the discourse communities (or from the researcher's perspective) to the rapport-management strategies was carried out to find the relational work among three discourse communities. In this way, the second research question was approached.

A descriptive analysis will be used for analysing and reporting the linguistic behaviour such as moves, linguistic realization of moves, and linguistic features of the head acts. In other words, only raw numbers and percentages will be reported. However, some inferential statistics analyses, such as one-way ANOVA, will be conducted on the perception of the contextual variables and SIPs by the three discourse communities. This is because, compared to the perception which happens by the research design and prescription, the use of some specific linguistic behaviour is by choice. Therefore, the linguistic behaviour, to some extent, happens by chance, which thus makes it unnecessarily to do a referential statistics analysis. Moreover, as we will see in Section 5.3.3, frequencies of some linguistic behaviour, like salutation forms in openings, are very low and thus unreliable for a referential analysis.

These socio-psychological factors, as demonstrated in Section 2.2, might influence the choices of rapport-management strategies. The related Chinese and British social-cultural factors were explored in order to interpret choices of rapport-management strategies in the three corpora of request emails.

The third research question was approached in term of emic analysis. As Gudykunst (2000) describes, the emic approach is often associated with qualitative analysis. It concerns linguistic behaviour within cultures. The emic/qualitative approach was employed to explore some discursive rapport management strategies of request emails within each group, which are based on the analysis of the identification of relational work in the emails. In addition, on the basis of the individual's own perception, it studies the individual's realization of rapport-management strategies within the three discourse communities (more detail for addressing Research questions 2 and 3, cf. Chapter 6).

Results of data analysis will be reported in English, despite the fact that some data (emails) were originally proposed in Chinese. The reliability of the translation is guaranteed by cooperation by the researcher and his former colleague, both of whom were bilingual in Chinese and English. Any discrepancies will be negotiated by the two translators. More importantly, the translation is not likely to constitute a severe threat to the comparability of Chinese and English data in this study. The data analysis, i.e. classifying and coding moves, the analysis of discourse structure and the analysis of requestive strategy were conducted on original Chinese data rather than on the translation script. Therefore, the comparison was mainly conducted on the level of meaning, i.e. pragmatic and discourse levels, rather than form levels, i.e. syntactic forms. Even though the translation job might have some insufficiencies, the cross-linguistic comparison of the two languages is not affected.

Because this research involved human beings, certain ethical guidelines were followed. In the following section, some ethical considerations, such as ethics approval, access and responsibilities to participants, data storage and protection and other ethics problems, are discussed.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is an essential (Rundblad, 2006) part of research design and it needs careful consideration. This study has strictly abided by the policy set out by the Ethics Committee of the University of Sheffield. Specifically, it firstly obtained ethics approval from the university before participants were approached. The potential for physical harm to the students in this study was very minor, but the potential for psychological stress to students might arise. It was mainly because the students might worry that confidential information such as some personal and academic information might be publicized. Therefore, the students were thoroughly informed about the study, including the objectives of the research, possible consequences, and issues of confidentiality and data security. In the case of questionnaires, the content and line of questioning were highly sensitive upon a participant's comfort and privacy. Considering the nature of the research activity, an individual's consent was obtained through email writing. Meanwhile, prior to their participation, the participants were told they had a right to refuse to participate in and/or to withdraw from the research at any stage.

On the consent form, the students were fully informed about all aspects of the research project, namely:

- the nature and objectives of the project;
- the methodology of the project and conditions for conducting it;
- who would be undertaking it
- the potential risks and inconveniences that may arise;
- the potential benefits that may result;
- what participation in the research would require;

Since naturally occurring emails were collected, and these email letters were inevitably related to the university instructors who received the emails, consideration was also paid to the instructors. The students were told to anonymise the instructors' name before they submitted the email to the researcher. Furthermore, the data were mainly collected through email systems, so the student's name and email address automatically appeared on the computer system. Information about the students (email address, name etc) and email data were stored separately.

In summary, the collection, storage, disclosure and use of research data has complied with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Any personal information of the participants remains strictly confidential and anonymous at all times. In addition, pseudonyms for the email senders and receivers were used in reporting the results of this research.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has expounded the complete design adopted for the study. To summarize, it has provided descriptive information of the participants from three discourse communities (i.e. CSs, ESs, and CESs) who offered 187 request emails. It has detailed the instruments (i.e. background questionnaire, a space for pasting emails and a questionnaire for some structured questions) for collecting data. It has further described the procedures for data collections and data analysis. It was proposed to conduct the data analysis from both etic and emic perspectives. The chapter finally discussed some ethical considerations of data collection, storing and publishing. In the following chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6), the results of the analysis are presented, which will address the research questions of the study.

Chapter 5 Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is primarily aimed at addressing the first research question of this study (see Section 1.3 for more detail) on how each discourse community from different cultural backgrounds generally manage rapport in request email. At the same time, it will discuss some interconnected socio-psychological factors, such as some contextual factors like the participants' perception of social relations, face and rapport, rights and obligations and task achievement, etc. As discussed in Chapter 2, these factors might function as explanatory variables to the choices of rapport-management strategies in the emails.

Given these issues, the chapter is divided into five sections. Section 5.2 summarizes requestive aims of the emails by members from the three discourse communities. In addition, any perceived imposition of these requests in emails by these members is also discussed and compared among the three communities. Section 5.3 presents rapport-management strategies in the emails employed by members of the three discourse communities. The rapport-management strategies mainly lie in three out of five domains, i.e. discourse domain, stylistic domain, and illocutionary domain. Moreover, to further investigate the pragmalinguistic competence of members from the Chinese English-speaking (hereafter CES) discourse community, this section is also dedicated to an exploration of mitigation features in head acts of requests in the English emails by members of the English-speaking (hereafter ES) and the CES discourse communities. Section 5.4 explores the perceived judgements of the email writers themselves on the relationship between the email writers and the recipients. It also discusses the perceived importance of the five Social Interactional Principles (SIPs). In this way, some socio-psychological factors which may give rise to the choices of rapport-management strategies are revealed. Finally, Section 5.5 makes a summary of this chapter.

5.2 Requestive Aims and Perceived Imposition of the Requests

This section compares the requestive aims of the emails by members of the three discourse communities. In addition, it explores members' perceptions of the imposition of the request in their emails.

5.2.1 Requestive aims of the emails

The requestive aims of the emails sent by the graduate students to the university instructors broadly fell into three topics:

(1) Requesting an appointment (e.g. calling for an appointment itself; asking about the availability of an appointment; and rescheduling an appointment);

(2) Requesting assistance for research or assignments (e.g. asking for proofreading and/or feedback; asking for guidance/advice to research or experiment; asking special consideration like changing research topic; extending the submission or recommending books; borrowing books/notes)

(3) Requesting an arrangement or a consideration other than an appointment, research or assignments (e.g. asking for permission of absence from class; applying for a job/membership of a research group; or asking for a reference)

Tables 5.1-5.3 demonstrate the sub-categories of the three categories of requestive aims in the three discourse communities. The most popular general requestive emails for the three communities were requesting assistance for their research or assignments like essays, research papers and dissertations (CSs, 73.9%; ESs, 66.7%; and CESs, 67.7%). Since all the research participants were postgraduate students in the universities, it was not surprising that most emails by the participants were aimed at achieving assistance for their research.

As Table 5.1 shows, the ESs and CESs were more likely to make appointments with the university instructors (21.7%; 16.1% respectively) than the CSs (6.2%) in their request emails. Among these emails for generally requesting appointments, the postgraduate students tended to call for an appointment itself with the instructors more often than to make a request for an available time or to reschedule an appointment.

Table 5.1 Sub-categories of requesting appointment out of the three groups of emails

Sub-category	CSs (T=65)	ESs (T=60)	CESs (T=62)	Total (T=187)
Calling for an appointment itself	2 (3.1%)	7 (11.7%)	5 (8.1%)	14 (7.5%)
Asking about the time when the teacher is available	2 (3.1%)	3 (5.0%)	3 (4.8%)	8 (4.3%)
Rescheduling an appointment	0	3 (5.0%)	2 (3.2%)	5 (2.7%)
Sub-total	4 (6.2%)	13 (21.7%)	10 (16.1%)	27 (14.4%)

Considering the sub-category aims at requesting assistance for research or assignments in the request emails, Table 5.2 shows that the postgraduate students under study generally preferred to ask for proofreading and/or feedback on their essays or papers (28.9%) and to ask for guidance/advice on their research or experiments (25.7%). These two requestive aims were followed by the aims of asking for special consideration (10.7%) and borrowing books/notes (3.2%). However, among the three communities, the frequency order displayed a slight difference. As for the ESs and the CESs, they asked for proofreading and/or feedback on their essays or papers most frequently (35.0%, 26.7% respectively, the CESs asked for proofreading and/or feedback in their emails as often as the emails for requesting guidance/advice). While for the CSs, they wrote request emails for guidance more often than the request emails for proofreading and/or feedback (32.3% vs. 26.2%).

Table 5.2 Sub-categories of requesting assistance or assignments out of the three groups of emails

Sub-category	CSs (T=65)	ESs (T=60)	CESs (T=62)	Total (T=187)
Asking for proofreading and/or feedback	17 (26.2%)	21 (35.0%)	16 (26.7%)	54 (28.9%)
Asking for guidance/advice to research or experiment	21 (32.3%)	11 (18.3%)	16 (26.7%)	48 (25.7%)
Asking for special considerations	6 (9.2%)	6 (10.0%)	8 (12.9%)	20 (10.7%)
Borrowing books/notes	4 (6.2%)	2 (3.3%)	0	6 (3.2%)
Sub-total	48 (73.9%)	40 (66.7%)	42 (67.7%)	130 (69.5%)

As for the aim of requesting an arrangement or a consideration other than appointments, research or assignments in the emails, the CSs (20%) were more likely to write emails to ask for permission of absence from class; while the ESs and CESs groups (2, 3.3%; 2, 3.2% respectively) seldom wrote emails for this purpose. On the other hand, the ESs and CESs wrote some emails to apply for some assistant jobs in the university and to ask for some references while the CNSs did not at all. Table 5.3 below shows the percentage of these sub-category requestive aims out of the total number of emails in each community.

Table 5.3 Sub-categories of requesting an arrangement or a consideration other than appointment, research or assignments out of the three groups of emails

Sub-category	CSs (T = 65)	ESs (T = 60)	CESs (T = 62)	Total (T = 187)
Asking for permission of absence from class	13 (20%)	2 (3.3%)	2 (3.2%)	17 (9.1%)
Applying for a job/joining a seminar	0	4 (6.6%)	6 (9.7%)	10 (5.3%)
Being a referee	0	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.2%)	3 (1.6%)
Sub-total	13 (20%)	7 (11.7%)	10 (16.1%)	30 (16.0%)

5.2.2 Perceived imposition of the requests in the emails

As described in Chapter 3, the research participants were asked to give a judgement on the imposition degree, with a 5-point Likert scale of the requests made in their emails. Based on the judgement of the participants, it was found that the perceived imposition degree within the three groups was relatively similar. Also, the judgement of the imposition degree among the three groups was similar.

Specifically, most members of the three communities marked the imposition degree in their email as low (Degree ≤ 2) and middle imposition (Degree = 3). Few of the email requests were judged as high imposition (Degree ≥ 4). Table 5.4 details the frequencies of the participants' assessment of imposition degree of the email requests in each group.

Table 5.4 Frequencies of the participants' assessment of imposition degree of the email requests

Imposition Group	Frequency of low imposition (Degree ≤ 2)	Frequency of middle imposition (Degree = 3)	Frequency of high imposition (Degree ≥ 4)
CSs (n = 65)	52 (80.0%)	10 (15.4%)	3 (4.6%)
ESs (n = 60)	40 (66.7%)	16 (26.6%)	4 (6.7%)
CESs (n = 62)	50 (80.6%)	8 (12.9%)	4 (6.5%)
Total (n = 187)	140 (74.9%)	34 (18.2%)	13 (6.9%)

As shown in Table 5.4, the three groups of participants assessed the imposition degree of the email requests in a highly consistent way. Generally, the majority of the requests were judged as low or middle impositions (74.9%, 18.2%) in the corpus of emails. Only a small number of email requests were marked as high imposition (6.9%). As for the CS academic discourse community, 80.0% of the email requests were judged as low imposition; 15.4% of the email requests middle imposition, and 4.6% of the email requests high imposition. As for the ES academic discourse community, a smaller number of the email requests (66.7%) were judged as low imposition than those of the CSs, but a larger number of the email requests (26.6%) were judged as middle imposition, and 6.7% of the email requests were judged as high imposition. Finally, for the CES academic discourse community, 80.6% of the email requests were judged as low imposition, 12.9% of the email requests middle imposition and 6.5% as middle imposition.

Table 5.5 demonstrates the results of a further quantitative comparison of the ratings of imposition among the three discourse communities. It shows that the three discourse communities marked imposition of the requests under 3 on average, which was lower than the medium value of a 5 scale-Likert (CSs: $M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.808$; ESs: $M = 2.18$, $SD = 0.873$; and CESs, $M = 1.90$, $SD = 0.953$). Therefore, it is safe to claim that imposition of the requests in the emails was judged to be low in general. Moreover, a one-way ANOVA test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference of ratings by members of the three discourse communities ($F = 2.944$, $P = 0.055$), in spite that a post-hoc test tells that a significant difference existed between the ratings from the CSs and the ESs ($P = 0.020 < 0.05$).

Table 5.5 Perceived imposition degree of the requests in the emails of the three discourse communities

Table 5.5a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.551	2	2.275	2.944	.055
Within Groups	142.187	184	.773		
Total	146.738	186			

Table 5.5b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	-.368[*]	.157	.020	-.68	-.06
	CESs	-.088	.156	.574	-.40	.22
ESs	CSs	.368[*]	.157	.020	.06	.68
	CESs	.280	.159	.080	-.03	.59
CESs	CSs	.088	.156	.574	-.22	.40
	ESs	-.280	.159	.080	-.59	.03

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

To summarize, the perceived imposition of the email requests was generally assessed to be low across all the three discourse communities. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference between the average assessments of the imposition among the three communities. These show that few members of the three academic discourse communities were happy to provide high-imposition request emails for the current study. This is possibly because not many members wrote such high-imposition request emails, like requesting a reference or some special consideration. On the other hand, it is also possibly due to the fact that the participants were reluctant to put themselves at risk by providing high-imposition email requests to the study.

5.3 Rapport-management Strategies

This section analyzes rapport-management strategies in emails employed by members of three discourse communities. Based on this analysis, quantitative (raw numbers and percentages as described in Section 4.5.3) and qualitative similarities and differences in the way members of the three discourse communities managed rapport in three domains were investigated. The three domains refer to discourse domain, illocutionary domain, and stylistic domain (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). The discourse domain mainly involves move structure and rhetorical structure of the emails. The stylistic domain mainly involves the use of address terms and the choice of tone (formality). And the illocutionary domain mainly involves the requestive strategies of head acts of requests in emails and linguistic realization of the head acts. In what follows, the way of

managing rapport by members of the three discourse communities is presented sequentially after a detailed move analysis of the emails.

5.3.1 Move analysis of the emails

This sub-section, together with Sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.4, aims at answering the first sub-question of Research Question 1 concerning the rhetorical structures of the emails of the three discourse communities. As discussed in Chapter 2, rhetoric discourse move refers to an element in the textual space of discourse analysis under Bhatia's (2004) multi-perspective framework. The moves which perform communicative or rhetorical functions in the request emails are identified. A total of 19 individual moves, together with the examples extracted from the corpora of emails, which performed different functions, are identified and listed in Table 5.6. Nevertheless, the *Postscript* move only appeared once in ESS' emails and was thus excluded from the table.

Table 5.6 Moves traced in the three groups of emails

Move	Examples from the email corpus	Number of emails including the move		
		CSs (T = 65)	ESs (T = 60)	CEs (T = 62)
1. Subject Line	<i>Interlace Article</i>	49 (70.7%)	58 (96.7%)	53(85.5%)
2. Opening Salutation	<i>Hello Y (given name)</i>	64 (98.5%)	57 (95.0%)	62(100%)
3. Identifying Oneself	<i>I am...(full name)+ personal information</i>	17 (26.2%)	3 (5.0%)	20 (32.2%)
4. Responding to Earlier Email	<i>Thanks for getting back to me despite post-flight fatigue.</i>	1 (1.5%)	3 (5.0%)	0
5. Providing back-ground Information	<i>I am making reasonable headway on transcribing book 3...</i> <i>I am currently writing a paper on...</i>	22 (33.9%)	18 (30.0%)	17 (27.4%)
6. Request Justification	<i>I remember you using a really interesting article on interlace back when we did OE: Language, Texts and Culture... It had lots of lovely pictures</i>	50 (76.9%)	45 (75.0%)	58 (93.5%)
Additional Justification		0	3 (5.0%)	4 (6.5%)
7. Preparator	<i>... just have a few things I'd like to talk to you about.</i> <i>There is something I'd like you to help me.</i> <i>Will you be in the lab tomorrow afternoon?</i> <i>Could you do me a favour...?</i>	15 (23.1%)	8 (13.3%)	9 (14.5%)

8. Requesting (head acts)	<i>Can you by any chance remember who it was by?</i>	65 (100%)	60 (100%)	62 (100%)
(Additional Request)	<i>How do you feel about films being included as primary material in the essay?</i>	1 (1.5%)	6 (13.3%)	11 (17.7%)
9. Elaborating/addressing related issues	<i>The address is below... (For an appointment) I am free any time from Tuesday afternoon...</i>	20 (30.8%)	29 (48.3%)	28 (45.2%)
(Additional Elaborating)		0	8 (13.3)	2 (3.2%)
10. Apologies	<i>There were some embarrassing errors on my part, for which I apologise. I am sorry that I have to be absent from the class tomorrow.</i>	10 (15.4%)	8 (13.3%)	10 (16.1%)
11. Showing Gratitude/Appreciation	<i>I appreciate that it is the same information ultimately...</i>	7 (10.8%)	8 (13.3%)	3 (4.8%)
12. Attending to Recipient's Situation	<i>I know you are very busy... Given your current workload...</i>	6 (9.2%)	5 (8.3%)	3 (4.8%)
13. Expressing Wishes/Compliments /Promise	<i>I hope it is not too late and that it is satisfactory (wishes) Your lecture was really fantastic!(compliment) I have to ask for a leave. But I will borrow notes from other students and learn it well. (promise)</i>	26 (40.0%)	12 (20.0%)	11 (17.7%)
14. Referring Documents	<i>The proposal is put in the attachment for your reading.</i>	4 (6.2%)	11 (18.3%)	2 (3.2%)
15. Looking forward to Reply	<i>I look forward to hearing from you (soon) 'Hope to hear from you soon'</i>	4 (6.2%)	3 (5.0%)	11 (17.7%)
16. Thanks	<i>Thanks! Many thanks! Cheers! Thank you for your time.</i>	24 (36.9%)	32 (53.3%)	40 (64.5%)
17. Complimentary Closing	<i>Best wishes or All the best, etc End with my respect.</i>	29 (44.6%)	39 (65.0%)	46 (74.2%)
18. Signing off with writers names	<i>Zhangsan/John</i>	65 (100%)	60 (100%)	62 (100%)
And Signing off with the date	<i>18/04/2010</i>	23 (35.4%)	0	1 (1.6%)

As a result of a move analysis of the emails, it was found that 65 Chinese emails consisted of a totality of 486 moves, which gives an average of 7.5 moves per email. On the other hand, the 60 English emails by ESs consist of a totality of 488 moves, which means every email contains 8.1 moves on average. Furthermore, the 62 English emails by CESs involved 559 moves, which give an average of 9 moves per email.

The three groups of emails under study varied greatly in term of the number and order of the moves in each email. Firstly, Table 5.6 identifies the repertoire of moves in the data; however, the listed moves were seldom contained in one email at the same time. Secondly, the order of the moves listed in Table 5.6 is only one option for the actual order of moves which appeared in the data. The following three extracts show how a fluctuation in the number and order of moves happened in the data (with the move in bracket going before the text).

1. (CSs' email No.31. The English translation is ours)

Subject Line: 请假条

(Opening Salutation) 敬爱的宋老师:

您好, **(Identifying Oneself)**我是选修英美文化概况 2 班的学生, 我的名字....., 学号为 2009104078。 **(Request Justification)**我因在江浦园艺试验地参与实验室活动, 不能回去上课, **(Request)**特请假, 望批准。 **(EWCP)**关于课上的内容, 我会向同学借笔记, 争取不落下课程。

(Complimentary Closing)祝老师工作顺利, 合家欢乐!

(Sign off with full name).....

(Translation script)

Subject Line: a note asking for absence

(Opening Salutation) Respectful and beloved teacher:

(Introducing Oneself) Hello, I am ..., a student in Class... who joined in the optional course Anglo-American Culture Introduction. My student number is 2009104078. **(Request Justification)** I have to participate in and experiment in the

Jiangpu gardening area. Therefore I cannot go back to school to take part in your class. **(Request)** I hereafter ask for a leave and look for your approval. **(EWCP)**As for the teaching content, I will borrow notes from the students who will take part in the class. I pledge I will not miss the content.

(Complimentary Closing) Hope you are OK with your work. Wish happiness to your family.

(Sign off with full name) J

2. (ESs' email No.60)

Subject Line: Meeting

(Opening Salutation) Dear A,

(Attending to the Recipients) We understand that our reviews for landscape are scheduled for 1.15pm next Tuesday. **(Request)** Would it be possible to make this either in the morning or after 2.30pm? **(Request Justification)** Bob in Architecture has planned a talk for all dual students regarding the year out at 1.0clock where we will have the chance to talk with some of the diploma ex kk13 students.

(Thanks) Thank you

(Sign off with given name) S

3. (CEs' email No.39)

Subject Line: my proposal project

(Opening Salutation) Hi V,

Hoping you've got a nice weekend! **(Request Justification)** I did some interviews last week and wrote a new proposal project which is about teaching speaking. Since I'm not quite sure about its appropriation, **(Request)** I was wondering if you could do me a favour to check it for me and give some opinions about it. **(Additional Request)** I'll be grateful if you could recommend some literatures related to my topic. **(Referring to Documents)** Please check the attachment.

(Thanks) Thanks a lot for your patience and efforts! **(Looking forward to Reply)** And I'm looking forward to receiving your feedback soon.

(Complimentary Closing) all the best

(Sign off with full name) Wang

As for the three extracted emails, it was found the other emails in the data under study contained different moves and move orders, which make it hard to find the most typical generic structure of emails under study. However, it could be said that some moves were prototypical or compulsory in the emails, such as moves like *Request Justification* and *Requesting*, while some others were optional, such as moves like *Attending to the Recipients* or *Referring to Documents*. In the following part, the prototypical and compulsory moves and optional moves in the emails by the three discourse communities are identified.

a. *Prototypical Moves*. Following Virtanen and Maricic's (2000) argument that moves appearing in 75% or above emails could be identified as prototypical moves, the requesting move (head acts) expectedly appears in all of the emails, which makes it reasonable to categorize it as a compulsory move and hence a highly prototypical move.

At the same time, it was observed that the moves *Opening Salutation* and *Signing off* were indispensable moves and hence prototypical to all groups of email writers because the two moves appeared in more than 95% of the emails respectively. In addition, the move *Requesting Justification* could also be regarded as prototypical in the three discourse communities. They were comparatively more discursively demanding than any other moves and were used in more than 75% emails in the three discourse communities.

Finally, the move *Subject Line* could also be regarded as a prototypical move to members of the ES and CES discourse communities (96.7%, 85.5%). It seems to be more essential to the ES discourse community than to the CES discourse community. For members of the CS discourse community, this move seems to be the least essential (70.7%). According to the frequency in the emails, this move is more likely not to be regarded as a prototypical move.

b. Optional moves. As a result of the identification of the prototypical moves, it is easily seen that the prototypical move types, except the *Subject Line* move, were the same across the three discourse communities. The move types other than the prototypical moves could be regarded as optional moves in emails of the three discourse communities. These moves are less prominent in the emails than the identified prototypical ones above in terms of their lower frequency in the emails (less than 75%). The following gives a comparison of the frequency of these individual moves in different discourse communities.

The frequency of these optional moves varied among and across the three discourse communities. The most frequent optional moves in both the ES and CES communities were *Complimentary Closing* (65.0%, 74.2% respectively). And the second highest frequent move in both the ES and CES communities was the *Thanks* move (53.3%, 64.5% respectively). In emails by the CSs, the moves of *Complimentary Closing* and *Thanks* appeared relatively less frequently (44.6%, 36.9%) than those in emails by the ESs and the CESs. However, compared with other moves, these two moves appeared more frequently in emails by the CSs.

In considering other optional moves among the emails by the three discourse communities, some other differences were observed and are worth our attention. Firstly, the *Identifying Oneself* move was very rarely used in emails by the ESs; only three emails included the move (5.0%). However, it happens quite frequently in emails by the CSs and the CESs (26.2%, 32.2%). Secondly, the CSs used relatively more moves of *Preparator* and *EWCP* than the other two discourse communities (CSs: 23.1%, 40.0%; ESs: 13.3%, 20.0%, CESs: 14.5%, 11.7%). Thirdly, the ESs (18.3%) used more *Referring to Document* moves than the CSs (6.2%) and the ESs (3.2%). Fourth, the CESs (17.7%) used quite a lot more moves of *Looking forward to Further Contact* than the CSs (6.2%) and the ESs (5.0%). Finally, the CSs used a distinct move *Signing off emails with the date* in their emails (35.4%) while this move did not appear in the emails by the other two discourse communities (only one in the emails by the CESs).

5.3.2 Moves serving rapport management (Discourse domain)

According to Virtanen and Maricic (2000), moves in emails could be classified into two categories: moves mainly performing a referential function and moves mainly performing a persuasive function. Following this classification, the 19 moves in this study were categorized into the following two categories:

Category 1-moves mainly performing a referential function: *Subject Line, Identifying Oneself, Responding to Earlier Email, Providing Background Information, Requesting, Referring to Documents* and *Elaborating, Signing off*.

Category 2-moves mainly performing a persuasive function: *Opening Salutation, Request Justification, Apologies, Showing Gratitude/Appreciation, Attending to Recipients' Situation, Expressing Wishes/Compliment/Promises (EWCP), Looking forward to Reply, Thanks, Complimentary Closing, Signing off*.

However, the line between the two categories is not absolute. As Virtanen and Maricic (2000) note, in some conditions, the two categories are interchangeable. The moves performing a referential function were not necessarily serving the referential goals of genre exclusively. For example, the *Requesting* move mainly fulfilled the primary goal of the request email, i.e., clear and concise description of the required information. The move *Providing Background Information* mainly helps to create a request space. Nevertheless, these two moves can also serve persuasive goals of the genre if the requester/email writer intends to do so.

As Ho (2011b) points out, the persuasive moves in Category 2 are more likely to serve to manage rapport with recipients of emails. Therefore, in what follows, some Category 2 moves, excluding *Openings* and *Closings* and the *Request Justification*, will be focused on at first. The *Openings* and *Closings*, which mainly include moves such as *Opening Salutation, Identifying Oneself, Looking forward to Further Contact, Thanks* and *Complimentary Closing*, are mainly involved in rapport management strategies in the stylistic domain. These two parts will be explored in the following sub-section. In addition, the *Request Justification* move, in relation to the placement of head acts,

constitutes the rhetoric structure of emails. The rhetoric structure will be discussed in another sub-section as the other issue of rapport-management strategies in discourse domain. Moreover, requestive strategies in the *Requesting* move, as a head act of request, plays a major role in realizing both referential and persuasive goals and hence will be highlighted in the other sub-section. In this way, rapport-management strategies in the illocutionary domain will be addressed.

However, to begin with, a Category 1 move, i.e. *Subject Line*, is discussed because it is found that this move has also been employed by some email writers to serve rapport management. These individual moves are described and exemplified by instances from the corpus under study.

SUBJECT LINE

The move *Subject Line* occurred in almost every email (96.7%) in the ESs' data. In contrast, the subject line did not appear very frequently in the CSs' data. Only 49 (70.7%) of the emails by the CSs employed it. On the other hand, the frequency of this kind of move in the CESs' data was higher than that of the CSs' data, while it was lower than that of ESs' data. Fifty three emails (85.5%) contained such kinds of move in the CESs' data.

For the content of the subject lines, English emails by both ESs and CESs tended to concentrate on the immediate requestive aims, which might enable the recipients to obtain the related request information before access to the emails. The following four subject lines from four emails are examples:

4. 4a: *Supervision Meeting*
- 4b: *Language Analysis Assignment*
- 4c: *MA Dissertation Proposal*
- 4d: *Project Description*

The first two subject lines were taken from the ESs' data. In the first example, the writer wanted to make an appointment with her supervisor to discuss some problems in her writing-up process. In the second email, the writer requested a lecturer to pay attention to her submission of an analysis assignment.

The third and fourth subject lines were taken from the CESs' data. Comparable to the subject lines in the ESs' data, these two subject lines also described related issues with the requestive aims. In the email with the third subject line, the writer wanted to have an appointment with her supervisor to discuss her proposal of an MA dissertation. In the email with the fourth subject line, the writer requested the lecturer to read his project description and then give him some feedback.

However, the subject lines in the two groups of English email data also had some differences. All the subject lines, except one in ESs' data, were presented with a phrase and addressed the issues which were explicitly and directly related to requestive aims. In CESs' data, some subject lines were presented with full sentences. And 9 of the subject lines (14.4% of the total number of CESs' emails) were not directly or explicitly related to requestive aims. These subject lines were presented with the writers' personal information such as *from ... (the writers' names)* or apologies like *I am sorry...*

The difference in subject lines between ESs and CESs group can be further found from a comparison of Chinese emails and English emails. In contrast to the explicit and direct subject lines in English emails, a relatively large number of Chinese emails (29.3% against the total of CSs' emails) in the CSs' data did not have explicit or direct subject lines. Some of the emails expressed greetings like *hello* in the subject lines. Other emails presented the writers' names with student names and some others just expressed requestive aims generally, like *help*.

To conclude, the *Subject Line* in the ESs' emails seemed to perform a referential function exclusively. However, for both CSs and CEs, the *Subject Line* seems to perform not only a referential function but also a persuasive function. In contrast with the ESs under study, the CSs and CESs had a tendency to use the *Subject Line* move to manage rapport with others.

OTHER MOVES

Pertaining to some Category 2 moves excluding moves in Openings and Closing parts of emails, some observations are worth our attention. Firstly, it was found that nearly all

the moves (i.e. *Preparator*, *Apologies*, *Showing Gratitude* and *Attending to the Recipients*), except *EWCP*, were merely optional for they occurred in less than 25% emails of all the three discourse communities. Of these optional moves, the *Preparator* move was comparatively used by more CSs (23.1%) than the ESs (13.3%) and the CESs (14.5%). The moves of *Showing Gratitude* and *Attending to the Recipients* were least necessary to the CESs (4.8% for both moves) than to members of the other two discourse communities.

The CSs relied more heavily on the move *EWCP* (40%) in managing rapport than the other two discourse communities (the ESs, 20%; the CESs, 17.7%). This is because in CSs' emails, the *EWCP* move was used for expressing wishes/hopes (12.3%), compliments (4.6%) and promise (23.1%), while in the ESs' and the CESs' emails, the *EWCP* move was used only for expressing a wish/hope.

5.3.3 Openings and Closings (discourse domain and stylistic domain)

This sub-section answers the second sub-question of Research Question 1 on what the general features of openings and closing are in the emails of three discourse communities. The stylistic domain mainly involves the stylistic aspect of emails like choices of tone (for example, formal or informal), choices of lexis and syntax and use of genre-appropriate address terms and honorifics (Spence-Oatey, 2000). These stylistic aspects are mainly represented in the moves in Openings and Closings of emails. Therefore, moves of these two components of emails are detailed below to investigate how members of the three discourse communities handled these moves appropriately. In so doing, rapport management strategies in the stylistic domain, as well as in the discourse domain (move content), will be revealed.

OPENINGS

The openings of emails were involved in two moves: the move *Opening Salutation*, which is composed of address terms, salutations and greetings; and the move *Identifying Oneself*. The following details the distributions of these features discovered in emails of the CS, ES and CES discourse communities.

1) Address terms

The address term was divided into two contrasting forms: the formal address term and the informal address term. The formal address term is usually combined with the title and surname of the recipient or is just formalized with the title only. In Chinese data, the title was exclusively presented by *Laoshi* which means ‘teacher’ or ‘professor’. In English data, the title was usually presented by using the recipient’s academic title like *professor* or *doctor*. Or sometimes it was presented by *Mr*, *Mrs*, *Sir* or *Madam*. On the other hand, the informal address in this study refers to addressing the recipient’s name (given name or full name) without any title, or addressing the recipients with other forms like *you*. Table 5.7 below demonstrates the distribution of the address terms in the emails of the three discourse communities.

Table 5.7 Address terms in the emails by members of three discourse communities

	CSs (Total of emails=65)		ESs (Total of emails =60)		CESs (Total of emails=62)	
	No. of emails with the form	%	No. of emails with the form	%	No. of emails with the form	%
1. Formal address term						
1) Title only (Sir, Madam, Professor)	4	6.2%	0	0	4	6.5%
2) Title + surname	59	90.8%	6	10.0%	23	37.1%
Total	63	97.0%	6	10.0%	27	43.6%
2. Informal address term						
1) Given name	0	0	48	80.0%	32	51.6%
2) Full name	0	0	0	0	3	4.8%
3) None or others	2	3.0%	6	10.0%	0	0
Total	2	3.0%	54	90.0%	35	56.4%

As the table shows, almost all the Chinese emails (97.0%) contained a formal address term which was mainly presented by title + last name (90.8%) or occasionally by title only (6.2%). In contrast, in the emails by British postgraduate students, the formal address term title + last name appeared occasionally (10.0%) and the address term represented by title only never appeared. Finally, the frequency of the formal address term in CES’s data (43.6%) fell between the one in CSs’ and ESs’ data, in which the address term title + last name (37.1%) occurred much more frequently than the address term with title only (6.5%).

Furthermore, a majority of ESs' emails (90.0%) contained an informal address term which was presented by the addressee's given name. And some few ESs' emails used an informal address like *ya* following *hi* to address the recipients. However, the CSs' did not contain any kind of informal address terms which addressed the recipients' given names. Moreover, like the frequency of formal addresses in the CESs' data, which was in the middle of the three groups, the frequency of the informal address with given names of the recipients in the CESs' data was also in the middle (56.4%). None of the CESs' emails included such informal address as *hi ya* appearing in the ESs' data.

In a word, as for the address terms in the three corpora of emails, the Chinese emails were used in a highly formal way, while the English emails by British postgraduate students went to the other extent, i.e., a highly informal way. The formality of the English emails by Chinese postgraduates was in the middle. Less than half of the emails in this group used the formal address terms like the Chinese speakers, while a little more than half used informal address terms like English speakers.

2) Salutation and Greetings

The salutation in this study refers to a prefatory greeting in an email. It typically appears at the very beginning of English emails like *Dear...* and *Hi...* which were usually combined with the address terms. In Chinese emails, the salutation was usually realized with two forms: 敬爱的... (*Respected and dear...*) and 尊敬的... (*Respected...*). In contrast, the greetings in this study refer to the greetings after the salutation and address terms, which took typical forms in the Chinese emails, such as 您好 (*Hello honorific-you*) and 你好 (*Hello you*). In English emails, the greetings did not appear as commonly as in those of the Chinese emails. Table 5.8 and Table 5.9 demonstrate the distributions of the salutation and greeting forms in the emails of the three academic discourse communities.

Table 5.8 Salutation in the emails of members of three discourse communities

Salutation Forms	CSs (Total of emails = 65)		ESs (Total of emails = 60)		CESs (Total of emails = 62)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1) <i>Respected...</i>	7	10.8%	0	0	0	0
2) <i>Respected and Dear...</i>	3	4.6%	0	0	0	0
3) <i>Dear + given name...</i>	0	0	24	40.0%	21	33.9%
4) <i>Dear + title + surname</i>	0	0	3	5.0%	16	25.8%
5) <i>Dear + full name</i>	0	0	0	0	3	4.8%
6) <i>Dear + title</i>	0	0	0	0	4	6.5%
7) <i>Hi/Hello/Hey + given name</i>	0	0	31	51.7%	9	14.5%
8) <i>Hi + Dear...</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1.6%
9) <i>Hi + ya</i>	0	0	1	1.7%	0	0
10) <i>Hi/Hello + title + surname</i>	0	0	0	0	6	9.7%

Table 5.9 Greetings in the emails of members of three discourse communities

Greeting Forms	CSs (Total of emails = 65)		ESs (Total of emails = 60)		CESs (Total of emails = 62)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1) <i>Hello+ Honorary you in Chinese (Nin hao)</i>	43	66.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2) <i>Hello + you in Chinese (Ni hao)</i>	9	13.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3) <i>How are you</i>	N/A	N/A	0	0	6	9.7%
4) <i>Other (Happy holidays! Hope you are well!)</i>	1	1.5%	3	5.0%	0	0

As the above table shows, in the ESs' emails, it was found that the salutation *Dear...* did not occur as frequently as *hi* (45% vs.53.4%). However, in the CESs' data, the salutation *Dear...* appeared much more frequently than the salutation *hi* did (71.0% vs. 24.2%). Furthermore, the salutation *Dear...* was almost exclusively combined with the addressee's given name in the ESs' data. While in the CESs' data, it was used more diversely with title + surname (25.8%), full name of the addressee (4.8%), titles of the addressees (6.5%) as well as with the addressee's given name (33.9%). In the CSs' data,

some Chinese emails began with the salutation *Respected...* (10.8%) or *Respected and dear...* (4.6 %)

Meanwhile, in the CSs' emails, it was found that greetings were used in 53 emails (81.5%) and the majority (66.2%) were realized with *Ninhao* (honorific you-well) which means "how are you?" in English. And some others (13.8%) were realized with *Nihao* (you-well). In Chinese, both *nin* and *ni* correspond to the pronoun *you*, which is used for addressing the hearer. However, *nin* has an honorific connotation which is used by lower-ranked people to high-ranked people to show the speakers' respect. *Ni* in Chinese is usually used between equals or from high-ranked people to low-ranked people. For CESs' data, 6 emails (9.7%) contained *how are you?* greetings, which may be similar to Chinese emails with such greetings in the place after salutations and address terms. The English speakers did not use such greetings in their emails. Instead, 3 of them (5.0%) used more personalized and situational greetings like *Happy holidays* and *Hope you are well*.

3) Identifying Oneself

As for the self-introductory move of the opening, it was realized in three forms in the data. Some email writers could just tell the recipients their names like *This is...* They could also introduce themselves with their name and some background information like *This is your student...* Finally, some writers may give their background information without their names like *I am one of B's Landscape MA students*. The Chinese postgraduate students, no matter whether they wrote emails in English or in Chinese, used the three forms of self introduction more frequently than the English postgraduate students. Furthermore, the CESs introduced themselves more often than the CSs (32.2% vs. 26.2%). Among the three forms of self-introduction, both the CESs and the CSs preferred to introduce their names with their background information than to use the other two forms. In contrast, the ESs were much less inclined to introduce themselves in the openings of the emails. Only 3 of them (5.0%) introduced themselves with their sole background information. Table 5.10 further demonstrates the distributional forms of self-introduction in the emails of the three academic discourse communities.

Table 5.10 Distributional forms of self-introduction in the emails of the three discourse communities

Form of Self-introduction	CSs (Total of emails = 65)		ESs (Total of emails = 60)		CESs (Total of emails = 62)	
	No. of emails with the form		No. of emails with the form		No. of emails with the form	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1) name only (This is xxx)	6	9.2%	0	0	5	8.1%
2) name & background Information	9	13.9%	0	0	10	16.1%
3) background information only	2	3.1%	3	5.0%	5	8.1%
4) emails without any self-introduction form	48	73.8%	57	95.0%	42	67.8%

CLOSINGS

In this study, the closing was categorized into two parts: concluding politely and signing off. In the first part, three moves were found: *Looking forward to Reply, Thanks, and Complimentary Closing*. In addition, the signing-off part might include two steps (especially in the CSs' data): *Signing off with the writers' name and information or writers' name only, and Signing off with the date*. The distributions of these moves of the two parts in the emails are detailed in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Distribution of 'closing' options by members of the three discourse communities

	CSs (Total of emails = 65)		ESs (Total of emails = 60)		CESs (Total of emails = 62)	
	No. of emails with the move		No. of emails with the move		No. of emails with the move	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Concluding politely						
1. Looking forward to reply	4	6.5%	3	5.0%	11	17.7%
2. Thanks	24	36.9%	32	53.3%	40	64.5%
3. Formulaic complimentary expressions	29	44.6%	39	65.0%	46	74.2%
Signing-off						
1. Signing off with name and person information	33	50.8%	3	5.0%	1	1.6%
2. Signing off with only name						
1) Full name	32	49.2%	8	13.3%	34	54.8%
2) Given name only	0	0	49	81.7%	27	43.5%
Signing off with the date	23	35.4%	0	0	1	1.6%

As the table shows, the three groups of participants had different preferences for the closing moves. In general, the CESs were more inclined to use moves to conclude their emails politely than the other two discourse communities in terms of the number of three moves contained in their email. The ESs were less inclined to use these moves than the CESs but were more inclined to use them than the CSs. As for the part of signing off, nearly all the members in the three communities signed their names to end the emails. However, the CSs had some tendency to sign off the emails with the date, while members of the other two communities had no such tendency. In the following part, the specific choices of different moves are detailed.

1) Looking forward to Reply

The move *Looking forward to Reply* is used as a formulaic ending in the emails which is claimed to be borrowed from print epistolary correspondence conventions (Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2008). In this study, two conditions have been set for identifying this move. On the one hand, the move should be presented with a relatively set expression like *Xiwang Nin Neng Huifu Wo* (*hope you can reply*) in Chinese or *Looking forward to your reply* in English. And the move should be at the end of the emails and it is separated from the content moves. In other words, this move is usually constructed into an independent paragraph by itself or with other closing moves such as thanks or complimentary closes. On the other hand, this move is not coded as a head act of request, though it expresses a request for a reply from recipients of emails. The head acts of request have been presented in the previous body of the emails.

Following the two coding principles, it was found that not many emails of the three communities contained such move forms. Only four CSs' emails (6.5%) contained the move forms. The ESs' emails contained only 3 such move forms (5.0%). The CESs' emails had relatively more such move forms than those of the other two discourse communities. Eleven sentences (17.7%) were found to act as this move in the CESs' data.

2) Thanks

Furthermore, the move *Thanks* is used as a formulaic ending in the emails to show the writers' gratitude to recipients for the possible compliance of the request or reading the request email. It occurred in 24 CSs' emails (36.9%), 32 ESs' emails (53.3%) and 40 CESs' emails (64.5%). Among the three communities, the CESs expressed thanks more frequently than the other two, and the CSs expressed thanks least frequently.

The formulaic, routine expression of thanks in the Chinese email data is *xiexie* corresponding to English *thanks*. On the other hand, the routine expression (*many*) *thanks*, *thank you* and *cheers* appeared frequently in the ESs' and the CESs' data. The other kind of thanks which explicitly expressed the reason thanks were given also occurred in the two groups of data frequently. These thanks often contained reasons like *thanks a lot for your time*, *thanks a lot for the possible suggestions*, and *I'd be grateful for any help with this*.

3) Complimentary Close

Complimentary Close refers to some good wishes or epistolary forms which the email writers used to give good wishes or compliments to the recipients. In Chinese emails, good wishes were expressed in a more detailed way than in the English data, like good wishes for recipients' health, work and holidays. In English emails, good wishes seemed to be conventionalized and were expressed in a general way like *best wishes* and *best*. On the other hand, the use of *Complimentary Close* in Chinese was very formal which came from Chinese formal written letters *cizhi* and *jingli*, which mean "stop here" and "salutation" in English. In the English emails, the complimentary close such as *regards* and (*yours*) *sincerely* were used regularly by both ESs and CESs. The distribution shows that the CESs (74.2%) tended to use this kind of move more frequently than the other two groups. The CSs group used this kind of move at the least (44.6%).

While the forms of *Complimentary Close* are detailed above as rapport-management strategies, another matter which needs to be addressed here is that these forms were found to be usually conventionalized in both Chinese and English emails. In other

words, they might be used without regards to the matter of rapport management, since omitting such formulae would not contribute to the maintenance of a harmonious relationship.

4) Signing off through writers' names with/without information and dates

All the emails were signed off with writers' names. However, the CSs' emails had two distinct features in signature in contrast with the ESs' emails. Half of the CSs' emails (50.8%) were signed with the writer's name and personal information such as the writer's academic department and their identity as students, while only three ESs' emails (5.0%) were signed off like this. More specifically, in the CSs' emails, the writers always constructed this kind of move with the structure of "(your) student + name" which emphasized their students' identity. In the ESs' emails, the move was usually combined with the writer's name and their academic department. Furthermore, signatures in the CSs' emails were realized by the writers' full names, no matter whether the full names were signed with the personal information or independently or not. In contrast, in ESs' data, only 8 emails (13.3%) were signed with the full names of writers.

As for features of signature in the CESs' data, it seemed that the distributions fell between the CSs' and ESs' data. The Chinese English speakers seldom signed their names with their personal information in English emails (only one example was found). This performance was different from that in Chinese emails. However, in contrast to English speakers who preferred to sign their given names, more than half of the Chinese English speakers (54.8%) signed their full names to end the English emails.

Finally, 23 Chinese emails (35.4%) were found to be signed with the date. This kind of move was not found in the ESs' data and only one example was found in CESs' data.

SUMMARY

According to the above findings, the opening and closing of emails by the three groups varied greatly. The distributional differences of these features embodied linguistic

differences in request emails across cultures. On the other hand, these differences represent the different rapport management strategies each group employed in order to achieve request compliances. Several findings on the differences of rapport management strategies in openings and closing parts of email are worthy of being summarized here.

The CSs used formal address terms, salutations and greetings and self-introductions to show their deference to the emails recipients. This was indicated by the fact that the CSs had a very high tendency to use the formal address term title + last name and *honorific you* in greetings. Furthermore, compared with the ESs, the *Identifying Oneself* move was more compulsory in some emails by the CSs, while it appeared in few emails by the ESs. It looks as though there may be a correlation between the CSs' tendency to use honorific salutations and self introduction, while the ESs tended to use informal salutations without self-introduction.

The move *Identifying Oneself* most probably serves rapport management because the CSs used this move to emphasize their student identity no matter whether they were familiar with the recipients or not. In addition, the formal features of rapport management strategies in the stylistic domain could also be displayed in signing off with the full names of the CSs. In some emails, the CSs had a tendency to use this move to show their students information. This move, similar to the move *Identifying Oneself*, might also be used to emphasize the student's identity.

In contrast, the address terms in the ESs terms were informal because a majority of members in the ES community preferred to address the recipients with their given names or even with no name, such as *hi ya* mentioned above. In addition, they had a greater tendency to use the informal salutation like *hi* than the informal salutation *dear*. The informal feature of rapport management strategies in stylistic domain, as we will discuss in Chapter 7, might indicate that the ESs wanted to invoke their association rights. The informal feature was also shown in signature for most of the ESs signed off the emails with their given names.

For members of the CES discourse communities, their linguistic performance in openings and closings of the emails falls between those of the CSs and the ESs. Specifically, like the ESs, they had a greater tendency to use informal addresses than formal addresses, though the tendency was not as strong as that of the ESs. However, relating to salutations, the CEs had a greater preference to use formal salutations than informal salutations, which was thus different from the preference of the ESs. Moreover, among the three discourse communities, the CESs had the highest tendency to use the self-introduction move and this move was thus more discursively necessary to the CESs than to the others. The formal style of rapport management strategies was also found in the signature move, for the ESs signed off their emails with more full names than with given names only.

5.3.4 Rhetorical strategies (Discourse domain)

The rhetorical strategy is often used by people in presenting their ideas (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). It refers to the relative position of the Head act move (*Requesting*), in relation to the placement of potential *Providing Background Information* and *Request Justification*. The rhetorical strategy is usually composed of two sub-strategies, an inductive strategy and a deductive strategy, in terms of the ordering of different information. Based on this viewpoint, the inductive strategy in current study refers to the one in which the Head act of request is presented after the emails recipients have received some prepared message. The prepared message is realized by *Providing Background Information* and/or *Request Justification*. In contrast, the deductive strategy refers to the one in which the Head act of request is presented before the prepared message in the emails, i.e. before *Providing Background Information* and/or *Request Justification*. Furthermore, a third rhetorical strategy, which was neither an inductive approach nor a deductive approach, was found in the current study. It refers to the one in which no *Providing Background* or *Request Justification* preceded or followed the Head Act of request. This strategy, to our knowledge, could be called a bald request strategy. The following three extracts from the data further illustrate the rhetorical strategies used in the request emails under study (*Requesting* underlined, *Providing Background Information* bolded and *Request Justification* italicized).

5. (Inductive strategy, CSs' email No.64, the English translation is ours)

最近我在看毒素吸附剂的相关文献，我对吸附剂的课题很感兴趣，想做深入研究。但同时我发现自己的基础比较差，霉菌的培养与毒素的提取以及毒力实验等基础技术掌握的还不是很熟练，我想自己养一些霉菌，并做一些基础实验。希望老师批准并给予相关指导。谢谢！

I have recently read some literature relevant to toxin adsorbency. I am interested in adsorbent studies and want to do some in-depth research. However, I think I am still poor in ability in this research area. Also, I have not mastered the basic technique of the cultivation of fungi and extraction of toxins. I am not very skilled at the virulence experiment. Therefore, I would like to raise some mould and do some basic experiments. I hope, my teacher - you will approve of the plan and provide some relevant guidance.
Thank you!

6. (Deductive strategy, ESs' email No.10)

I was wondering if you are available to meet up within week 8 or 9 to discuss a dissertation timetable. I am planning to return home in June when my housing contract runs out and do my dissertation at home ...

7. (Bald request strategies, ESs' emails No. 4)

Dear V,

Would you have 10 mins or so during your office hour today to discuss my dissertation?

Kind regards,

Following the way of categorizing the rhetorical structures, the three rhetorical strategies that emerged in the data were analyzed. Table 5.12 reports the percentage of the rhetorical strategies presented with the deductive strategy, the inductive strategy, or bald request strategy.

Table 5.12 Rhetorical structure in the emails of the three discourse communities

Rhetorical Structure	CSs (Total of emails = 65)	ESs (Total of emails = 60)	CESs (Total of emails = 62)
Deductive Strategy	2 (3.1%)	26 (43.3%)	6 (9.7%)
Inductive Strategy	62 (95.4%)	29 (48.3%)	56 (90.3%)
Bald Request Strategy	1 (1.5%)	5 (8.3%)	0

As Table 5.12 shows, the three discourse communities tended to prefer the inductive rhetoric strategy than the other two rhetorical strategies. The CSs and the CESs employed the inductive rhetorical strategy in almost all the request emails (95.4% and 90.3% respectively). However, as for the ESs, they had much less tendency to use the inductive rhetorical strategy (48.3%) in their emails than the CSs and the CESs.

Regarding the deductive rhetorical strategy employed in the emails under study, the ESs obviously tended to use this strategy in their emails (43.3%) more than the other two discourse communities (the CSs, 3.1%; the CESs, 9.7%). However, for the ES discourse community, the number of emails which employed deductive rhetorical strategy was still smaller than those which employed inductive rhetorical strategy (43.3% vs., 48.3%).

Finally, some members in the ES community seemed to have a tendency to employ bald request strategy in their emails (8.3%). However, only one email in the CS community was found to use this strategy (1.5%). This strategy was not found at all in the emails by the CESs.

5.3.5 Requestive strategies of head acts (Illocutionary domain).

This sub-section answers the third sub-research question of Research Question 1 on what requestive strategies the three discourse communities used in making head acts of request in their emails. Requestive strategies of head acts of requests in emails, together with linguistic realization of these head acts and requestive perspectives, fall into rapport-management strategies in the illocutionary domain.

With reference to the description of head acts drawn by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), 66, 66 and 73 head acts of request were identified from the CSs', the ESs' and the CESs' data respectively. And following the adapted coding framework of requestive strategies by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), the requestive strategies of head acts in emails employed

by members of three discourse communities are illustrated in Table 5.13 in the next page.

Table 5.13 Frequencies of the requestive strategies used by the three communities

Request Strategies	Frequency of the strategies in CSs' data (Total = 66)	Frequency of the strategies in ESs' data (Total = 66)	Frequency of the strategies in CESs' data (Total = 73)
Conventionally Direct Strategies (CD)	53 (80.3%)	16 (24.2%)	29 (39.7%)
Imperative	18 (27.3%)	4 (6.1%)	4 (5.5%)
Direct Questions	5 (7.6%)	8 (12.1%)	11(15.1%)
Want Statements	2 (3.0%)	4 (6.1%)	9 (12.3%)
Expectation Statements	28 (42.4%)	0	5 (6.8%)
Indirect Strategies	13 (19.7%)	50 (75.8%)	44 (60.3%)
Conventionally Indirect Strategies (Query-Preparatory) (CID)	13 (19.7%)	41 (62.1%)	41 (56.2%)
Non-conventionally Indirect Strategies (Strong Hint/Mild Hint) (NCID)	0	9 (13.7%)	3(4.1%)

1) Directness levels in request emails across three discourse communities

As shown in Table 5.12, members of all the three discourse communities preferred to use conventional requestive strategies (encompassing conventional directness and conventional indirectness). The CSs did not use any non-conventional indirect strategy at all. A small proportion of emails by the ESs and the CESs used non-conventional indirect strategies (13.7% and 4.1% respectively).

More specifically, the preference order of requestive strategies in head acts by the CSs was CD>CID> NCID while the preference order selected by both the ESs the CESs was CID > CD > NCID. As for conventionally direct strategies, the CSs used them most frequently (80.3%); the CESs came next (39.7%) and the ESs were least treatment (24.2%). Concerning the detailed conventionally direct strategies, the CSs had the highest tendency to use expectation statement strategies (42.4%). They also had the highest tendency to use *Imperatives* as conventionally direct strategies (27.3%). They were less likely to use *Direct Questions* and *Want Statements* (7.6%, 3.0% respectively). On the other hand, the ESs did not use the *Expectation Statement* as a conventionally

directive strategy. They had a relatively greater tendency to use the *Direct Questions* strategy (12.1%) than the *Imperative* and the *Want Statement* strategies (6.1% respectively). Regarding the CESs, like the ESs, they had the highest tendency to use the *Direct Questions* strategy (15.1%) than the other three conventionally direct strategies (*Want Statement*, 12.3%; *Imperatives*, 5.5%; and *Expectation Statement*, 6.8%). However, unlike the ESs, they had a small tendency to employ the *Expectation Statements* strategy in their English request emails, which the ESs did not employ at all.

As for the employment of indirect requestive strategies (encompassing conventionally indirect strategies and non-conventionally indirect strategies), the ESs had the highest tendency to use this kind of strategy (75.8%). It is necessary to highlight here that the ESs used relatively few non-conventionally indirect strategies. They (13.7%) preferred to use the sentence pattern *attached is the ... work* to indirectly request the recipients to read it and give them feedback. This sentence pattern was thus labelled as hints which belong to non-conventionally indirect strategies. Besides these, the ESs had a greater tendency to use conventionally indirect strategies, i.e., query preparatory, than the CESs (62.1% vs. 56.2%). The CESs used some hints in some of their feedback request emails, but the proportion (4.1%) was a little smaller than the emails by the ESs. Finally, it is noted that the CSs used much less conventionally indirect requestive strategies (20.7%) than the other two discourse communities and the CSs seemed to have no tendency to use hints in their request emails.

2) Request perspectives

As regards requestive perspectives the CSs employed to express their request, the following Table 5.14 demonstrates that they had a predominant tendency to perform their request from the I(email writer)-perspective (68.2%). As illustrated in the last section, the CSs preferred to use *Expectation* and *Want Statements* to express their requests. The expectation or want clearly assumes an ego-perspective: the email writer expresses their own expectation or want. Contrastively, a relatively small proportion of emails by the CSs express their requests from the you (hearer)-perspective (28.8%). And only two emails (3.0%) contained a request from an impersonal perspective.

Table 5.14 Use of perspectives in requests by members of three communities

Request Perspectives	CSs (Total = 66)	ESs (Total = 66)	CESs (Total = 73)
I (speaker)-perspective	45 (68.2%)	32 (48.5%)	33 (45.2%)
You(hearer)-perspective	19 (28.8%)	23 (34.8%)	34 (46.6%)
We(speaker and hearer)-perspective	0	1(1.5%)	0
Impersonal perspective	2 (3.0%)	10 (15.2%)	6 (8.2%)

With regards to requestive perspectives, the other two discourse communities, the ESs and the CESs, used I (speaker)-perspective at similar frequencies (ESs, 48.5%; CES, 45.2%). However, it is evident that the ESs, more often than the CESs, tended to translate I (speaker)-perspective into conventionally indirect strategies such as the query preparatory form *I wonder....* (e.g. a-b). While on the other hand, the CESs had a greater tendency to translate the ego-perspective into conventionally direct strategy such as *Want* and *Expectation Statements* forms like examples c and d below:

- 8. 8a. Just wondered if you knew of any books that set out...
- 8b. I was wondering if you are available to meet up with in week 8 or 9 to discuss...
- 8c. I do hope I could meet you sometime this week.
- 8d. I would like to know if I could ask for a casual leave of absence for next Tuesday...

Furthermore, the CESs, more so than the ESs, tended to structure their request from you (addressee)-perspective (CESs, 46.6%; ESs, 34.8%). Compared with the ESs, the CESs relied on the forms *Can/could you...* more heavily like a-b below:

- 9. 9a. Could you show me something to start with?
- 9b. Can you help me to reschedule it to next month?
- 9c. Would you please have a very quickly scan of my draft...?

Finally, it was found that the ESs had a relatively greater tendency to make requests from impersonal perspective than the CESs (ESs, 15.2% and 8.2%). And a closer look would further disclose that while the CESs translated this perspective into direct question forms like a-b, the ESs translated this form into the form *Would it be possible....*, such as c-d:

- 10. 10a. Does this equipment use the principle...?
- 10b. Does this apply to listening exercises...?
- 10c. Would it be possible to come and see you ...in your office hour?
- 10d... would it be better to hold fire on...until you have more time?

5.3.6 Mitigation features in English request emails (Stylistic domain)

Since all the request emails were written by postgraduate students to university instructors (i.e. upward request emails), it could thus be expected that the email writers might use many mitigation devices to the recipients. The mitigation devices, as coded in Section 4.5.2.2 are mainly manifested in syntactic and lexical structures. They could, on the one hand, mitigate the request imposition on the recipients (Blum-Kulka, et al 1989). They could also function as rapport-management strategies in the stylistic domain (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, a comparison of the use of them by the ESs and the CESs could be helpful in disclosing the pragmalinguistic competence of the CESs. Due to these reasons, the use of mitigation devices in the head acts of English emails is demonstrated below, which also answers the fourth sub-question of Research Question 1 on how the ESs and the CESs use syntactic and lexical modifiers in the head acts.

5.3.6.1 Syntactic mitigation modifiers

According to the coding framework in Section 4.5.2.2, major syntactic modification devices employed by members of ESs and CESs discourse communities were found below:

Interrogatives: *Could you please tell me what I should do next?*

Can I just submit the first draft of my choosing...?

Would you please make such a letter for me?

Progressive aspect: *I was just wondering how to go about signing up?*

I am/was wondering... instead of I wonder...

I am hopinginstead of I hope

Past tense: *I was wondering...instead of I am wondering...*

Would you please...instead of Will you please...

I wanted to know...instead of I want to know...

If clauses: *If you could, please highlight me...*

I am wondering if you could do me a favour...

If you could circulate these details, that would be great.

The totals in Table 5.15 show that both ESs and CESs could employ the four syntactic mitigation devices. In general, the interrogatives were used by two groups as the commonest choice of syntactic downgraders. Past tense was the second commonest choice preferred by the two groups as mitigation devices. The progressive aspect was the least common choice used by the two groups.

Table 5.15 Frequency of identified syntactic mitigation modifiers

Syntactic Downgraders	Frequency		Total frequency
	ESs (Total of requests = 66)	CESs (Total of requests = 73)	ESs + CESs (Total = 139)
Interrogative	31	42	73
Progressive Aspect	19	11	30
Past Tense	40	27	67
If Clauses	22	14	36
Total	112	94	206

While some of the CESs appeared aware of using these mitigation devices for making requests, most others in the CES discourse community might not have been aware of the possibility of using the progressive aspect, the past tense, the if clause or a combination of these devices to mitigate their requests as the ESs. According to Table 5.15, the ESs had a much greater tendency to use these syntactic downgraders, except interrogatives, than the CESs. The CESs seemed to rely on interrogatives more heavily than the ESs to mitigate their requests, but they did not use the combination of mitigation devices as the ESs did below:

12. 12a. *I just wanted to let you know that...*

12b. *I was wondering if I could come and see you...please?*

12c. *If you could circulate these details, that would be great.*

As these examples show, the ESs seemed to prefer combining more than syntactic downgraders into one request. In example b, it combines past tense, progressive aspect, if clause and interrogative into one requestive head act. Moreover, it should be noted that this requestive sentence used a question mark to mitigate its requestive force, even if it is actually a statement sentence according to its word order, i.e. the question mark serves to characterize the statement as an indirect question. This form is very typical in ESs' emails. Several ESs used a question mark to end the request sentence form *I wonder...?*

In contrast, the CESs did not combine these syntactic downgraders in their requestive head acts as often as the ESs. Some examples are quoted from the CESs' emails below:

13. 13a. *I am wondering whether you can do me a favour to...* (not having past tense)

13b. *I wonder if you have anything to add to my knowledge on this.* (not having past tense or progressive aspect)

13c. *Just want to know if the 6 types of* (not having past tense)

5.3.6.2 Lexical modifiers

Table 5.16 demonstrates the percentage of head acts of requests with lexical and phrasal downgraders. The most intriguing finding here was that the ESs used lexical and phrasal downgraders twice as much as the CESs in general (ESs, 82 tokens; CESs, 45 tokens). On average, each requestive head act by the ESs might contains more than one lexical or phrasal downgrader, while two requestive head acts by the CESs might contain one lexical or phrasal downgrade.

Table 5.16 Frequency of identified lexical and phrasal downgraders

Lexical and phrasal downgraders	Frequency		Total frequency	
	ESs (total of requests = 66)	CESs (total of requests = 73)	ESs + CESs (total of requests = 139)	
Please	11	19	30	
Downtoner (e.g. possibly, possible)	14	3	17	
Understater (e.g. a little, just)	7	2	9	
Hedges (e.g. some, any)	11	1	12	
Subjectiviser	I wonder	26	8	34
	I hope	0	4	4
	Others	4	7	11
Consultative (e.g. Do you think...)	9	1	10	
Total	82	45	127	

A closer examination of specific lexical or phrasal downgraders reveals that *please* and *I hope* were preferred downgraders for the CESs than for the ESs. Interestingly, *please* often appeared in imperative sentences or in the sentence pattern *could/would you...* in the CESs' requests (examples a-c below), while it was used in the *I wonder...* structure by the ESs (in example d).

14. 14a. **Please** check the file I attached.

14b. Could you **please** tell me what I should do?

14c. Would you **please** explain a little bit of the difference between them.

14d. I was wondering if you are free any time next week for a supervision meeting **please**?

Except the downgraders *please* and *I hope*, other lexical or phrasal downgraders were used much more frequently by the ESs than by the CESs. The subjectiviser forms (*I wonder, I was wondering, etc.*) were found to be salient because they appeared in about one out of 2.5 emails by the ESs. The downtoner forms such as *possible, maybe* and *perhaps* were found in about one out of five emails. Other lexical and phrasal downgraders such as understaters (e.g. *just, by chance, and minor*), hedge (*some, any*) and consultative (e.g. *do you think, is there a chance, have suggestions*) appeared relatively frequently in the request head acts by ESs (between 10% and 20%). However, these lexical and phrasal downgraders occurred in very few request head acts by the CESs (frequencies were below 5%).

To summarize, according to the analysis above, the CESs in the study used a basic set of syntactic devices to mitigate their requests. However, compared with the ESs, they used a much smaller range of syntactic mitigation devices regarding past tenses, progressive aspect and if-clauses. As regards lexical and phrasal downgraders, it shows that half of the CESs' emails requests were bare of any lexical or phrasal modification, while nearly all the ESs' email requests contained such lexical or phrasal modification. Even for those CESs' email requests which contained some lexical or phrasal modifications, the forms were not as varied as the ones occurring in email requests by the ESs under study.

5.3.7 Summary

This section has explored and compared rapport-management strategies in emails across the three discourse communities. Some similarities and differences were found in different domains. In the discourse domain, both the CSs and the CESs had predominant preference for inductive rhetorical structure, but the ESs had similar preference for both inductive and deductive rhetorical structures. Moreover, some difference was disclosed in terms of some move choices and move realizations, such as moves of *Subject Lines*, *Preparator* and *EWCP*. In the stylistic domain, the CSs seemed to have the highest preference for a formal style, followed by the CESs and the ESs. In the illocutionary domain, the CSs were likely to use direct requestive strategies, while the ESs and the CESs were more likely to use indirect strategies. Finally, in terms of mitigation devices in the head acts of English emails (stylistic domain), the CESs were found not to be able to use the identified devices as abundantly as the ESs.

The pattern of similarities and differences of rapport-management strategies, as discussed earlier, might be attributed to several interconnected socio-psychological factors, which are argued to be cultural concepts. In the following section, the perceptions of the social distance and Sociopragmatic Interpersonal Principles (SIPs) by members of three discourse communities are discussed.

5.4 Perception of social distance and Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles

Drawing upon the framework by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) on the factors which may influence rapport management use, this section discusses the email writers' discernment of some factors which may give rise to the choice of the rapport management strategies in their emails.

5.4.1 Perceived social distance between email writers and recipients

As for the perceived social distance between email writers and recipients, ratings show that perceived social distance was relatively similar among members of the three discourse communities. They all tended to choose a medium value 3 of the 5-scale Likert (1 means not close at all, 5 means the closest). The social distance between email

writers and recipients was judged to be closest by the CSs (M=3.11, SD=0.687), followed by the ESs (M=2.78, 0.993), and the CESs (M=2.61, SD=1.136). However, according to the means, the social distance judged by members of the three discourse communities was in the middle, i.e. not too unfamiliar or too familiar with the recipients. As shown in Table 5.17, although the one-way ANOVA test indicates that there was statistically significantly difference of social distance judgement between the three groups (F=4.430, P=0.013<0.05), the post-hot test tells that the significant difference only existed between the CSs and the CESs.

Table 5.17 Perceived Relationship between email writers and recipients

Table 5.17a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.048	2	4.024	4.430	.013
Within Groups	167.139	184	.908		
Total	175.187	186			

Table 5.17 b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	.324	.171	.059	-.01	.66
	CESs	.495*	.169	.004	.16	.83
ESs	CSs	-.324	.171	.059	-.66	.01
	CESs	.170	.173	.325	-.17	.51
CESs	CSs	-.495*	.169	.004	-.83	-.16
	ESs	-.170	.173	.325	-.51	.17

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

5.4.2 Perceived importance of the Sociopragmatic Interactional Principles (SIPs)

To investigate the email writers' sociopragmatic knowledge in writing request emails, this study tested whether the perceived importance of SIPs differs significantly across the three discourse communities. A series of one-way ANOVA tests were conducted on the importance rating of the five SIPs (using the 5-scale Likert to measure them, where 1 means the least important, 5 means the most important). Table 5.18 to Table 5.22

demonstrates the mean, standard deviation, inter-group disparities of these ratings across the three discourse communities.

Importance of not hurting the addressee's feeling. As Table 5.18 shows, a one-way ANOVA for the perceived importance of this SIP indicates a statistically significant difference among the three discourse communities ($F=5.231$, $P=0.006$) < 0.01). Specifically, members from the CS discourse community ($M=3.40$, $SD=1.378$) showed more concern for not hurting the addressee's feeling than members from the ESs ($M=2.83$, $SD=1.428$) and the CESs ($M=2.65$, $SD=1.307$). A post-hoc test shows that the significant difference of the perceived importance existed between the CSs and the ESs, and the CSs and the CEs. No significant difference was found between the ESs and the CESs.

Table 5.18 Comparing the perceived importance of avoiding hurting the addressee's feeling among the three discourse communities

Table 5.18a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.681	2	9.840	5.231	.006
Within Groups	346.127	184	1.881		
Total	365.807	186			

Table 5.18 b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	.567*	.246	.022	.08	1.05
	CEs	.755*	.243	.002	.27	1.24
ESs	CSs	-.567*	.246	.022	-1.05	-.08
	CESs	.188	.248	.450	-.30	.68
CESs	CSs	-.755*	.243	.002	-1.24	-.27
	ESs	-.188	.248	.450	-.68	.30

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Importance of minimizing imposition. As shown in Table 5.19, a one-way ANOVA for the perceived importance of this SIP shows a statistically significant difference between the three discourse communities ($F = 4.843$, $P = 0.009$) < 0.01). However, a post-hoc test

indicates that there was no significant difference in the perceived importance between the CSs and ESs. Significant difference existed between the CSs and the CESs, and the ESs and the CESs. Members of the ES discourse community rated the importance of minimizing imposition the highest ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.027$), followed by members of the CS community ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.074$), and members from the CES community ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.207$).

Table 5.19 Comparing the perceived importance of minimizing imposition among the three discourse communities

Table 5.19a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.835	2	5.918	4.843	.009
Within Groups	224.807	184	1.222		
Total	236.642	186			

Table 5.19 b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	-.199	.198	.317	-.59	.19
	CESs	.410*	.196	.038	.02	.80
ESs	CSs	.199	.198	.317	-.19	.59
	CESs	.609*	.200	.003	.21	1.00
CESs	CSs	-.410*	.196	.038	-.80	-.02
	ESs	-.609*	.200	.003	-1.00	-.21

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Importance of avoiding negative evaluation from addressees. Table 5.20 demonstrates the results of comparing the perceived importance of avoiding negative evaluation among the three discourse communities. There was statistically significant difference between the three discourse communities ($F = 6.071$, $P = 0.003 < 0.01$). A post-hoc test shows a significant difference existed between the CSs and the CESs, and the ESs and the CESs. There was no significant perceived difference between members of the CS discourse community and the ESs. The CSs rated the importance highest ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.996$), followed by the ESs ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.969$), and the CESs rated it lowest ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.159$).

Moreover, it is noteworthy here that all the perceived values of this case of SIPs were higher than those of the above two cases within the three discourse communities. This indicates that among the three face concerns, the email writers of the three discourse communities had highest uniform concern for their positive face.

Table 5.20 Comparing the perceived importance of avoiding negative evaluation among the three discourse communities

Table 5.20a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.245	2	6.623	6.071	.003
Within Groups	200.733	184	1.091		
Total	213.979	186			

Table 5.20 b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	.008	.187	.967	-.36	.38
	CESs	.569*	.185	.002	.20	.93
ESs	CSs	-.008	.187	.967	-.38	.36
	CESs	.561*	.189	.003	.19	.93
CESs	CSs	-.569*	.185	.002	-.93	-.20
	ESs	-.561*	.189	.003	-.93	-.19

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Importance of Clarity. The most striking finding when comparing the SIPs was in relation to the perceived importance of clarity among the three discourse communities. According to Table 5.21, both the one-way ANOVA and the post-hoc test indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the three discourse communities under study ($F = 0.891$, $P = 0.412$). The CESs attached the highest importance to clarity ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.822$), followed by the ESs ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.715$), and the CSs ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.768$).

Table 5.21 Comparing the perceived importance of clarity among the three discourse communities

Table 5.21a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.057	2	.528	.891	.412
Within Groups	109.115	184	.593		
Total	110.171	186			

Table 5.21 b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	-.145	.138	.295	-.42	.13
	CESs	-.168	.137	.221	-.44	.10
ESs	CSs	.145	.138	.295	-.13	.42
	CESs	-.023	.139	.869	-.30	.25
CESs	CSs	.168	.137	.221	-.10	.44
	ESs	.023	.139	.869	-.25	.30

Importance of effectiveness. Finally, with regards to the perceived importance of effectiveness by members from the three discourse communities, Table 5.22 shows that there was statistically significant difference between the three discourse communities ($F = 3.342$, $P = 0.038 < 0.05$). A post-hoc test shows that this difference existed between the CSs and the ESs, and the CSs and the CESs. There was no significant difference of perceived importance of effectiveness by the ESs and the CESs. The CSs rated the importance highest ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.713$), followed by the ESs ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .803$), and the CESs ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.967$)

Table 5.22 Comparing the perceived importance of effectiveness among the three discourse communities

Table 5.22a ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.633	2	2.317	3.342	.038
Within Groups	127.538	184	.693		
Total	132.171	186			

Table 5.22b Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons)

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CSs	ESs	.338*	.149	.024	.04	.63
	CESs	.322*	.148	.030	.03	.61
ESs	CSs	-.338*	.149	.024	-.63	-.04
	CESs	-.016	.151	.915	-.31	.28
CESs	CSs	-.322*	.148	.030	-.61	-.03
	ESs	.016	.151	.915	-.28	.31

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Overall, the three discourse communities made different perceived ratings of four SIPs. Within the three discourse communities, members consistently attached a high importance to a concern for clarity and effectiveness in the pursuit of interactional goals.

The findings do not support previous hypothesis and research findings (cf. Kim 1994, Spencer-Oatey, 2003) that members of more collectivistic cultures would attribute greater importance to relational considerations, while members of more individualistic cultures would attach more importance to clarity and effectiveness in the pursuit of interactional goals. The CSs attached significantly greater importance to concerns about not hurting addressee’s feelings than the ESs, but differences in the importance ratings of minimizing imposition on the addressee and avoiding negative evaluation from addressees by the CSs and the ESs were not significant. On the other hand, it was found the ESs did not attribute significantly greater importance to clarity in the pursuit of interactional goals than the CSs. Moreover, contrary to the previous hypothesis, the CSs from more collectivistic cultures attributed significantly greater importance to effectiveness in the pursuit of interactional goals than the ESs.

With regards to ratings of importance to the five SIPs by the CESs, it is worth noting that the CESs attributed lowest importance to the three SIPs concerning relational construction. The ratings did not follow the trends by the CSs or by the ESs. They attributed significantly lesser importance to all three SIPs in relation construction than the CESs. Furthermore, they attached significantly less importance to concerns for avoiding negative evaluation from addressees and minimizing imposition than the ESs.

Finally, as for the perceived importance of effectiveness in the pursuit of interactional goals, they attached significantly lesser importance than the CSs, but the rating was not significantly more than that by the ESs.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has mainly explored requestive aims, rapport-management strategies and some socio-psychological factors of the request emails by three discourse communities. Both similarities and differences were discovered in terms of this exploration. However, it needs to be acknowledged that there are some inadequacies of the above investigations which were mainly conducted from a frequency and regularity oriented approach. This approach could facilitate describing linguistic structured patterns of variation and change among the three communities. However, the approach is at risk of ignoring some difference among individuals and the members' personal factors. To address these inadequacies, the next chapter further examines the research findings from an emic perspective, i.e. to examine the relational work within each discourse community and explore some individuals' rapport-management strategies in their request emails.

Chapter 6 Relational Work: A Discursive Perspective on Linguistic Behaviour

6.1 Introduction

This chapter extends and expands the data analysis in Chapter 5. It is to answer Research Question 2 on how the appropriate relational work is performed in each discourse community, and Research question 3 on how individuals construct and contribute to the discursive relational work in emails within each discourse community (cf. Section 1.3 for detail). In doing so, the chapter is divided into 4 sections. Section 6.2 explores relational work in different domains of emails. Section 6.3 conducts several case studies to investigate some individuals' performances in emails. Section 6.4 summarizes this chapter.

Relational work is realized across a continuum, ranging from inappropriate/non-politic (i.e. impolite and over-polite) to appropriate/politic (i.e. non-polite and polite) behaviour (Locher, 2006). Four aspects of the spectrum of relational work are illustrated below (more detail of relational work, cf. Section 2.3.3.2).

↑	Judgement (a): impolite	+ inappropriate/non-politic	+ negatively marked
	Judgement (b): non-polite	+ appropriate/politic	+ unmarked
	Judgement (c): polite	+ appropriate/politic	+ positively marked
↓	Judgement (d): over-polite	+ inappropriate/non-politic	+ negatively marked

Figure 6.1 Aspects of the spectrum of relational work (Locher, 2006, p.256)

The 'appropriate/non-polite/politic' behaviour is unmarked while the other three behaviours are marked. Based on these notions, the chapter firstly attempts to differentiate two types of behaviour, i.e. unmarked behaviour and marked behaviour, in terms of observed frequencies of the realization patterns of rapport-management strategies. Similar to Chapter 5, the differentiation mainly concerns three domains of rapport management: the discourse domain, which includes moves and rhetorical structures in the emails; the stylistic domain, which is mainly involved in moves in openings and closings; and the illocutionary domain, which is mainly concerned with the requestive strategies in the head acts of the emails.

Some evaluations are made on the identified linguistic behaviour. Following Locher (2006, p.262), the identified unmarked behaviour in the three domains of rapport management could be treated as “the then-current unmarked social norms of appropriateness” in these domains, which constitute a large part of the relational work in the emails within the three discourse communities. Furthermore, with respect to the identified unmarked social norms, the identified marked linguistic behaviours are assessed to see whether they are positive or not, i.e. whether they are “paying somewhat more tribute to face than expected” (Locher, 2006, p.263), or, more specifically, whether they are markedly designed to meet email recipients’ face needs and sociality rights. If this marked linguistic behaviour is perceived to be positive, it is judged to be open for an interpretation (or at least for a recipient’s interpretation) as polite.

The above evaluation of linguistic behaviour in the emails is mainly from an etic perspective, i.e. a pattern evaluation from outside of the discourse communities (or from the researcher’s perspective). To gain comprehension of the relational work in emails of the three discourse communities, an investigation of some individuals’ performances in emails is also conducted. Several case studies are presented to illustrate how individual members manage rapport management through identified linguistic behaviour. The idiosyncratic performance, especially identified marked behaviour, is interpreted according to the email writers’ own perception of inter-connected psychological factors, such as face sensitivities, sociality rights considerations and some contextual variables such as relationships between interactants.

6.2 Relational Work in Different Domains of Emails

This section documents types of relational work in the discourse, stylistic and illocutionary domains of the emails in the three discourse communities. In each domain, it firstly attempts to distinguish unmarked/appropriate linguistic behaviour from marked linguistic behaviour. With respect to the manifested unmarked behaviour as norms, the marked linguistic behaviour is further assessed to see if it is open for an interpretation as polite, i.e. whether it is markedly designed to meet some specific needs of emails recipients in relation to face and sociality rights. Before the identification work, an

observation method which was used to investigate the two types of relational work in each domain is discussed in what follows.

6.2.1 Observation method of identifying types of relational work

In terms of identifying the relational work in the emails under study, it is necessary to find an objective descriptor to specify the characteristics of linguistic behaviour. In order to achieve this goal, Ho's (2011b) observation method is followed.

According to Ho (2011b), the best way for linguists to identify a particular linguistic behaviour in a discourse is to observe the existing ways of speaking or writing as objectively as possible. In his study, two criteria were drawn upon to identify and differentiate between merely appropriate and polite moves from emails in three Communities of Practice (CofPs). One criterion was from Locher and Watts (2005) on an interpretation of behaviour as polite. According to Locher and Watts, if the absence of the observed behaviour would not make the ongoing interaction any worse, the behaviour could be open for an interpretation as polite. The other criterion was drawn from Virtanen and Maricic (2000), who set up a line to distinguish prototypical linguistic behaviour. Specifically, they regarded moves occurring in more than 75% of the emails as prototypical moves and hence unmarked or conventional.

The observation method was applied and adapted to identify types of relational work in different domains of the emails under study. Specifically, two steps were performed. As a first step, the frequency line of 25% was set as a criterion to classify marked linguistic behaviour in each domain. If occurring frequency of a linguistic behaviour is below (or only marginally above) 25%, the behaviour was regarded as marked. The lower the frequency is, the higher the markedness would be. In contrast, the frequency line of 75% was set to classify unmarked linguistic behaviour. If a linguistic behaviour occurred in more than (or marginally) 75% of the total emails, it would be regarded as unmarked. The higher the frequency is, the more compulsory the linguistic behaviour would be regarded as for the emails. Furthermore, for linguistic behaviour of which the occurring frequency was around 50%, it was regarded as non-marked, i.e. neither marked nor unmarked.

As mentioned earlier, identified unmarked linguistic behaviour is regarded as the norm and therefore is not evaluated. They are equated with appropriate/polite behaviour. An evaluation was conducted mainly on the identified marked linguistic behaviour. Specifically, if the behaviour was positively evaluated in terms of the existing politeness theories, it was thus deemed as positive marked behaviour, and was therefore open for an interpretation as polite. However, if some identified marked linguistic behaviour was negatively evaluated, it might be at the risk of being interpreted as impolite.

6.2.2 Relational work in discourse domain

Identifying relational work in discourse domains mainly involves analysis of move structure and the rhetorical structure of emails. This section firstly discusses the linguistic behaviour of the three discourse communities in choosing specific moves in emails. It locates choices of moves which are marked and then assesses these moves to see if they meet the recipients' face needs and sociality rights and may thus be open for an interpretation as polite. It then takes a closer look at the rhetorical structure of the emails of the three discourse communities and attempts to position the relational work in them.

6.2.2.1 Relational work in move structures

With reference to Chapter 5, moves are categorized into two groups, moves serving referential functions, and moves serving persuasive functions. Moves serving persuasive functions are more likely to perform relational work. Therefore, following the observation method and the frequency line set above, Table 6.1 highlights the moves performing a persuasive function appearing in less than 25% of the request emails.

Table 6.1 Presence of persuasive move in emails by the three discourse communities

Move (No.)	2 Opening salutation	6 Request justification	7 Preparator	10 Apologies	11 Gratitude	12 Attending to recipients' situation	13 EWCP	15 Looking forward to further contact	16 Expressing thanks	17 Complimentary closing	18 Signing off
CSs	98.5	76.9	23.1	15.4	10.8	9.2	40.0	6.2	36.9	44.6	100
ESs	95.0	75.0	13.3	13.3	13.3	8.3	20.0	5.0	53.3	65.0	100
CEs	100	93.5	14.5	16.1	4.8	4.8	17.7	17.7	64.5	74.2	100

Note: moves emerging in more than 25% of the emails are italicized; moves in less than 25% of the emails are bolded.

As Table 6.1 shows, compared to other moves, Moves 7, 10, 11, 12 and 15 (*Preparator; Apologies; Showing Gratitude/Appreciation; Attending to Recipients' Situation; and Looking forward to Further Contact*) are marked because they appeared in less than 25% of the emails in all three discourse communities. It shows that non-inclusion of these moves would be regarded as usual by members of the discourse communities. In other words, emails without these moves would be regarded as appropriate. In addition, inclusion of these moves can reduce threat to recipients' negative face (or address recipients' equity rights) or strengthen the positive (quality) face of receivers of request emails. For example, the move *Preparator* could make the request less direct than a request without it, making the request less of an imposition to the email recipients and reducing the threat to the recipient's negative face. In addition, the move *Showing Gratitude/Appreciation* acknowledges the contribution of the email recipients, if they comply with the request. It hence strengthens the recipient's positive face.

As measured above, Moves 7, 10, 11, 12 and 15 are thus open for an interpretation as polite across the three discourse communities. What is more, under the same considerations, Move 13 (EWCP) could also be open to interpretation as polite in both ESs and CEs discourse communities (Frequency: 20.0%, 17.7% respectively). However, in the CS discourse community, this move was used more commonly (40.0%) than that in the other two discourse communities. It might be considered increasingly usual rather than open for an interpretation as polite if more members of this discourse community choose to use it in future.

In contrast, Moves 2, 6, and 18 (*Opening Salutation; Request Justification; and Signing off with the writers' names*) are judged to be unmarked moves across all the three discourse communities. These moves appeared in more than 75% (even 100%) of the request emails and thus could be regarded as prototypical moves, which may be compulsory to the email genre. Therefore, the appearance of these moves may be norms to the email writers. As a result, these moves may be regarded as merely appropriate in all the three discourse communities.

Finally, as for Moves 16 and 17 (*Thanks, Complimentary Closing*), it was a little harder to judge them as unmarked or marked in terms of their frequencies in the three discourse communities. They were more likely to be unmarked behaviour in the CES discourse community (Move 16, 64.5%; Move 17, 74.2%) than in the other two communities. In contrast, they are more likely to be open for an interpretation as polite in the CSs discourse, as they appeared in a much smaller number of emails than those in the other two discourse communities. In other words, according to the frequency of these two moves in emails of the CSs discourse communities (36.9%, 44.6%), the two moves are more likely to be developed into marked linguistics behaviour. Moreover, these two moves could address the recipient's positive face or uphold the recipient's quality face.

6.2.2.2 Relational work in rhetorical structure

In Chapter 5, three rhetorical structures - i.e. inductive structure (*Head act* following moves of *Background* and/or *Request Justification*); deductive structure (*Head act* followed by moves of *Background* and/or *Request Justification*); and bald-request structure (*Head act* without moves of *Background* or *Request Justification*) - were identified in the emails. The inductive rhetorical structure was employed in almost all the emails of the CS and the CES discourse communities (95.4% and 90.3% respectively). Therefore, the inductive structure seems to be normal to members in these two discourse communities.

Within the CS and the CES discourse communities, the inductive structure might be unmarked for both the email writers and receivers. It could thus be a norm which all the

email writers may need to follow. The structure may hence have been developed into a normal rhetorical structure (a merely appropriate behaviour) in the upward request emails; though according to previous studies, the inductive structure was regarded as being polite, showing speakers' respect and consideration to avoid hurting the hearer's negative face (Gu, 1990; Wong, 2000; Zhang, 1995a).

Whilst the inductive structure was considered as the norm in both the CS and the CES discourse communities within the relational work, the deductive rhetorical structure became a marked linguistic behaviour in terms of their low frequency (CSs, 3.1%; CESs, 9.7%). In terms of Chinese socio-culture, they may be at risk of being interpreted as impolite, for, according to the previous studies (Wong, 2000; Zhang, 1995b) on Chinese rhetorical structure, the deductive rhetorical structure might be too direct for making upward requests to teachers. However, from another perspective, as the majority of the emails were perceived as involving low imposition, in terms of the email writers' judgement on the requests, the extent of impoliteness might not be high.

Finally, in regard to the rhetorical structure of the emails within the ES discourse community, the deductive structure and the inductive structure emerged in almost each half of the email (43.3% vs. 48.3%). This indicated that both structures were widely acceptable within the ES discourse community. Therefore, both could be safely judged as appropriate strategies of rapport management in this discourse community. From the researchers' perspective, the inductive strategies are more likely to be interpreted as being polite, corresponding to the assertion of linear relationship between indirectness and politeness reviewed in Chapter 2. However, more assessment of the two rhetorical structures is needed especially from the perspective of email writers.

In the end, in terms of the occasional use of the bald-request rhetorical structure (1.5% in the CS discourse community, and 8.3% in the ES one), they were marked. It seems hard to evaluate them as positive or negative. If we treat emails as written letters, this structure seems to be impolite. However, if we treat emails as casual conversation, it might be acceptable to the speakers.

Overall, the above exploration has managed to distinguish unmarked/appropriate and marked/(im)polite rapport-management strategies in the discourse domain according to the observation method. It was found that there was a high consistency in differentiating polite moves and unmarked/appropriate moves across the three discourse communities. However, in terms of the differentiation of polite or unmarked/appropriate rhetorical structures, the consistency only exists between the CS and the CES discourse communities.

For those moves, which are identified as unmarked and therefore compulsory to the discourse communities, linguistic realization of these moves is also noteworthy. These moves might be realized differently by different members within and across the three discourse communities. Realizations of some moves are discussed in what follows, as an exploration of the relational work in the stylistic and illocutionary domains.

6.2.3 Relational work in stylistic domain

Two moves, *Opening Salutation* and *Signing off*, appeared in nearly every email of the three discourse communities. According to Spencer-Oatey (2000, p.20), these two moves fall into the stylistic domain which mainly involves “genre-appropriate terms of address or use of honorifics”. However, a closer examination reveals that realizations of these moves differed within and across the three discourse communities. This has made it necessary to identify the relational work of these moves realization within each discourse community.

6.2.3.1 Opening salutations

The move *Opening Salutation* is usually composed of address terms, salutations and greetings. The move was regarded as prototypical and thus unmarked for it occurred in almost every email. However, specifically in relation to the realization of each part of the move within the three discourse communities, polite executions of these parts (textualization) could be distinguished from those merely appropriate executions.

FOR THE CS DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

As regards the address terms, almost all the members of the CS discourse community express it through the formal structure title + surname of the addressee (97.0%). Since all the emails were sent to university instructors, the title was addressed with the job title 老师 (*Laoshi*- teacher). This formal address form is unmarked and is thus supposed to be merely appropriate, that is, normal behaviour within this discourse community.

With regards to salutations in the *Opening salutation* of the emails, the salutation “尊敬的 *Zunjing de* (Respected)...” or “敬爱的 *Jingai de* (Respected and dear)...” could be regarded as polite behaviour in the CS discourse community. These two salutation forms appeared in a small number of emails (10.8%, 4.6% respectively). They were marked because the majority of emails did not have any explicit salutation. Not having a salutation ahead of the address terms is thus regarded as normal. Moreover, the two forms of salutations showed respect to the email receivers and thus could be positively evaluated.

For the greeting forms, it is quite difficult to identify the polite and normal ones. The greeting form with *honorific you* 您好 (hi you) and the form with *plain form you* (你好) appeared in 66.2% and 13.8% of the emails in this community. A large number of other emails (18.5%) did not contain any kind of greeting form. The greeting form with the *honorific you* could thus be regarded as an unmarked norm and greetings with *plain you* or non-greetings as marked forms.

In terms of the Chinese socio-cultural context, students are expected to use *honorific you* to pay high respect to high-ranked people like teachers. The expectation was met here with the high frequency of the *honorific you*. Therefore, from a researcher's perspective, the greeting with *plain you*, or non-greetings, may be at risk of being interpreted as impolite, for they do not show as high a degree of respect to email recipients as the greeting form with the *honorific you*.

In sum, the polite salutations, combined with the formal address terms and the honorific greeting form, may render a marked and polite way of *Opening Salutation* in the CS discourse community. Examples are demonstrated below:

1. 1a. 敬爱的高老师：您好！（Respected and Dear Teacher Gao, hello honorific you)
- 1b. 尊敬的老师，您好！（Respected teacher, hello honorific you).

In contrast, the formal address, with the *honorific you* form of greetings, might be regarded as normal, such as 房老师：您好（Teacher Fang, how are honorific-you). Finally, the formal address terms with *plain you* greetings, or especially those without greetings, and non-openings, would be less polite and even be at risk of being interpreted as being impolite. Examples are also shown below:

- 2.2a. 张老师你好（Teacher Zhang, how are plain- you)
- 2b. 张老师（Teacher Zhang)

FOR THE ES DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

In the ES discourse community, the address terms were predominantly realized by informal forms with *addressee's given name* (80% of the emails). In contrast, only 10% of the emails employed a formal address, which was typically realized by addressing the receiver's job title, such as *professor*, and their surnames. In addition, the other 10% of emails used *you* within *hello you* or had no address term. Considering the frequencies of address terms, the address term with the addressee's given name could be regarded as unmarked linguistic behaviour and hence the norm. The formal address, with the addressee's job title and surname, is marked in this discourse community. Also, the informal address term with *you* or non-address term is marked. In upward request emails, the formal address term is more likely to uphold the receiver's positive face by stressing their teacher's status. Therefore, the formal address terms can be interpreted as polite, while the informal address forms with *you* or with a non-address term might be at risk of being interpreted as impolite.

Regarding salutation forms in emails, it is hard to judge which form, *dear* or *hi/hello* is unmarked or marked. According to their frequencies of appearance, the two forms could only be regarded as non-marked behaviour in the ES discourse community, for each of them appeared in almost half of the emails (Dear, 53.4%; Hi/hello, 45.0%). This indicates that both of these terms are appropriate from the perspective of the email writers. From the researcher's perspective, *dear* is more likely to develop into unmarked/appropriate behaviour if emails are treated as a written letter. In contrast, *hi/hello* is more likely to become unmarked/appropriate behaviour if emails are regarded as casual talk.

As for greeting forms in emails by the ESs, only 3 emails (5%) contained some greeting forms. Not having greeting forms is thus regarded as appropriate in the ES discourse community. On the contrary, greeting forms such as *hope you are well* are marked and positive to the receiver. These forms are open for an interpretation as polite.

To sum up, in the ES discourse community, addressing the email receiver's given name premised with *dear* or *hi*, is unmarked and might be regarded as merely appropriate behaviour. In contrast, those openings with *dear + receiver's title + surname* such as *Dear Professor Smith* are marked and are much likely to be interpreted as polite.

FOR THE CES DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Within the CES discourse community, it is hard to identify which one, formal address terms or informal address terms, is interpreted as polite behaviour solely on the basis of markedness judgement. Both formal and informal forms occurred commonly in emails (43.6% and 56.4%). As a start, it is safe to assert that both these two forms are socially appropriate, at least from the perspective of the email writers. For those email writers who have accepted British norms of address as evidenced in the previous section, informal address terms could be regarded as merely appropriate and the formal address terms might be open for an interpretation as polite. In contrast, for those email writers who still adhered to Chinese norms of address, the formal address terms may be regarded as appropriate, while informal address terms might be regarded as impolite and thus inappropriate in these upward emails.

As for the salutation forms *dear* and *hi*, members of the CES discourse community seemed to have acquired British norms to treat both forms as appropriate ways of addressing the email recipients. However, it is equally as hard for researchers to identify which one is polite and which one is merely appropriate linguistic behaviour. While the use of *hi* is marked (25.3%) in this discourse community, it seems impossible to interpret this form as being polite in contrast to the use of *dear*, given its informality and lack of perceived respectfulness. In addition, as illustrated earlier, *hi* is possibly to be treated as unmarked/appropriate behaviour in the ES discourse community. Therefore, the marked behaviour of *hi* (in terms of its frequency of occurrence) could also be regarded as appropriate in the CES discourse community.

Finally, for the greeting forms in emails by the CESs, similar to the ES discourse community, only 6 emails (9.7%) contained some greeting forms. This may show that the CESs have grasped the norms in the ES discourse community, so that not having greeting forms might be regarded as appropriate. As with those in the emails of the ESs, the six greetings such as *how are you* could be open for an interpretation as polite.

In sum, it is harder to identify marked/polite behaviour of opening salutations in the CES discourse community than that of the other two discourse communities. The possible reasons for this will be further discussed in the next chapter.

6.2.3.2 Relational work in the move of Signing off

Regarding the move of *Signing off* in the request emails of the CS discourse community, the way of signing off with the writers' full name could be regarded as unmarked because almost all the emails were ended in this way. Therefore, signing off with the writer's full name is the norm in the CS discourse community.

Moreover, half (50.8%) of the members of the community stressed their student's status in *signing off* like “您的学生” (*honorific- your student*) or “学生” (*student*). However, this form of signing off is non-marked in terms of its frequency of occurrence. As a result, both forms (i.e. signing off with or without the student's status) are appropriate in the discourse community. From the researcher's perspective, signing off with the

student's status seems to be more polite than signing off without it. According to the survey, almost all the email writers and the recipients were familiar with each other. Email writers thus might not need to introduce themselves. When they signed off their emails by emphasizing their student status, they might have been hoping to stress that, according to the Chinese socio-culture, they are inferior to their teachers. Therefore, signing off with the student's status is a way to show respect to teachers and thus to be more polite than employing a non-signing off of student status.

As for members of the ES discourse community, only a small number of emails (5%) were signed off with both the student's information and their names. Most of the emails were signed off with the writer's name only. Signing off with both the information and student's name is thus marked in this discourse community, which is different from that of the CS discourse community. It is more likely to be interpreted as polite. Furthermore, within the group of emails signed with the writer's names only, most of the emails (85.9%) were signed off with the writer's given name. Only a small number of the emails were signed off with the writer's full name. In consideration of the markedness and formality, full names can possibly be interpreted as being polite, while given names are more likely to be merely appropriate behaviour.

Finally, with regards to signing off in the CES discourse community, the performance was varied. Both signing off with given names and signing off with full names were non-marked behaviours according to their frequency of occurrence in emails (with given name, 43.5%; with full name, 54.8%). It might show that many CESs might still adhere to Chinese norms to sign off their emails with full names. However, in terms of identified norms of signing off in the target language of English, both forms would possibly be seen as within the 'normal' range.

6.2.4 Relational work in illocutionary domain

The head act of request plays a key role in request emails for it has both a referential and persuasive function (Virtanen & Maricic, 2000). Firstly, the move clearly and concisely describes the request information. In addition, it could serve for persuasive goals, i.e. functioning as rapport management and doing relational work.

As shown in Chapter 5, more than 80.3% of emails in the CS discourse community used conventionally direct strategies in the requesting move. More specifically, the direct request was rendered syntactically in the form of imperatives, direct questions, want statements, and expectation statements. The conventionally direct strategies thus could be regarded as unmarked/appropriate ways of requesting by the CSs.

Alternatively, the indirect strategies, which were rendered in syntactic form as query preparatory, appeared in 19.7% emails in this discourse community. It could thus be regarded as marked behaviour. Moreover, indirect requests can mitigate the imposition of the request and thus reduce the threat to the recipient's negative face or uphold the recipient's equity rights. Therefore, it is positively evaluated from the researcher's perspective. It is hence open for an interpretation as polite.

In contrast, indirect strategies in requesting moves were used in most emails (75.8%) in the ES discourse community, while direct strategies were used in a small number of emails (24.2%). In terms of their occurring frequencies, indirect strategies are unmarked while direct strategies are marked. Therefore, in this discourse community, indirect strategies seem to be the norm. Compared with indirect strategies, direct strategies are generally regarded as less polite because, as we reviewed in Chapter 2, most researchers agree that there is a linear relationship between indirectness and politeness in English. If so, from the researcher's perspective, the marked direct requestive strategies are at risk of being interpreted as impolite.

Finally, in the CES discourse community, the performance of requestive strategies seemed to represent a difference from the norm found in the ES discourse community. Members of the CES discourse community had much lesser tendency (60.3%) to use indirect strategies than those in the ES discourse community. In contrast, they preferred to use more direct strategies than the latter. From a researcher's perspective, it seems that more members in this discourse community were more likely to make impolite/inappropriate requests than members from the ES discourse community (see Chapter 7 for further discussion of this issue).

6.2.5 Summary

Following the observation method illustrated above, this section has managed to identify three types of linguistic behaviour: marked, non-marked and unmarked ones. The identified unmarked behaviour was regarded as a norm and thus appropriate in relational work in different rapport management domains. Furthermore, from a researcher's perspective, the section attempted to examine the marked linguistic behaviour in each domain to see if they were open for an interpretation as polite, i.e. the linguistic behaviour was markedly designed to meet recipients' face needs and sociality rights. Finally, as for those identified non-marked behaviours in some domains, such as the move *Thanks*, an attempt has been made to distinguish the ones which are more likely to be polite behaviour in each discourse community.

This work has successfully identified the relational work in different rapport management domains within the three discourse communities. It has made it possible for us to explore some systematic similarities and differences of the relational work across the three discourse communities, which could thus deepen our understanding of cross-cultural/intercultural communication with academic request emails (a detailed discussion about this will be conducted in Chapter 7).

However, one insufficiency might have arisen from this analysis in terms of the etic approach. The pattern evaluation of the linguistic behaviour was conducted from a position outside of the system (a researcher's perspective) which thus may ignore the individual's repertoire of rapport-management strategies in the emails. This has inevitably driven the researcher to employ a relatively positive and absolute criterion- i.e., facework of recipients, to interpret the identified marked behaviour. The criterion, on the one hand, has successfully addressed some factors like power, distance, rank of imposition, and some face sensitivities (positive face and negative face; quality face and equity rights in reference to Spencer-Oatey, 2000). On the other hand, it may have ignored other factors, especially rights and obligations (such as identity face and association rights in reference to Spencer-Oatey, 2000), which may also contribute to the choice of strategies of rapport management.

In fact, one possible inconsistency has emerged in terms of the discussion above. As mentioned earlier, all the emails were assessed as appropriate by email writers. According to Locher and Watts (2005), appropriate behaviour consists of unmarked/appropriate behaviour and marked/polite behaviour. Therefore, in line with the email writers' judgements, the identified marked behaviour, which breached the corresponding norms (unmarked behaviour), was expected to be interpreted as polite. However, as observed above from the researcher's perspective, some identified marked behaviour, such as direct requestive strategies in the ES discourse community, seemed not to be polite and even to be at the risk of being interpreted as impolite and thus inappropriate.

In a word, the insufficiency might be attributable to the ignorance about some other factors rather than factors of face needs and sociality rights of recipients. Some linguistic behaviour may not necessarily address only the three contextual factors, or recipients' face needs and sociality rights. They may be intended to address other factors like the sociality rights of email writers. If so, the linguistic behaviour might in fact be interpreted as being appropriate after all.

In addition, the etic approach may have overlooked individuals' roles in performing relational work in their emails. As Locher (2006) emphasized, the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is, by definition, flexible and fuzzy, and cannot be completely the same for every member in a discourse community. Moreover, according to Gudykunst (2000), interpersonal factors may also mediate the research of cross-cultural research. Therefore, further research is called for on the research participants' perspective.

Considering the above factors, an interpretation of the identified linguistic behaviour could not solely rely on pattern evaluation. A deeper and more local exploration into the relational work in emails is required. Specifically, as noted above, there is a considerable amount of individual variation amongst students and staff, which may influence the relational work in request emails. A case study is thus needed to probe into the relational work in some typical emails in each discourse community. To do so, the next section describes and discusses some email cases (i.e. the emic approach) and

especially focuses on marked behaviour in order to investigate areas neglected by the above analysis, using an etic perspective.

Last but by no means least, the following case studies are expected to address the other insufficiency possibly brought about by the general exploration of linguistic behaviour in emails among the three discourse communities. Specifically, the pattern evaluation could only examine the pattern of linguistic behaviour in each rapport management domain. It could not provide insights into the inter-relationships of all rapport-management domains in an individual's email. The case studies will thus investigate linguistic behaviours in the overall composition of emails.

6.3 Individual Variation and Relational Work in Request Emails

This section documents several individuals' performance on managing rapport in their request emails and thus addresses the third research question of this study. A description in depth is provided at first regarding the individual's demographic information and their perception of social variables, because these factors might impact upon the choices of rapport-management strategies in making request emails. After the description, several request emails within each discourse community are analyzed at both clause and discourse levels to display the strategies the students employed. The emails chosen for analysis are representative of the whole population of the emails, i.e. containing all the identified linguistic behaviour in the data. Finally, the identified strategies are analyzed with reference to the constructs of rapport management, i.e. face sensitivities- 'quality face' and 'identity face', and sociality rights- 'equity rights' and 'association rights' (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, p.14) of the interlocutors. All the emails in the case studies are reproduced exactly as they appear in the original data.

6.3.1 Cases within the CS discourse community

Within the CS discourse community, three emails are discussed below. Following the selection criteria set out above, the three emails are selected here firstly because they could be said to represent the whole population of the emails in the CS discourse community with respect to their realization of rapport management in different domains.

More importantly still, they show some idiosyncratic characteristics. For example, the relationship between the first email writer and recipient is relatively more distant than the relationship of the writer and recipients in other emails. The second email selected for study is due to its requestive aim of asking for a leave, which is more common than that of emails in the other two discourse communities. Finally, the third email contains a deductive rhetorical structure, which is regarded as a marked rapport-management strategy within the discourse community in terms of the analysis in Section 6.2.2.2 above.

6.3.1.1 Case 1: Wang

The first case participant from the CS discourse community is Wang (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), who was a male student aged 25 at the time of the data collection. He was a first-year MA student majoring in Agricultural Studies. He reported that he seldom wrote and sent academic emails to teachers.

The following email in Extract 1 was written by the email writer to a university teacher in the same university. The teacher was a male professor. However, as Wang reported, he knew of the teacher but the teacher might not know him. As reported in Chapter 4, most of the recipients of the emails in the CS discourse community were familiar with the email writers. Therefore, the social distance between the two interactants of this email was relatively great. Finally, according to Wang's own judgement, the rank of imposition of his request for an academic research guide was medium (value 3). The email is presented in English below with move analysis and linguistic realization analysis undertaken on it.

Note that the translation of the Chinese emails is provided in all the extracts below. The originals are provided in Appendix 4.

Extract 1 (CSs email No. 4).

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Request for teaching from a student	A Phrase
Openings: 1. Salutation 2. Greetings	Teacher Gao	<i>Title + surname</i>
	Hello you	<i>Chinese formulaic greeting with honorific you</i>
Showing Gratitude	First of all, I would like to express my thanks to you for taking out time to read a student's email.	
Identifying Oneself	I am a student from the college of Agriculture	
Providing Background Information	Because of the need for experiments, an ultrastructural observation is to be conducted on tobacco leaves.	
Request Justification	I read through some literature and found that you have explored some similar issues	
Preparator	I want to ask teacher (you) a question.	<i>Address the teacher's title</i>
Elaboration	It is about how to choose the PH when using an osmolality fixative to fix tobacco.	
Additional Justification	Because my experimental field is in Guizhou and I need to bring some samples back to Nanjing.	
Requesting	Can you give me some advice on selecting a fixative and conducting an operation in the middle process?	Interrogative sentence with modal verb <i>neng</i> (can)
Thanks	Heartfelt thanks to the teacher's help.	
Complimentary Close	Wish you good health and smooth work. End with my respects.	Typical ending in Chinese written letters (Chen, 1991)
Signing off with writer's name and the date	Student Wang 2010.5.17	Writer's title + full name <i>Signing-off formulaic in Chinese written letters</i> (Chen, 1991)

Compared with other emails in the CS discourse community, the email in Extract 1 contained several formal linguistic devices, like signing off with the date, which is

compulsory in Chinese written letters, together with the honorific *you*. Moreover, it involves more identified marked moves which can be interpreted as polite, such as *Showing Gratitude; Identifying Oneself; Preparator; and Thanks*. Finally, the head act of request is also marked, for it employed an indirect requestive strategy, which is in contrast to the direct strategies employed by most of the email writers in this discourse community.

The email with a formal style and several polite moves may be firstly oriented to address the equity rights of the recipient. As the email writer reported, it was very important for him to try not to hurt the recipient's feeling or impose on the recipient through the email. Even though the request for academic advice was not regarded as very high (value 3), the power and distance, as we discussed above, was relatively higher than those in other emails. As a result, the weightiness of face threatening was high. The email writer might thus employ such polite moves to strengthen mitigation of the request and to reduce the imposition brought by the request.

The formality and the number of polite moves may also indicate that the email writer hoped to build a harmonious relationship with the recipient. This was confirmed by the email writer's own judgement in his questionnaire. Therefore, the email seemed to have been carefully designed by the email writer to uphold the recipient's (teacher's) identity face. Through this, the writer may expect to be seen as a very polite MA student and thus uphold his quality face. As a result, the writer is more likely to achieve compliance with his request from the recipient.

To sum up, the two variables, high power and distance have played a key role in deciding choices of rapport-management strategies. The email writer thus employed the marked indirect strategy in the head act of request and relatively more polite moves than the other emails in this discourse community. All these help the writer to build a harmonious relationship with the recipient and realize the goal of getting the recipient to provide the help needed by the writer.

6.3.1.2 Case 2: Juan

The second case participant in this discourse community was Juan Zhou (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality). She was aged 25 at the time of data collection. She was a second-year MA student studying plant protection. It was reported that she seldom wrote academic emails.

The email in Extract 2 was written to a female lecturer, whom she considered to be in a medium-close relationship with her (value 3). According to this, the power and distance between the interactants could be regarded as normal. The email is presented below with move analysis and some highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 2 (CSs email No. 18).

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Request for absence from the lecture	<i>A Phrase</i>
Openings: 1. Salutation 2. Greetings	Respectful Teacher	<i>Respectful + title</i>
	Hello you	<i>Chinese formulaic greeting with honorific you</i>
Showing Gratitude and Appreciation	Thanks a lot for you have taught me very much in this semester. I have benefited much from your teaching and I like your lectures so much.	<i>The use of plain you in the body of this email.</i>
Request Justification	I am close to the end of my studies and have started my job seeking. I will attend an interview this Tuesday, when you give the lecture then. Thereby I may not join in your lecture.	
Requesting	Hope you will allow me to be absent.	<i>Expectation statement (Direct requestive strategy)</i>
Apology	I beg your pardon.	
EWCP	I will self-study what you will give in the lecture and consult you if I meet anything that I cannot understand.	
Complimentary Close	Wish teacher good health and smooth work End with respect	<i>Typical ending in Chinese written letters</i>
Signing off with writer' name and the date	Juan Zhou 2010.5.18	<i>Writer's full name Signing-off formulaic in Chinese written letters</i>

The email was written to the recipient to request an absence. According to the questionnaire, most participants regarded the rank of imposition of such a request to be high, and this email writer believed so too (value 4). In addition, the writer regarded that it was very important for her to avoid hurting the recipient's feeling (value 5) and avoid imposing on the recipient (value 4). In other words, similar to the email in Extract 1, the writer considered that it was very important for her to achieve the goal of upholding the recipient's identity face and equity rights in this email.

Several rapport-management strategies might help the email writer attain the goal. At first, like the email of Extract 1 and most emails in this discourse community, this email used inductive rhetorical strategy in the discourse domain. As Scollon and Scollon (2001, p. 97) point out, the inductive rhetorical strategy is a "face politeness strategy of independence". In reference to this context, the email writer was not sure whether the recipient would automatically agree with her request for absence. In other words, the email writer might use the rhetorical strategy to reduce the possible imposition on the recipients brought by her requests.

In addition, the email writer used several moves which are open for interpretation as polite. The opening salutation move, which was realized by *respectful + title + surname*, is very likely to be used to uphold the teacher's status (identity face). Furthermore, the move of *Showing Gratitude* indicated that the writer wanted to uphold the teacher's identity face as an excellent teacher. And the move *Apology* was used by the writer to reduce the imposition of the request on the teacher (i.e. upholding the recipient's identity rights).

Therefore, even though the email writer employed a direct requestive strategy in the head act of request (this is a typical Chinese form of request, which will be discussed further in Chapter 7), the inductive rhetorical strategy, together with the identified polite moves used to explicitly acknowledge high imposition, would thus reduce the imposition of the request. Meanwhile, compared with the email in Extract 1, the power and social distance between the interactants did not look so high. This may possibly lead to the writer of the email in Extract 2 using a direct requestive strategy, while the

writer of email in Extract 1 used a marked indirect requestive strategy in the head act of request.

To sum up, through using the indirect rhetorical strategy and some polite moves, the email writer may expect to reduce request imposition on the recipient (i.e. addressing the recipient's equity rights). Meanwhile, these strategies may be expected to uphold the recipient's identity face through elevating the teacher's status, i.e. respectful addressing, and acknowledging the student's obligations (cf. the move of *EWCP* where that student promised that she would study what the teacher delivered in the lecture by herself). All these thus help the student to leave an impression that she is a good and polite student on the recipient and thus realize the requestive goal that she made.

6.3.1.3 Case 3: Zhi Hua

The third case participant of this discourse community was Zhi Hua (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), a female MA student. She was 23 years old at the time of the data collection. She was in her first year studying of Biology. It was reported that she seldom wrote academic emails to university instructors.

The email was written to a female teacher, who had a PhD degree and was working as a personal tutor in the school. The relationship between the email writer and recipient, as reported, was medium (value 3). However, compared with most email recipients within this discourse community, the power of the recipient seemed to be relatively low, for she was just a tutor while most of the recipients were lecturers or supervisors. The email is presented below with move analysis and some highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 3 (CSs email No. 27)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	None	<i>A Phrase</i>
Openings: 1. Salutation 2. Greetings	Teacher Zhou	<i>Title + surname</i>
	Hello you	<i>Chinese formulaic greeting with plain you</i>
Requesting	I attach the list of students who want to join the Party or who are eligible for joining the Party for your review.	<i>With honorific you, statement sentence</i>
Making another Request	After you review, please tell me the result. Is that Ok?	<i>Honorific you</i>
Thanks	Thanks	
Signing off with writer's name	Zhi Hua	<i>Writer's full name</i>

Compared with the majority of emails within this discourse community, this email is special for its marked inductive rhetorical strategy (even a bald request because it had no justification move following the requests). As was analyzed above, the deductive rhetorical structure is probably an essential structure in the CS discourse community. The inductive rhetorical structure thus might run the risk of being interpreted as impolite and hence inappropriate. However, a closer look at the email might change the judgement. Firstly, as mentioned above, the power of this email recipient might be relatively lower than the other recipients. As it was reported by the email writer, the rank of the request imposition was the lowest (value 1). She might believe that there was no risk of hurting the feelings of the recipient (value 1) or imposing on the recipient (value 1).

In other words, the email writer might believe it was the email recipient's obligation to comply with her request. Therefore, she did not address the recipients' equity rights to any great extent. She thus might use the direct rhetorical structure, together with the direct head act of request, to express her own rights of request in the email. In the meantime, in spite of the direct strategies the writer used, she did not reject the power distance between her and the recipient. In the email, the writer used *honorific you* twice and the formal title *teacher* to address the recipient. This might show that the writer still may tend to maintain the identity face of the recipient and thus leave a good impression on the recipient.

To sum up, this email called for the researcher's attention because it contained two marked linguistic behaviours. The inductive rhetorical structure and salutation *hello you (plain you)* were very likely to be devices used by the writer to maintain her own identity face and equity rights rather than the recipient's. However, in contrast with the honorific *you* used twice in the body of the email, the plain *you* in the salutation might also be unintentionally used by the email writer to breach the norm of using the honorific *you* in salutations within the discourse community.

6.3.1.4 Summary

Three email cases from three participants - Wang, Juan and Zhi Hua - have been analyzed within the CS discourse community in the above. Among these three cases, it was found that all the participants attached more weight to upholding the recipients' identity faces and equity rights. However, due to different contextual variables, realizations of rapport-management strategies are idiosyncratic among the three cases. In other words, the three case participants have relied on different strategies to manage rapport in their emails. For example, Wang chose more indirect strategies to address his relatively distant relationship with the recipient. In contrast, Zhi Hua used less indirect strategies and even used a direct rhetorical strategy - deductive strategy, which is judged as marked behaviour, possibly due to the relatively lower level of power and especially more obligations of the recipient than the other recipients of this discourse community.

6.3.2 Cases within the ES discourse community

In what follows, three case participants, from the ES discourse community with their four emails, are examined and discussed. These emails are selected for discussion because they meet the selection criteria illustrated above. They could be said to represent the email data of this discourse community for these emails contain nearly all of the rapport-management strategies identified within this community. Moreover, they have some special characteristics. Emails 1 and 2 were written by a same writer to different recipients, who had different social and power relationships with the email writer. Email 3 was aimed at requesting feedback on an assignment by the email writer,

and the request aim was relatively more common than the others within the discourse community. Finally, Email 4 is selected for discussion as its recipient was a tutor, who was believed to be slightly less powerful than the majority of the recipients (i.e. lectures and supervisors) within this discourse community.

6.3.2.1 Case 1: Alice

The first case participant within the ES discourse community is Alice (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), who was a 24-year-old female student at the time of data collection. She was a final-year PhD student majoring in English Language and Literature. She reported that she often wrote academic emails, i.e. two or three in one week. With reference to her research area and the high frequency of composing academic emails, Alice was more likely to have grasped norms of writing appropriate request emails to university instructors. Moreover, she was cooperative and kindly provided two request emails for the research. The two emails were written to different instructors, which offered a good chance to conduct a comparison between them.

Extract 1 is an email written by Alice to seek the possibility of teaching position in her department. The email recipient was a female professor, who was at the time head of the school. Compared to other recipients within the ES discourse community, the recipient of this email is probably of higher power. Moreover, according to Alice's own judgement, she had a relatively high-distance relationship with the recipient (the relationship value of judgement is 2, which means not intimate). Finally, as for the judgement of the rank of request imposition, the email writer believed that the rank was neutral (Value 3). The email is presented in what follows with move analysis and linguistic-realization of these moves.

Extract 1 (ESs email No. 19)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Teaching Next Semester	A Phrase
Openings: 1. Salutation 2. Greetings	Dear Professor X,	<i>Dear + title + surname</i>
	I hope this message finds you well.	<i>I hope + clause</i>
Providing Background Information	I am writing to inquire about the status of Old English teaching next semester.	<i>I am writing to inquire...</i>
Request Justification	As the end of my PhD approaches, I'm thinking about what to do next; I would very much like to carry on teaching here at Sheffield,	<i>I am thinking ... I would like to...</i>
Making the Request	and was wondering if that looks like a possibility.	<i>Past tense form of be + wondering if</i>
Thanks	Thank you very much for your time;	<i>Thank you very much for...</i>
Looking forward to Reply	look forward to hearing from you.	Formulaic phrase <i>Look forward to</i>
Complimentary Closing	With all best wishes,	Formulaic phrase with <i>all best wishes</i>
Signing off	Alice	Given name

Compared to Extract 1 which was written to a recipient with relatively higher power and distance, Extract 2 is an email written by Alice to her male supervisor, who was thought to be close to her (the relationship value of judgement is 4, which means close). Moreover, like most email recipients who were email writers' supervisors in this discourse community, the power of this recipient is normal. The email was aimed at asking for the name of an author of an article. According to the judgement of the email writer herself, the rank of the request imposition was relatively high for she marked the imposition value as 4. The email is displayed below with its move analysis and the micro-linguistic realizations of these moves.

Extract 2 (ESs email No. 20)

Function of moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Interlace Article	Noun phrase
Opening (Greeting + Address)	Hello P,	<i>Hello + given name</i>
Preparator	I know this is a long shot	<i>I know...</i>
Requesting Justification	, but I remember you using a really interesting article on interlace back when we did OE: Language, Texts and Culture... It had lots of lovely pictures.	<i>But I...</i>
Making the Request	Can you by any chance remember who it was by?	<i>Can you...?</i>
Thanks	Thank you.	Formulaic phrase <i>Thank you</i>
Complimentary Closing	All best,	Formulaic phrase <i>All best</i>
Signing off	Alice	Given name

Several identical moves were found in the two request emails. Some of these moves - *Subject Line*; *Opening Salutation*; *Request Justification*; *Head Act*; and *Signing off* - are unmarked moves, which are normative to the ES discourse community. Other moves, like *Expressing Thanks* and *Complimentary Closing*, regarded as non-marked behaviour, also appeared in both emails. In addition, it was found that both emails employed the same inductive discourse structure, i.e. putting moves of *Providing Background* and/or *Request Justification* before *Head Act of Request*.

Some differences were also found between the two emails in terms of some recurring moves and their linguistic realizations. Extract 1 contained moves of *Providing Background* and *Looking forward to Reply*, while Extract 2 contained the move of *Preparator*. With regards to linguistic realizations of some moves, it was found that Extract 1 had greetings in the move of *Opening Salutation*. Moreover, the salutation of Extract 1 is marked because it was realized by *Dear + title + surname*, while the salutation in Extract 2 is unmarked because it was realized by the recipient's given name. Finally, it was found that the head act of request in Extract 1 was more

syntactically and lexically mitigated than that of Extract 2. Specifically, the head act ... *and was wondering if that looks a possibility* in Extract 1 involves mitigation forms, progressive aspect, past tense, if-clause and an epistemic stance adverb (possibility). However, the head act *Can you by any chance remember who it was by?* involves only one syntactic downgrader-interrogative form and one hedge *by any chance*.

In the two request emails, the writer managed rapport constantly by attending to the face and sociality rights of the teachers with a range of rapport-management strategies in order to fulfil two aims including (i) maintaining rapport with appropriate behaviour; and thus (ii) portraying herself as being a polite and well-educated student/job applicant (in email 1) and a PhD candidate (using positively marked behaviour). What follows demonstrates how the writer attended to the face and sociality rights of the interlocutors with strategies of rapport-management in the two emails.

Extract 1

Extract 1 might be regarded as a most polite request email, as it contained several polite moves and polite linguistic realization of these moves. For example, in the move *Opening Salutation*, the writer used two positively marked linguistic strategies: a marked salutation *Dear + title + surname* and a positive marked greeting to the recipient. These forms seemed to make the email a tool for professional communication rather than a personal one. It seemed to signal to the recipient that the writer was behaving as a job applicant and wished to gain teaching job in the school. In other words, the polite behaviour, especially the formal address term (i.e. a distancing strategy) might uphold the email recipient's identity face, i.e. upholds the recipient's leadership role and high-power status. Conversely, the polite behaviour might strengthen the email writer's quality face, i.e. desiring to make a good impression on the recipient. The desire was confirmed by the email writer's own assessment in the questionnaire that she thought it very important to leave a good impression on the recipient through the email.

As detailed above, the writer added much mitigation force into the head act of request in this email. The head act ...*and was wondering if that looks like a possibility* belongs to a conventionally highly indirect request (according to CCSARP coding framework). It

also contains a downgrader device *possibility*. This much-mitigated head act of request might further strengthen the above assertion that the writer tended to uphold the recipients' hierarchical identity face. The assertion could also be confirmed from the email writer's own perception. According to the email writer she did not consider the imposition of her request to be high. Also, she did not believe her email would impose on the recipient when proposing this email. Therefore, at least on the writer's own part, the mitigated devices might not be primarily aimed at addressing the recipient's equity rights, i.e. reducing imposition, but aimed instead at addressing the recipient's identity face.

In other words, in terms of sociality rights, the email writer might hope to attend more to the association rights than to the recipient's equity rights with the identified formal and mitigated linguistic behaviour. This was proved by the writer's response that it was very important for her to maintain a harmonious relationship with the recipient through the email. As a result, the email seemed to be employed to address more the social component than the personal components of rapport management.

To sum up, the writer's effort in attending to her quality face served to portray her as one who was being a polite student and job applicant, and a potentially qualified teacher. Moreover, by attending to her association rights and upholding the recipient's identity face, the writer might show that she would be a potentially cooperative subordinate in the future.

Extract 2

Compared with the email in Extract 1, the email in Extract 2 employed fewer polite moves and mitigated linguistic devices. Also, the email seems to be less formal (e.g. the address term) than the one in Extract 1.

This may be due to the fact that the email writer did not feel it necessary to attend to the quality face and identity face as highly as to those in the email in Extract 1. As was indicated above, the interpersonal relationship between the interactants in this mail was closer than that in Extract 1. Moreover, the email writer judged that it was less

important to attend to the quality face of both the recipient and the email writer than to that of the interactants in Extract 1. Similar to the email in Extract 1, she wanted to maintain a good relationship with the recipients but the desire was not as strong as that in the former.

In other words, in the email of Extract 2, since the email writer believed she had been very familiar with (or, in fact, did have a good relationship with) the recipient, it would likely not be necessary for her to use similar polite moves and mitigated linguistic behaviour as those in Extract 1 to uphold their quality face and identity face. By doing so, the email would run the risk of being over polite and hence inappropriate.

However, as the email writer judged, the imposition of the request in Extract 2 was stronger than that in Extract 1. This might mean that writer would like to attend more to equity rights of the recipient than that in Extract 1. Therefore, while the writer felt it not necessary to use so much polite linguistic behaviour as that in Extract 1, she used a move of *Preparator*. Together with the head act (a conventionally indirect request strategy), it seemed to further mitigate the request imposition and hence successfully address the equity rights of the recipients.

To summarize, the writer of the two emails could successfully maintain a harmonious relationship with the recipients through her choice of appropriate rapport-management strategies. The writer had different perceptions of rapport in the two emails, i.e. different face wants and interactional wants. Correspondingly, different moves and linguistic realizations were employed to address the differences, especially some marked forms which are more likely to be interpreted as polite.

In what follows, two other emails, which embrace some different rapport management strategies from the above emails are explored, to deepen our understanding of individual performance of rapport management within this discourse community.

6.3.2.2 Case 2: Paula

The second case participant is Paula (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), who was a 41-year-old female student at the time of the data collection. She was a taught MA student majoring in English Language and Literature. According to her report, she seldom wrote academic emails.

Extract 3 is an email written by Paula to ask for an evaluation/feedback of her essay. The email recipient was a male lecturer. The power of the recipient is thus regarded as normal within the discourse community. In terms of the relationship between the interactants, Paula marked it with a medium value, i.e. not high or low. Finally, Paula believed that her request in this email was of low imposition (Value 2). The email is exhibited below with move analysis and a linguistic-realization of these moves.

Extract 3 (ESs email NO.3)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Language analysis assignment	A Phrase
Opening (Salutation)	Dear R,	<i>Dear + given name</i>
Making the Request	I would like your suggestions on my language analysis assignment (on ...) which has been posted to your today.	Want-statement requestive strategy <i>I would like your suggestions...</i>
Request Justification	I will bring one in on Thursday but as it's the holidays and the Easter weekend I thought it might be safer to put a copy in the post anyway.	<i>Statement sentence</i>
EWCP	I hope it is not too late and that it is satisfactory.	<i>I hope...</i>
Thanks	Thank you and have a good Easter.	Formulaic phrase
Complimentary Closing	Kind regards	Formulaic phrase
Signing off	Paula	Given name

Comparing this email with the two emails written by Alice, it was found that the email employed a different rhetorical structure, i.e. a deductive rhetorical structure (putting the *Head Act of Request* before the move of *Requesting Justification*); a different requestive strategy in the head act, i.e. direct requestive strategy (want statement); and a different marked move of EWCP.

As Scollon and Scollon (2001, p.96) state, the deductive rhetorical strategy is “the unmarked way in which one presents an idea... [and it is] taken for granted the speaker has every right to hold or to advance that idea and does not need to convince the listener of that right”. As a result, the deductive rhetorical strategy is regarded as an involvement strategy. In relation to this context, when the writer used the deductive rhetorical strategy, she might believe that she had the right to expect the recipient (module tutor) to comply with her request. Actually, the expectation is confirmed by Paula’s own judgement in the questionnaire that the rank of the imposition of her request was low (Value 2). In other words, if the instructor got the assignment, then it is fair to say the instructor is fully expected to provide grade feedback on it. In this context, it would be reasonable to argue the instructor has an obligation to comply with the request.

We can say, then, that this email writer may hope to attend more to her sociality rights (fair treatment and association with the recipient) in terms of using the direct rhetorical strategy, together with the direct requestive strategy in the head act. For this consideration, the direct requestive strategy in the head act (want statement) is appropriate in addressing the situation of the request, even though, as we identified above, direct requestive strategies in the head acts are marked linguistic behaviour, which might be less polite when coupled with indirect requestive strategies, and could even be at risk of being interpreted as impolite and thus inappropriate.

Moreover, while the email writer wanted to uphold the sociality rights when making the request email, the writer did not ignore attending to equity rights of the email recipient. It was found that Paula thought it was extremely important (value 5) to avoid imposing on the recipient. She may have hoped to leave a good impression on the recipient and thus to get a high grade.

A closer look at the head act of request in the email might show how Paula tried to address the equity rights of the recipient, i.e. a desire not to impose too much. She managed to post her assignment to the teacher and thus hoped the teacher would get it as early as possible. In other words, as shown by the politeness move EWCP, she may have expected that teacher would have more time-slots to read her assignment and thus reduced the imposition of the request.

In a word, the email writer might have got a rough balance of rapport management in proposing this email. The writer, on the one hand, might have wanted to uphold her sociality rights with direct rhetorical structure and direct syntactic structure of the head act. She also tried to attend to the recipient's equity rights with other linguistic devices. As a result, the writer could successfully attend to her quality face and maintain a good relationship with the recipient, in order to finally realize her requestive aim.

6.3.2.3 Case 3: Sam

The third case participant is Sam (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), who was a 26-year-old male student at the time of the data collection. He was a taught MA student majoring in medicine. It was reported that he usually wrote academic emails (once a week).

Extract 4 is an email written by Sam to request help in saving a sequence of data. It was written to a male module tutor. The power of the recipient is thus regarded as relatively low within the discourse community. It was thought by Sam that he had an intermediate relationship with the tutor. He thought his request in his email was of low imposition (Value 2). The email is displayed below with analysis, like the above emails.

Extract 4 (ESs email NO. 41)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Sequence	A Phrase
Opening (Salutation)	Hi Norman,	<i>Hi + given name</i>
Making the Request	Is there way of saving the final sequence produced from hitting build unit in the masher program on ...?	Direct question <i>Is there...</i>
Request Justification	I've been trying for a while now but have so far only managed to save the masher program with the list of activities.	Statement sentence
Apology	Sorry to bother you again with this.	<i>Sorry to...</i>
Complimentary Closing	All the best,	Formulaic phrase
Signing off	Sam	Given name

Comparing Sam's request email with the above three emails, it was found that it was very similar to Paula's with regards to their direct strategies in the head act of request and deductive rhetorical structure. This might further confirm that the direct requestive strategy was a way of making appropriate requests within the discourse community. More specifically, this email employed a direct question as the head act of request. This might be due to the fact that the request for saving a sequence involved low imposition according to the email writer's own judgement. Moreover, as mentioned above, the direct head act, together with the direct rhetorical structure, may indicate that the email writer wanted to primarily uphold his sociality rights. However, similar to the email in Extract 3, this email also did not ignore addressing the equity rights of the recipient in terms of using a politeness move - the move of apology - at the end of the email (i.e. it was found that the writer thought it was extremely important to avoid imposition to the recipient when making the email). As a result, the request of this email might be mitigated to some extent.

Finally, the use of *hi* with the recipient's given name as a salutation needs to be highlighted here. It was comparable to the second email of Alice's (*Hello + given name* in ESs Email No. 20). This may be due to some similarities between the two emails. Both emails were written to recipients who were regarded as close to the email writers. Moreover, in terms of their own judgements, they believed that their emails were not likely to risk hurting their recipients' feelings. Therefore, they tended to use the salutation of *hi/hello* to show social proximity with the recipients. Alternatively, the email writers might have expected to maintain their existing close relationship with the recipients (association rights) with these informal salutations.

6.3.2.4 Summary

This section has explored four emails from three participants - Alice, Paula and Sam - within the ES discourse community. Among these four email cases, it was found that three of them were, to a relatively large extent, intended to address the email writers' sociality rights, especially with respect to the direct rhetorical strategy and requestive head acts employed in the third and the fourth email cases. In contrast, the first email seemed to primarily address and uphold the recipients' identity face in terms of the email writer's own judgement and the employment of indirect strategies and the formal style of the email.

6.3.3 Cases within the CES discourse community

Within the CES discourse community, four email cases are explored in what follows. The four emails are selected for analysis in order to represent the whole population of the emails in this community. Moreover, they have been selected mainly with respect to the variable of email writers, whose English proficiency differed from high to low in terms of their IELTS performance, and other factors, such as their research field (e.g. students from the School of English might generally have higher English proficiency than other students from other departments). At the same time, the relationships between these email writers and their recipients are different and the requestive aims of these emails are different.

6.3.3.1 Case 1: Yan Zou

The first case participant from the CES discourse community was Yan Zou (pseudonymous for the sake of confidentiality), who was a taught MA student of linguistics. She was 23 years old at the time of data collection. She got seven points out of the total of nine in the IELTS examination for the application of MA studies in a Britain university. She believed that her English proficiency was advanced, i.e. native or native-like. According to the questionnaire, she reported that she seldom composed academic emails in Chinese before translating and sending them in English. Finally, Yan Zou reported that she seldom wrote English academic emails.

The email was written by Yan Zou to a female lecturer of her MA module, who she considered to have a high-distance relationship with her (value 1). Similar to the majority of the recipients within this discourse community, the power of this recipient was supposed to be normal for her job position as a lecturer. The email is displayed below with its move analysis and highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 1 (CESs email NO. 1)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	MA ... dissertation proposal -Yan Zou	<i>A Phrase + the email writer's full name</i>
Opening Salutation	Dear Ms L,	<i>Dear + title + surname</i>
Identifying oneself	I am Yan Zou doing MA ...and also from your ... class on Monday afternoon.	
Providing background information	I am thinking of doing my dissertation within the subject of ...	
Preparator	so I hope I could have the opportunity to have a word with you and have your advice on my proposal.	<i>Expressing the writer's hope</i>
Request justification	When will be your office hour? Since we have to hand in the proposal the Monday after Easter vacation,	
Making the request	I do hope I could meet sometime this week.	<i>Expressing the writer's expectation strongly with 'do'</i>
Looking forward to reply	Hope to hear from you soon!	
Complimentary closing	Your sincerely	<i>Formulaic phrase</i>
Signing off	Yan Zou	Full name

The above email was aimed at making an appointment with the recipient in order to discuss the writer's dissertation proposal. According to the email writer's own judgement, the rank of the request imposition is low (value 2). The recipient, as a supervisor appointed for guiding the email writer's dissertation writing, might be regarded as having an obligation to do the requested job.

Generally, the email is formal and indirect in terms of its openings and closings, inductive rhetorical structure and several moves which were interpreted as polite. The formality and indirectness of this email was not necessarily oriented to the recipient's equity rights because the request was regarded as low-imposed and obligatory to the recipient. Alternatively, they were possibly used more to address the identity face of the recipient. Specifically, similar to the address forms in the email of Extract 1 by Alice in the ES discourse community and the formal addressing forms in the CS discourse community, the address term in this email was formalized as *dear + title + surname*. It might be a way of showing respect to the recipient and thus upholding her high status as a teacher. Moreover, through utilizing the inductive rhetorical structure and some moves for politeness, such as *Preparator* and *Identifying Oneself*, the email writer may further expect to address the identity face of the recipient and thus highlight the recipient's hierarchical status.

According to the questionnaire, the email writer reported that she expected to build a good relationship with the recipient (i.e. association rights). She may thus expect the email recipient to get to know her through the move of *Identifying Oneself* (the email recipient may have known her well since she joined the module taught by the recipient). Therefore, the formality and indirectness may help the email writer to achieve her aim.

Finally, two move realizations, the *Head Act of Request* and *Signing off*, are worth highlighting here. The head act of request, which was realized with the syntactic structure *I (do) hope...* is categorized as a request strategy of expectation statements. The *Signing off* move was realized by the email writer's full name. As found in Chapter 5, these two move realizations did not appear in the emails of the ES discourse community. In contrast, they were very common in the emails of the CS discourse

community, especially the way of signing off. With regards to this phenomenon, it might be safe to assert that some rapport-management strategies by the CESs deviated from norms of the ESs under study.

To recapitulate, with regards to the four dimensions of rapport management, this email tended to be used to address the identity face of the recipient. In doing so, several indirect rapport management strategies, like inductive rhetoric discourse strategy and the polite moves, were employed to confirm the power difference between interactants. In this way, the writer might thus expect to build a harmonious relationship with the recipient and hence achieve the request compliance from the recipient. However, some divergence of rapport management strategies from those in ESs emails was also identified.

6.3.3.2 Case 2: Lan Zhang

The second case participant of this discourse community was Lan Zhang (pseudonymous), who was a 34 year-old female PhD student majoring in architecture studies. At the time of data collection, she was in year one but she had previously been a visiting scholar in a British university for one year. She reported that she often wrote English academic emails (at least two in a week). However, she regarded her English proficiency as intermediate, and she occasionally composed emails in Chinese before sending them out in English.

The email in Extract 2 was written to her PhD supervisor, who was a male professor. She thought their relationship was very close (the highest value 5). The email proposed a request for the rearrangement of an appointment. It is displayed below with move analysis and some highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 2 (CES email NO. 16)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	RE: Meeting together with Hu	<i>A Phrase</i>
Opening Salutation	Dear Professor	<i>Dear + title</i>
Request Justification	Hu has told me she would meet you at 12:00am tomorrow, and she would like to show you something about I hope to join with you.	
Making the Request	So can I change my meeting time from 14:00pm to 12:00am?	<i>Conventional Indirect request Can I...?</i>
Thanks	Thank you!	
Complimentary Closing	Best Regards,	<i>Formulaic phrase</i>
Signing off	Lan Zhang	Full name

In terms of the rank of the request imposition, the email writer believed it to be very low (the lowest value 1). Due to this, together with the close relationship between her and the recipient, the writer may have believed that her email was not likely to risk hurting the recipient's feelings (value 1) or imposing too much on him (value 3). Moreover, the writer believed that it was not very important to make a good impression on the recipient (value 3).

Pertaining to these considerations, the email seemed to be informal. No polite moves were involved in this email, except two moves, *Thanks* and *Complimentary Closing*, which were analyzed to be unmarked and thus might be merely appropriate moves. The indirect request strategy in the head act might show that the writer addressed the recipient's equity rights and identity face to some extent. However, it was very conventional and simpler than most indirect strategies employed by ESs (i.e. no aspect and no hedge devices; this point will be detailed in Chapter 7). In addition, as we discussed before, the opening salutation *Dear + title* and the way of signing-off might be special to native English speakers.

To sum up, this email is presented here because it is very consistent with the general behaviours within the discourse community. This may be due to the fact that the writer seemed to have no special inclination to build or maintain any special relationship with the recipient.

6.3.3.3 Case 3 Lily

The third participant from the discourse community was Lily (pseudonymous), who was a second-year postgraduate student in business studies. She was 23 at the time of the data collection. She reported that she seldom composed academic English emails and she seldom composed emails in Chinese before sending them out in English. She got 6.0 points in IELTS when she applied for entry to a British university. She considered that her English was at an intermediate level.

The email in Extract 3 was written to a male lecturer of an MA module. The relationship between the interactants was regarded as medium (value 3). The email was aimed at receiving academic feedback. It is displayed below with move analysis and highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 3 (CEs Email No. 49)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	Marketing Communication	<i>A Phrase</i>
Opening Salutation	Dear C:	<i>Dear + given name</i>
Identifying Oneself	This is Lily, one of the students from MA Marketing	
Request Justification	I got one question for Marketing Communication. That is when we talk about the forces, it refers to competitors, technology, PEST, etc.	
Making the Request	Just want to know if the 6 types of perceived risk and time are kind of forces as well?	<i>Want statement</i>
EWCP	I think it should be!!	
Thanks	Thanks for answering :)	<i>With a non-verbal symbol of smile</i>
Complimentary Close	Regards,	<i>Formulaic phrase</i>
Signing off	Lily	<i>Given name (English name)</i>

According to the email writer's assessment, the rank of this request was not high (value 2). The email writer might believe that it is the obligation of the recipient, a module lecturer, to give her academic feedback. In addition, the request seemed not to be time-consuming because it was just a question of clarification. Therefore, the writer might believe that his email was not at high risk at hurting the feelings of the recipient (value 3) or imposing on him (value 2). In other words, the recipient's equity rights and identity face were not highly valued. This consideration may lead to the direct requestive strategy in the head act (*Want Statement*).

Furthermore, the email writer may hope to uphold her association rights and quality face with this email. The inductive rhetorical discourse structure, as we discussed above, is a way of showing 'involvement face politeness' (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Moreover, in the opening salutation, the writer addressed the recipient's given name. And the writer used her English given name to sign off the email. Besides, the thanks move is marked because it was given with a non-verbal symbol of smile, i.e. ☺. All these may indicate the writer hopes to build a harmonious relationship with the recipient. Meanwhile, in the move *EWCP*, the writer added two exclamation marks at the end of the sentence. This might show that the writer wants to show her self-assurance to the lecturer because she assumes that her idea is right. This, as a result, might also uphold her quality face as a well-qualified student.

To put it briefly, this email was possibly intended by the writer to address more to her own sociality rights and quality face. This might lead the email to embrace several marked rapport management strategies as we described above.

6.3.3.4 Case 4: Yang Mei

The fourth case participant of the CES discourse community was Yang Mei, who was an MSC student in data communications studies. She was 23 at the time of data collection. It was reported that she regularly wrote English academic emails (once week). However, she only got 5.5 in IELTS when she applied for entry to the British university. She assessed her English proficiency as at an intermediate level. Finally she reported that she never composed emails in Chinese before sending them out in English.

The email in Extract 4 was written to a male tutor for making an appointment to discuss her project. The relationship between the interactants was regarded as medium (value 3). The email is presented below with its move analysis and some highlighted micro-linguistic realizations.

Extract 4 (CESs Email NO. 22)

Types of Moves	Moves	Micro-linguistic realizations to be highlighted
Subject Line	none	<i>none</i>
Opening Salutation	Hi, Dr. Ford,	<i>Hi + title + given name</i>
Introducing Oneself	i am a DC student, you are my second maker.	Some spelling mistakes might happen here for the small case 'i' and the misspelling of 'maker'
Request Justification	So i'd like to make an appointment with you to discuss my project.	
Making the Request	When do you have time tomorrow?	<i>Direct Question</i>
Thanks	Thank you very much.	
Complimentary Close	Best Wish	<i>Formulaic phrase but no es following wish</i>
Signing off	Yang Mei	Full name

Similar to the email in Extract 3, this email seemed not to be oriented much to the recipient's equity rights and identity face. Several similarities can be found between the two emails. Firstly, the rank of requesting imposition was also regarded as low in this email (value 2). Furthermore, the writer in this email thought that it was not very important to avoid hurting the recipient's feeling (value 3) or to avoid imposing on the recipient (value 3). Secondly, the orientation was also represented with a direct request strategy in the head act and without some extra polite moves. In addition, the email was similar to the one in Extract 3 in terms of the move of *Introducing Oneself*. According to the assessment by the two writers, the relationship between the interactants was at an intermediate level. In other words, the interactants might be known to each other. Therefore, the self-introductory move might be an indicator to maintain the writer's

association rights, i.e. a student-teacher relationship, for both emails emphasized that they were students in the move.

However, in contrast to the email in Extract 3, this email might not help the email writer achieve a harmonious relationship efficiently with the recipient, because it contains what might be seen as several inappropriate rapport management strategies. For example, the request head act seems to be too imposing with the imposing request justification *I'd like to*. Moreover, the *hi* salutation seems to be inappropriate in this social context. Finally, several typos like lower case *I* might also influence the efficiency of rapport management.

6.3.3.5 Summary

In summary, while some emails in the CESs discourse communities could successfully and efficiently serve the aim of rapport management, other emails, like the last email brought to light here, might contain some linguistic behaviour which deviates from those of emails by native English speakers. From a researcher's perspective, the linguistic behaviour might be inappropriate and thus may influence the efficiency of rapport management in these emails.

From case studies across the three discourse communities, it was found that case participants from the CS discourse community were more likely to orient their emails to address the email writers' hierarchical identity face. In contrast, the participants from the ES discourse community had a greater tendency to primarily address their own sociality rights. At the same time, the CESs were unable to use abundantly kinds of rapport-management strategies (many polite moves and mitigation devices in the head acts) to address the recipients' equity rights. It was in this respect that the case participants from the CES discourse community could not perform as well as the participants from the ES community.

6.4 Summary

This chapter has identified the appropriate relational work across the three discourse communities and explored some individuals' construction and contribution of the relational work within the three discourse communities. They were approached from etic and emic perspective respectively.

The emic perspective has confirmed that Locher's (2006, p.258) assertion that "the incentive to be polite in addition to merely appropriate is recognized in the power struggle that interactants engage in". More specifically, it has proved that relational work involves people negotiating their identities and relationships (Locher, 2006; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Negotiation is not only addressed to power differences, the closeness and distance of the interactants' relationship, and the rank of the imposition. It also addresses attributes of face sensitivities and behaviour expectations, such as rights and obligations.

Therefore, the emic analysis might have compensated some shortcomings from the pattern analysis in terms of an etic approach. As reviewed earlier, the etic approach was to some extent conducted on the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). However, the face work might ignore some interpersonal factors which may also influence the choices of the strategies. For example, in terms of an etic approach, direct requestive strategies are likely to be interpreted as impolite and thus inappropriate, especially in contrast to indirect requestive strategies as norm/unmarked/appropriate within the ES discourse community. However, from an emic perspective, it was found that some direct strategies might also be interpreted as appropriate, especially when they are related to the management of the email writer's sociality rights and identity face. Moreover, the emic approach made it possible to see that some direct requestive strategies were embedded in emails which had much mitigation in other domains of rapport management, such as many polite moves in the discourse domain. In this situation, the direct strategy might be interpreted as being appropriate.

Furthermore, the emic approach, which relied on the research participant's judgement, makes it possible to know whether the identified marked behaviour was undertaken by some members (email writers under study), intentionally or unintentionally, to breach the identified norms. As a result of this analysis, it was found that some marked behaviour was made by email writers intentionally. This might be a way for the email writers to "negotiate their identities in relationships" (Locher, 2006, p.258). Therefore, the marked behaviour could be interpreted as appropriate, at least on the part of email writers. On the other hand, it was found that some marked behaviour was made by email writers unintentionally and was judged as impolite/inappropriate. It is highly possible that some members, especially some CES email writers, have not grasped the norms of appropriate linguistic behaviour, as found in the case studies.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter conducts further discussion and interpretation of the research findings presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. It compares the research findings from the three discourse communities, which summarizes the answer to the first and second research questions on how each discourse community manages rapport and does relational work in the request emails. Secondly, the chapter explores some possible reasons to account for the research findings.

More specifically, the chapter compares and interprets linguistic behaviour in the three domains of rapport management (namely in the discourse domain, the stylistic domain and the illocutionary domain) of the emails among the CS, the ES, and the CES discourse communities. It falls into five sections. Section 7.2 describes and interprets the shared practices of rapport management and doing relational work in the emails. Section 7.3 attempts to explore how some interconnected socio-psychological factors (such as considerations of face needs, sociality rights and relationships) give rise to the different practices of rapport management and doing relational work between the CS and ES discourse communities. Section 7.4 examines whether or to what extent the practice of rapport management and relational work in the CES discourse community conforms to/deviates from that in the ES discourse community. It then examines the reasons for the conformity and divergence from a perspective of interlanguage pragmatics (i.e. the impact of the variability of L2 learners). Finally, Section 7.5 summarizes the research findings and interpretation.

7.2 Shared Practices of the Three Discourse Communities

This section first summarizes similarities in managing rapport and doing relational work among the three discourse communities. It then provides discussion and interpretation of these similarities.

7.2.1 Similarities of the emails of the three discourse communities

A strong similarity was found in the ways in which the CSs and the ESs manage rapport and do relational work. The similarities are highlighted in what follows.

Firstly, it was found that members of the three discourse communities adopted the same prototypical/core moves in their request emails - *Opening Salutation*, *Request Justification*, *Head Acts of Request*, and *Signing off*. In other words, these moves are probably indispensable to nearly all the members in the two discourse communities.

In the second, all the identified moves were found in the emails of three discourse communities. Moreover, such moves like *Preparator*, *Apologies*, *Showing Gratitude*, *Attending to Recipients' Situation*, and *Looking forward to Further Contact* were observed as being marked linguistic behaviour and open for an interpretation as polite (i.e. marked designed to meet recipients' face needs and sociality rights) in the three discourse communities. The other two moves, *Thanks* and *Complimentary Closing*, were observed to be non-marked in that all the three discourse communities had a relatively high tendency of using the two moves.

7.2.2 Discussion and interpretation of the similarities

The similarities in the emails among the three discourse communities, which were mainly embodied in the prototypical/unmarked moves and almost all the marked moves (open for an interpretation as polite), could be attributed to the following factors. First, the three discourse communities shared a common goal oriented to academic request. Moreover, a subordinate-superior relationship exists between the email writers and the recipients. In addition, all the low-ranked members of the three discourse communities showed that they wanted to manage a harmonious relationship with the high-ranked recipients on a constant basis. In other words, the goal of managing rapport plays a very important role in the emails if the writers seek to achieve 'request compliance' (Ho, 2011b) and to make the discourse function effectively, efficiently and smoothly. As a result, it is usually necessary for members of the discourse communities to expend great discursive effort in managing rapport in emails.

In addition, the three discourse communities have a consistently prominent inclusion of moves of *Openings* and *Signing off* in their emails. This may indicate that all of them have a high tendency to follow “epistolary conventions in writing email to their professors, which suggests that they viewed email as more similar to conventional correspondence” (Zhang, 2000, p.14). For one thing, the emails in the three communities commonly started with address terms to politely salute the target addressee. At the same time, most of the email writers also adopted the convention of signing off with their own names. As Virtanen and Maricic (2000) argue, the email writers’ significant tendency to sign their message suggests that they regard the move *Signing off* is an important form of rapport management, because the “signature is informationally superfluous in computer-mediated communications” (p.133) like emails. Also, the inclusion of the *Signing off* can make the requester more visible.

The other similarity lies in the high preference shown for the move *Request Justification* by members of the three discourse communities. This finding supports the argument by Virtanen and Maricic (2000) that the move *Justification* constitutes a prototypical move in their data of query emails. According to Virtanen and Maricic (2000), the *Justification* move, together with rapport management moves like *Apology* and *EWCP* in this study, serve persuasive functions in the request emails. The justification is subordinate to rapport management, yet it could reinforce rapport management. In other words, email writers in this study have the communication goal of managing rapport with the recipients. The justification serves to legitimise their requests and thus to reduce the potential threat to rapport which is possibly brought about by requests.

Furthermore, the three discourse communities shared a strong tendency to use moves of *Thanks* and *Complimentary Close*, as the above conclusion suggests. This finding confirms those of previous similar studies (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2010; Herring, 2007). Firstly, all the emails were composed for the purpose of requests. According to Spencer-Oatey (2000), the speech act of request is a rapport-sensitive act and might be regarded as an imposition on the recipients. The move of showing gratitude may thus be preferred by the writers to “mitigate and compensate for the imposition” (Bou-Franch, 2010, p.15). Secondly, as the emails were sent up the institutional hierarchy, the email writers might have wanted to show their deference and respect to the recipients with the

use of these two moves. Furthermore, as Herring (2007) points out, the use of the *Thanks* move in emails may demonstrate that the email writers want to adapt it to the email medium. In face-to-face interactions, speakers may get an immediate response from hearers after they make a request and then the speakers will give thanks to the hearers, while in email interactions, the writers may realize the asynchrony in the communication process. They may then feel it necessary to show thanks to the recipients in advance, thus adjusting to the applied electronic technology.

Moreover, as regards the high consistency of using marked moves such as *Preparator*, *Apologies* and *Showing Gratitude/Appreciation*, this might indicate that all the discourse communities make great discursive effort to manage rapport and perform positive relational work in their emails. As argued in Chapter 6, these moves are open to interpretation by recipients of emails as polite because they are likely to be markedly designed to address the recipients' equity rights, i.e. to mitigate the imposition which might be brought by the request emails upon the recipients. According to Spencer-Oatey (2000, p17), requests can easily threaten rapport because they might affect the recipients' 'freedom of autonomy' and 'freedom from imposition'. Therefore, members of the three discourse communities were systematically similar to each other in the sense that they all wanted to manage rapport or perform polite relational work.

From an emic perspective, the eagerness to mitigate the possible imposition on the recipients could be confirmed by the CSs' and the ESs' own perception of the importance of minimizing imposition. As found in Chapter 5, both the CS and the ES communities reported that they perceived the importance of minimizing imposition as high, and there are no significant differences between the two communities. Therefore, it is possible that the two discourse communities tended to use the marked moves to minimize the imposition. However, according to the questionnaire, the perceived importance of minimizing the imposition by the CESs was significantly lower than those of the CSs and the ESs; while the perceived relationship of the CESs and the email recipients was significantly more distant than those of the CSs and the recipients, and of the ESs and the recipients. Therefore, for the CES discourse community, the use of marked moves was more likely to be affected by the distance of social relations rather than by the perceived importance of avoiding imposition.

Finally, considering in particular the similar practices presented in the emails by the CESs, it is clear that the CESs could observe the epistolary conventions in writing email to their professors as well as the ESs. More specifically, almost all the CESs could add greetings and closings in their emails. This finding contrasts with that of a similar study by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), who found that the majority of Greek English learners did not put a greeting or closing in their request emails to professors. According to Economidou-Kogetsidis, the email structure without a greeting or a closing might be judged as inappropriate because it might increase coerciveness of the email message and lead these emails to be status-incongruent. In terms of this point, almost all the CESs' emails could be judged as appropriate because the inclusion of greetings and closings might help these emails to gain status congruence (i.e. emails written from low-status writers to high-status university instructors).

Several factors might contribute to the CESs' use of the same epistolary conventions followed by native English speakers. In the first, as discussed earlier, both the CSs and the ESs followed the same epistolary conventions in writing emails to the university instructors. Therefore, following either norms of proposing emails in Chinese and English would lead to the CESs' appropriate way of adding greetings and closings in the upward request emails.

The close similarity between the CESs' and the ESs' emails is also likely to be due to the fact that the CESs were required to adhere to the practices of the British postgraduate discourse community. As illustrated in Chapter 4, all the CESs under study had relatively high proficiency of English. They evaluated that they were at or above intermediate level in English. This was also proved by the fact most of them took part in IELTSs and got at least 6 before their postgraduate studies. Moreover, all of them had been studying in Britain for at least half a year before the data collection process took place. Due to the high proficiency and the studying time in Britain, it is highly possible for the CESs to have acquired the epistolary conventions of emails as members from the ES discourse community.

7.2.3 Summary

In general, the academic emails by the three discourse communities seemed to still follow the normal conventions of written letters. The epistolary style, as Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) argued, can reduce the coerciveness of the email message. It thus can help the email writers to manage rapport and do relational work in such a ‘hierarchical system’ (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 6, while marked/polite moves were used by the three discourse communities to manage different aspects of rapport, they are more likely to be used to address the equity rights of the email recipients as a priority.

7.3 Different Practices of the CSs and the ESs Emails

This section first summarizes differences in managing rapport and doing relational work between the CS and the ES discourse communities. It then provides discussion and interpretation of these differences.

7.3.1 Differences of the CSs and the ESs emails

Differences of rapport-management strategies and relational work were found in the three domains of rapport management, namely, in the discourse domain, the stylistic domain and the illocutionary domain.

1) Pattern difference in discourse domain

Pattern difference in the discourse domain of rapport management was mainly evident in the use of some moves and rhetorical structures between the two discourse communities.

Specifically, although most members (70.7%) of the CS discourse community tended to use a subject line when sending their emails, the ES discourse community used this move more frequently (96.7%). Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 5, the subject line in the ESs’ emails seemed to perform only a referential function, namely describing immediate request aims. However, the subject line in the CSs’ emails was also used for

persuasive goals, i.e., rapport management, like greetings to the recipients. In addition, the CSs tended to introduce themselves at the beginning of the emails more frequently than the ESs (26.2% vs.5.0%).

Moreover, the move *EWCP* (*Expressing Wishes, Compliments and Promises*) was more likely to be employed by members of the CS discourse community and was thus identified as non-marked linguistic behaviour (40.0%). In the ES discourse community, the move was much less likely to be used (20.0%) and the move was exclusively used in expressing wishes.

The other difference in the discourse domain was shown in the rhetorical structures employed by the two discourse communities. Almost all the CSs (95.5%) preferred to employ the inductive rhetorical strategy. However, the ESs had a similar preference to use inductive and deductive rhetorical strategies in their emails (48.3% and 43.3%).

2) Pattern differences in stylistic domain

The differences exposed in the stylistic domain of rapport management were mainly evident in the realization of moves in openings and closings of emails. In openings, it is noteworthy that nearly all the CSs' emails (97.0%) included a formal address term (title + last name) to address the course instructors. In contrast, in the ES discourse community, most of the emails used informal address terms, such as addressing the recipients' given names (80.0%) or composing emails without using any form of address (10.0%).

At the same time, the majority of Chinese emails (81.5%) contained greetings after the address terms. The greetings were often expressed with *honorific you nin* in Chinese, together with *hao* (hello). In English emails, the honorific *you* was not applicable. In addition, 27 ESs' emails (45.0%) made use of *hi/hello/hey* before the address term for greetings, while 32 emails (53.4%) utilized *dear* before the address terms. All these forms might function as salutations.

With regards to the *Signing off* move, undertaking this with personal information, such as *your student + name*, by members (50.8% of the emails) of the CS discourse community was distinctive from that of the ES discourse community. Nearly all the CSs' emails were signed off with the email writers' full name, which was in sharp contrast with the ESs' emails, where most (81.7%) signed off with the email writer's given name. Finally, some CSs' emails (35.4%) also ended with the written date, which did not appear in any email in the ES discourse community.

3) Pattern difference in the illocutionary domain

The two discourse communities showed totally different preferences for direct or indirect requestive strategies. Specifically, the CSs showed a strong preference for direct requestive strategies while the ESs showed a strong preference for indirect requestive strategies (80.3%; 75.8% respectively). In relation to the conventionally direct strategies used by the two communities, it was found that the strategy of expectation statement was unique to the CS community (42.4% of emails). Furthermore, regarding the indirect strategies used by the two communities, it was found that a small number of the ESs' emails (9 out of 66) used non-conventional indirect strategies, e.g. hints, while no CSs' emails utilized such kinds of strategy in their head acts.

7.3. 2 Discussion and interpretation of the observed differences

This section offers some discussion of the observed differences, between the research findings given here and those in previously similar studies. With reference to some relevant literature and pragmatic perceptions from members of the two discourse communities, it further provides some possible interpretations of these differences.

1) Concerning rhetorical structures. As mentioned earlier, the CS discourse community used the inductive rhetorical strategy predominantly in their emails. This finding corresponds to those in previous studies on written or oral requests in Chinese (e.g. Ding, 2006; Kaplan, 1966; Kirkpatrick, 1991, 1993; Kong, 1998; Zhang, 1995a, 1995b). For example, based on a study of business request letters, Kong (1998) observed that the Chinese have a greater tendency to use the inductive rhetorical

strategy while the Anglo-American culture favours the deductive strategy. Ding (2006) argued that the inductive rhetorical strategy was influenced by Confucianism. The use of the inductive rhetorical strategy, as an indirect style, can accommodate two pragmatic acts: “establishing their ethos that helps create a strong bond between individuals at a more personal level, and building a harmonious social structure at a more societal level” (Ding, 2006, p. 87).

In addition, the inductive rhetorical structure is generally regarded as being greatly influenced by the *qi cheng zhuan he* structure, the traditional principle of Chinese writing rhetoric (Kong, 1998). In reference to Hind’s (1990) description, Kong (1998, p. 106) explicated the four aspects below:

1. *Qi*- ‘begin your statement’
2. *Cheng*-‘next, development’
3. *Zhuan*- ‘turn the idea to a subtheme where there is connection, but not directly related to the major theme’
4. *He*- ‘last, bring all of these together and come to conclusion’.

According to Kong, the *qi* section refers to the general theme but not necessarily the topic statement. *Cheng* is equivalent to English “elaboration” of “development”, which is followed by *zhuan*, the largest part of an argumentative essay. The final part of an essay is *he*, which reaches the conclusion and the main point at the end. With regard to the current study, the emails were primarily aimed at requests. Therefore, the head acts of requests might be treated as a conclusion (*he*) to be put after request justifications or elaborations in the emails.

Furthermore, as Scollon and Scollon (2001) argue, the inductive rhetorical strategy is an independent strategy which lays emphasis on the independence of the participants in a discourse from each other. The strategy is best used “when it is not clear that the speaker has the right to advance a particular topic, when it is unclear that the listener will accept the speaker’s conclusion, or when the purpose of the discourse is to exhort the listener to action” (p.97). To put it in another way, the inductive rhetorical strategy will be especially effective when speakers desire to show that they are aware that their speech act is highly likely to be of great weightiness, i.e. the total value of power, distance and imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In a word, the finding that members in the CS discourse community preferred the inductive rhetorical strategy echoes the observations made on Chinese written or oral request sequences (Ding, 2006; Kaplan, 1966; Kirkpatrick, 1991, 1993; Kong, 1998; Zhang, 1995a, 1995b; to list but a few). They might serve the main function of making the recipients feel they are respected. They might also serve to decrease the degree of imposition brought by requests, although the CSs generally perceived that their requests were not of high imposition. The inductive rhetorical structure was thus aimed at managing a harmonious relationship with the recipients and ultimately getting request compliance from the email recipients. However, since to the best of my knowledge, almost no similar research has been done on the rhetorical structure in Chinese email, more exploration into this area is needed in the future.

However, the results of the present study have not confirmed observations from previous studies on oral and written requests (e.g. Kaplan, 1966; Kirkpatrick, 1991; Kong, 1998) that English-speaking Westerners have a greater tendency to use the deductive rhetorical strategy than the inductive rhetorical strategy. It contrasts with the finding of Gumperz and Roberts (1980) that it is a norm of interaction for British English speakers to use deductive requestive sequences. Moreover, the finding does not conform to those studies (e.g. Chang & Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2001) on request emails by American English native speakers. In contrast to these studies, the ESs of this study preferred the inductive rhetorical strategy slightly more than the deductive rhetorical strategy (48.3% vs. 43.3%)

The finding that the ESs preferred to use the inductive rhetorical strategy corresponds to Ho's (2011b) observation that the English teachers under his study had a higher preference for the inductive strategy than the deductive one (55% vs.25%). As discussed above, this finding may show that the email writers in the ES discourse community, similar to those in the CS discourse community, have a tendency to attach a high importance to the recipients' sense of autonomy. In other words, these email writers might thus use this strategy to mitigate the imposition of the request on the recipients and to achieve a congruence of low and high status between email writers and recipients.

At the same time, it was found from this study that members of the ES discourse community had a greater tendency to use deductive rhetorical strategies than members of the CS discourse community (43.3% vs. 3.1%). The findings support the suggestion that, as Zhang (1995a) noted, English native speakers do not necessarily use the inductive rhetorical strategy as Chinese speakers to show their respect and consideration for the hearers, but rather, they might use the deductive rhetorical strategy as an involvement strategy to assert their rights to advance their positions (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

In other words, in contrast to members of the CS discourse community, members of the ES discourse community still have a greater preference for using the deductive strategy to claim their sociality rights of requesting help from university instructors. On the other hand, unlike the CS discourse community, in which power seems to be the prime factor, which led to the high/exclusive preference for independently inductive strategy, the relationship might be the prime factor for the members of the ES community who preferred the deductive rhetorical strategy. The email writers might primarily hope to show a close relationship (solidarity) with the recipients, even if the recipients have a power advantage.

Besides the two rhetorical strategies used by the two communities, the third type, i.e. the bald-on-record rhetoric strategy, which belongs to neither of the above two strategies, has been utilized, especially by the ES discourse community (5 emails out of 60). Request emails like this are very straightforward. According to Scollon and Scollon (2001), this is an 'extreme involvement strategy', which is used by people who are familiar with each other and who are very comfortable in their environment. In the discourse communities under study, as argued in the previous chapters, the email writers and recipients had common interests. Also, the prevalent individualistic culture in Western countries may be more likely to reduce the power difference between postgraduate students and university instructors in Britain. As a result of these factors, the email writers in the ES discourse community might use the straightforward and assertive rhetorical strategy to show a close relationship with the recipients.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 5, both CS and ES discourse communities highly valued clarity and effectiveness in emails (average values are larger than 4). Moreover, the CS discourse community attached significantly higher importance to the effectiveness of emails than the ES community. The finding is not consistent with Kim's (1994) findings that the perceived importance of clarity and effectiveness was higher in the more individualistic culture. Meanwhile, since both discourse communities, especially the CS community, had a high preference for the inductive (indirect) rhetorical structure, it is safe to judge there is no directly causal relationship between the perceived importance of clarity and effectiveness and the deductive (direct) rhetorical strategy.

To sum up, the findings on the performance of rhetorical structures in this study, together with Ho's (2011b) findings, seem not to support the stereotype of a direct individualistic culture in the west and an indirect collectivistic culture in the east (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Kim, 1994). It lends support to the assertion by Scollon and Scollon (2001) that researchers of cross-cultural studies need to be very cautious before accepting the claim that there is an East–West division in terms of the choice of rhetorical strategy.

2) Concerning move structures. In considering differences in the realization of some rhetorical moves by members of the two discourse communities, firstly, the CSs had a lesser tendency to use subject lines than the ESs. Moreover, the subject line in the CSs emails did not concentrate on the immediate requestive aims as often as the ESs emails; instead, the CSs seemed to use the subject lines to perform phatic functions, such as greetings and introducing themselves. This finding is consistent with Zhu's (2000) study comparing Chinese and English business letters. It seems to support Hall's (1977, p.79) assertion that people from high-cultural environments like China are less willing to use a "coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message". In contrast, the ESs' performance in subject lines seems to support the observation that a low context culture is one in which "the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall, 1977, P.70).

Secondly, members of the CS discourse community predominantly used the formal address terms (title + last name) to address the recipients. This usage observes the “Chinese Address Maxim” (Gu, 1990), which stresses the use of appropriate titles to show respectfulness in communication. In Chinese traditional culture which was mainly influenced by Confucianism, the teacher’s status is very high (Chan, 1999). Therefore, in a Chinese sociocultural context, it is abnormal for people to use the given name of a higher-status addressee, even if they are very familiar with them and the individuals get along very well with each other. The address terms in these Chinese emails reflect a hierarchical relation between the email writers and the recipients.

As Scollon and Scollon (2001) asserted, it is an independent strategy to address some people by their surnames and titles. The strategy is commonly used in the hierarchical system. The addressors tend to use this approach to recognize social differences and to put themselves into subordinate positions and the addressees into superordinate positions. Therefore, the Chinese postgraduates under study were inclined to attend the recipients’ ‘identity face’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) which acknowledge and uphold the teachers’ quality face and social identities or roles. In addition, the ‘identity face’ was further enhanced by the use of salutations such as “respected” and “distinguished and dear” before the formal address forms in the CS discourse community.

Moreover, as Matsumoto (1988) stated, honorific forms reflect an awareness of rank-ordering and acknowledge the superior-subordinate relationship between the participants in the interaction. In this study, members of the CS discourse community might use the *honorific you* to acknowledge the high-ranked position of the recipients and thus further attend to the ‘identity face’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) of the recipients.

In contrast, in terms of the opening moves in the discourse community, the British postgraduate students did not often address the recipients in a formal way, like the Chinese postgraduates. They had a greater tendency to use informal address terms (*dear/hi + given names*) to address the email recipients. This may indicate the ESs might not attach the same importance to the recipients’ identity face’ (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) as the Chinese postgraduate. Instead, they seemed to be more concerned with receiving fair treatment from the university instructors and thus shared a tendency to

attend to their 'equity rights' (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). When the university instructors' first name was selected, the email writers may have the view that the distance and status difference between the recipients and themselves might be reduced. Meanwhile, they may hope that their 'association rights' (Spencer-Oatey, 2000) might be enhanced because the informal addresses tend to strengthen the solidarity between students and teachers. Consequently, a relatively close and friendly relationship was likely to be built and maintained.

At the same time, concerning the salutation choice of *dear* and *hi*, both choices of *dear* and *hi* seemed to be common rapport strategies in English. More than half of the emails used *hi/hello/hey* as salutations. This might confirm that the English postgraduates were more inclined to attend their 'equity rights' in the openings of emails. On the other hand, other emails used *dear* as salutations, which might indicate that the writers preferred to show their deference to the recipients and to attend to the recipients' 'identity face' in the openings, or to see emails as similar to written letters.

The preference for formal opening salutations by the CSs, together with the preference for informal opening salutations by the ESs, was further confirmed by the moves of *Introducing Oneself* and *Signing off* in the two discourse communities respectively. As described earlier, two distinctive features in the stylistic domain of rapport management were found in the CS discourse community. In contrast to the ES discourse community, the CSs preferred more *Introducing Oneself* moves. In addition, they had a greater tendency to add the information of their student identity in the *Signing off* move.

These two distinctive features are more likely to serve rapport management than to convey the personal information of email writers. According to the survey, the CSs perceived a closer relationship with the recipients than the ESs did. In other words, most of the emails in the CS discourse community might not need to contain such moves as *Introducing Oneself* or students' personal information in the *Signing off*. Therefore, the possible interpretation for these two distinctive features might, in a way which is similar to addressing the recipients with the recipients' full name and title, lie in the fact that the writers hope to stress and consolidate the existing hierarchical power difference between the recipients and the writers themselves. This is, again, attributed to

Confucian beliefs in China, which strongly emphasize the hierarchy of society (Chen & Chung, 1994; Yum, 1988).

However, when the writers were British postgraduates, they might have been more influenced by the predominant individualistic culture and thus might not attach a high importance to the power difference. As Scollon and Scollon (2001) noted, Western culture assumes that “individuals must be considered to be equal to each other” (p.110). As a result, the interactants in this discourse community might prefer to use involvement strategies to show solidarity and equality with each other. Corresponding to addressing the recipients with their given names, the British postgraduates tended to sign the emails with their given names only. The writers may have wished to use this involvement strategy to further consolidate the solidarity between the communication partners, which in turn is likely to reflect the egalitarian nature of western culture.

Finally, as indicated above, the CS discourse community seemed to have a greater tendency to use the *EWCP* (expressing wishes/compliments/promises) to manage rapport with the recipients than the ES discourse community. Moreover, while the CSs used this move to express wishes, compliments or promises, the ESs seemed to use this move only for expressing their wishes. This pattern difference may indicate that the CSs had a greater tendency to minimize the threat to the recipient’s ‘equity rights’ and uphold the recipients’ ‘identity face’ as high-powered teachers. In addition, a closer look at these moves in the CSs’ email data shows that these moves were more likely to be used in the emails requesting an absence. Therefore, these moves might also be used primarily for serving interactional goals.

To sum up, the investigation of rapport-management strategies in the stylistic domain has supported the observation by Bjørge (2007) that emails written by students from a high power distance (PD) culture embraced more formal openings and closings than those from low PD cultures. As Bjørge (2007, p.17) concludes, email writers might choose the forms and complementary closings according to their judgement of their relationship to the recipients. In the current study, the email writers from the CS discourse community had a greater tendency to be formal in using moves in Openings and Closings. They might expect to use more independent politeness strategies to

uphold the ‘identity face’ of the recipients and reduce the threat to the recipients’ ‘equity rights’. In contrast, the email writers from the ES discourse community had a greater preference for informality in openings and closings. They might be more inclined to use these involvement strategies to maintain their ‘association rights’ and ‘equity rights’.

3) Concerning head acts. With regards to the rapport-management strategies in the illocutionary domain (head acts of the request), the findings have confirmed those of previous studies (e.g. Biesenbach-Lucas, 2002, 2004; Byon, 2004; Chen, 2001, 2006; Liao, 1997; Yu, 1999; Zhang, 1995a) under the framework of CCSARP (1989), that English speakers tended to use more indirect requests in such similar situations, i.e. in unequal-status communication. The findings also supported those of previous studies (Kirkpatrick, 1991; Wong, 2000; Zhan, 1992), which showed that the Chinese speakers tended to use direct requestive strategies in head acts in such situations.

The findings show a high tendency for the ESs (75.8%) to use indirect requestive strategies. According to Scollon and Scollon (2001), these strategies could be categorized into linguistic strategies of independence. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009) further ascribed these indirect linguistic strategies to ‘restraint’ strategies because they give the recipients the option not to carry out the act through query preparatory and hints. In this way, the ESs might hope to acknowledge the imposition involved in their requests and thus minimize the possible threat to the recipients’ equity rights. Meanwhile, these strategies might help to uphold the recipients’ ‘identity face’ as high-powered teachers.

In contrast, the high preference for direct requestive strategies in the CS discourse community (80.3%) seems to support the previous findings that external modifications (supportive moves) are considered mandatory; while direct on-record requestive strategies are overwhelmingly preferred in the head acts (Wong, 2000). However, a closer look at these head acts will show that they probably did not threaten rapport, and that members of the CS discourse community have actually extended discursive efforts in managing rapport with the high-status recipients in the illocutionary domain.

The requestive strategies used by the CSs appeared to be quite direct when translated into English and thus may be interpreted as impolite or liable to jeopardize rapport management. However, a close examination of some linguistic realizations of these strategies can show they are actually ‘soft’ in Chinese. Specifically, the sentence pattern *Xiwang neng...* (Wish can), which was used mostly as a direct strategy (52.8% out of all the head acts) by the ESs, as Kirkpatrick (1991) argued, sounds soft and polite to Chinese. It is softer and more polite than *qing* (please). For the other, the CSs used reduplicated verbs like *Kankan* (read-read) and *Gaigai* (proofread-proofread) in the head acts of requests with imperatives or want statement. For example,

Mafan ni Kankan naxie defang xuyao gaijin.

(Trouble you to read to find the place to be improved)

The duplicated verb, according to Lee (2004b), can soften the imperative and the want statements.

Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the sentence pattern *Xiwang* and duplicated verb could also be a device for expressing restraint and independent strategies. Together with the head acts of the query preparatory, it could be concluded that the CS discourse community, in a way which is similar to the ES discourse community, have a greater tendency to use restraint rapport management strategies to minimize the threat to the recipients’ identity face and equity rights.

To recapitulate, at the first glimpse of requestive strategies of the head acts, a significant difference was found in the emails of the two discourse communities. The findings lend some support to those of similar former studies (Kirkpatrick, 1991; Wong, 2000; Zhan, 1992). The ESs had a greater tendency to use indirect strategies, usually either for acknowledging the imposition brought to the recipients or for maintaining the hierarchical politeness system. However, the fact that the CSs had a greater tendency to use direct strategies might not necessarily mean that politeness in hierarchical situations is mainly realized by the inductive discourse strategy, as some previous studies (e.g. Zhan, 1992; Chen, 2001) suggested. Alternatively, some sentence patterns like *Xiwang neng...* (Wish can) and duplicated verbs might help to soften the request force in the head acts. As a result, in a way which is similar to English, they might also deepen the mitigation of the request and thus finally manage rapport and do polite relational work

with the recipients. This finding might thus challenge some previous judgements that the head acts do not play a key role in expressing politeness in Chinese culture.

7.3.3 Summary

In summary, some salient differences between Chinese and English request emails were found in the three rapport-management domains. These differences might be due largely to the specific aims of rapport management and performing relational work. The CESs seemed to be more inclined to maintain the hierarchical politeness system, while the ESs seemed to be inclined to maintain both systems of hierarchical politeness and solidarity politeness.

7.4 Differing Practices in the CES and the ES Emails

This section focuses on how the CESs' performance diverges from native norms in managing rapport and performing relational work in the emails. It explores possible causes for the divergences, such as the impact of the CESs' native language on their performance in the English emails. Some other interpretations of these divergences are also provided in the section.

7.4.1 Divergences in the CESs and the ESs emails

As was identified in Chapters 5 and 6, pattern divergences of rapport-management/relational-work strategies were found between the CES and the ES discourse communities. They are summarized below.

1) Pattern divergences in discourse domain. Pattern divergences in the discourse domain of rapport management are mainly related to the frequencies of some moves and rhetorical structures used in the two discourse communities. The CESs had a lesser tendency to use subject lines than the ESs (85.5% vs. 96.7%). Furthermore, the CESs had a greater (about more than 10%) tendency to use the following moves in their emails - *Introducing Oneself*, *Looking forward to Reply*, *Thanks* and *Complimentary Close*. Finally, unlike the ESs, who used inductive and deductive rhetorical strategies in

their emails equally, the CESs had a predominant tendency to use the inductive rhetorical structure in theirs (90.3%).

2) Pattern divergences in the stylistic domain. Divergences in the stylistic domain of rapport management were mainly found in some moves of the openings and closings. Firstly, the CESs were much more likely to use formal address terms like *title* or *title + last name* to address the recipients than the ESs (43.6% vs. 10%). Conversely, they were less likely to use informal address terms like the recipients' given name than the ESs (51.6% vs. 80.0%).

Meanwhile, the CESs had a greater tendency to use '*dear*' before the address terms than the ESs (71.0% vs. 53.4%). In contrast, they had a lesser tendency to use *hi/hello* before the address terms than the ESs (24.2% vs. 45.0%).

Finally, regarding the *Signing off* move, the CESs were more inclined to use their full names than the ESs (54.8% vs. 13.3%). Conversely, they had a lesser tendency to sign off emails with their given names than the ESs (43.5% vs. 81.7%).

3) Pattern divergence in illocutionary domain. As regards the requestive strategies in the head acts, the CESs had the same preference order $CID > CD > NCID$ as the ESs. However, the CESs used much more direct strategies (39.7.7% vs. 24.2%) and less indirect strategies (60.3% vs. 75.8%) than the ES community. Moreover, 5 emails (6.8%) in the CES discourse community used the strategy of expectation statement as a type of conventional direct strategy, which, as we know, is a unique Chinese way of requesting.

In addition, as detailed in Chapter 5, a significant difference in linguistic realization of the head acts was found in the emails of the CES and the ES discourse communities. In general, besides I (speaker)-perspective in requests, the CESs relied on the you (hearer)-perspective more heavily than the ESs, who employed the other two perspectives, i.e. we-perspective, and impersonal perspective, more often than the CESs. Furthermore, the CESs used markedly less syntactic mitigation modifiers and lexical mitigation modifiers than the ESs. Moreover, the CESs had a unique tendency to use the

subjectiviser - *I hope* as a lexical mitigation modifier while the ESs did not use this at all.

To summarize, pattern divergences of strategies of rapport management in three rapport-management domains of the request emails were found between the CES and the ES discourse communities. In general, the CESs' performance on selecting strategies of rapport management seemed to fall between those of the CSs and the ESs.

7.4.2 Discussion and interpretations of the observed divergences

The divergences, which will be further discussed in what follows, might be due to the possibility that the CESs used different rapport-management strategies from those of the ESs. However, some divergences might be, to some extent, interlanguage-specific preferences by the CESs. Discussion and interpretation of the divergences are detailed below.

1) Concerning the divergence of rhetorical structures

With regard to the rhetorical structures used by the CESs under study, the finding supports previous studies (Chang & Hsu, 1998; Chen, 2001, 2006; Lee, 2004b) that Chinese students predominantly prefer inductive rhetorical structures. In other words, they tended to structure their request emails in an indirect sequence, using many pre-request supportive moves and placing the request act at the end.

This finding, at first, might indicate that the CESs had a higher preference for inductive rhetorical structures to maintain the 'hierarchical face system' (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). As discussed earlier, China is a predominantly high-power country. Moreover, according to the survey of the perceived social distance between email writers, the CESs perceived that their relationship with the email recipients was more distant than the ESs did. As a result, they might have a stronger desire than the ESs to use the inductive rhetorical strategy, as an independent strategy, to give recipients more options in complying with the request or not, and to mitigate the imposition on the recipients.

However, the predominant preference for the inductive rhetorical structure on the part of the CESs deviated from the ESs' preference for rhetorical structure. As reported above, almost half the ESs chose the deductive rhetorical strategy to manage rapport in their emails. The deductive rhetorical structure, as an involvement strategy, might especially help to address association rights of the email writers. It might help to maintain solidarity, so that the email writers might feel that the PD difference between themselves and the email recipients is thus diminished. Therefore, it might be appropriate, especially when the request falls within the email writers' rights and the recipients' obligations.

In reference to the ESs' choices of rhetorical structures, the CESs might not be able to use the rhetorical structures for managing rapport as flexibly and effectively as the ESs. This might be an interlanguage-specific problem for it might be rendered by L1 'pragmatic transfer' (Kasper, 1992). As discussed above, the Chinese native speakers predominantly preferred inductive rhetorical structure in their emails and this preference for rhetorical structure seems to be the norm. As a result, the CESs might transfer the norm into their English emails. Furthermore, the finding is in conformity with those of similar studies (e.g. Hassall, 2001; Fukazawa & Sasaki, 2004) that English learners usually use a relatively excessive rhetorical discourse structure, i.e. put supportive modifiers prior to the head acts, because these learners might transfer their L1 socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge into English. The CESs under study seemed not to be exceptional, even though they had high-proficiency in English and had been studying in Britain for at least half a year.

2) Concerning move structures. As regards the divergences of move structures between the CESs and the ESs emails, the first difference is seen in the *Subject Line* move. Specifically, compared with the ESs, more CESs preferred not to address their requestive aims directly or explicitly, or not to give a subject line in their emails. This finding might indicate that some of the CESs still follow Chinese high-context cultural norm of proposing subject lines of the emails.

Furthermore, regarding the moves of *Identifying Oneself* and *Looking forward to Reply*, the highest preference of the two moves on the part of the CESs might be due to a

practical consideration from the email writers, who may have hoped the recipients might identify them easily. As found earlier, the CESs perceived that their relationship with the recipients was the most distant among the three discourse communities. This perception might lead to the CESs' strong need to use these two moves in their emails. However, the high preference for a *Self-introduction* move might also possibly be an interlanguage-specific problem. As explored in previous chapters, the CSs seemed to be more inclined to use this move, even in emails written to their well-known teachers.

As regards the moves of *Thanks* and *Complimentary Close*, the CESs likewise followed the great tendency of the other two discourse communities to use them. This tendency, as we discussed above, might be motivated by several factors, such as mitigation and compensation of imposition, an adaptation to the email medium, and attempts to maintain the hierarchical face system. Moreover, the fact that the CESs had a greater tendency to use these two moves might indicate that, similar to the preference for moves of *Introducing Themselves* and *Looking forward to Reply*, the CESs are more inclined to address the perceived high-distance relationship with the recipients.

Finally, regarding the divergence in the stylistic domain of rapport management, less than half of the CESs emails contained a formal address term (*title* or *title + last name*) to name the recipients. In contrast, more than half of the emails contained an informal address term (recipients' given names). This finding does not conform to Chen's (2001) study that the entire Taiwanese students (Mandarin speakers) still observed the 'Chinese Address Maxims' (Gu, 1990). They used a formal address term (*title + last name*) to address professors in their English emails. In other words, the findings seem to indicate that more than half of the CESs, like the majority of the ESs, could use recipients' first name in their emails to signify solidarity. As discussed earlier, when the recipients' first names are used, it might help to shorten the distance and lessen the power difference between student and university instructors. Consequently, the email writers' 'association rights' and 'equity rights' might well be addressed.

Meanwhile, it can be seen that some CESs' emails (43.6%) contained formal address terms. Like a small number of the ESs' emails (10%), the CESs might use the formal address terms, as an independent strategy (Scollon & Scollon, 2001), to maintain the

hierarchical face system. Therefore, the recipients' 'identity face' and 'equity rights' could be upheld. Nevertheless, as we explored in some cases in Chapter 6, the ESs usually used the formal address terms to name the recipient who was viewed with high power and distance and in the situation when the imposition was regarded as high. Conversely, some CESs used formal terms to address the recipient who was believed to be very familiar with them and in the situation when the imposition was considered to be low. This observable fact might be, on the one hand, due to the possibility that the CESs still used them to primarily uphold the recipients' superordinate status. It might also on the other hand, be due to the possibility that some CESs still adhered to the 'Chinese Address Maxim', even though they were addressing the recipients of English speakers.

In terms of the other aspects in the stylistic domain of rapport management, the CESs also had a greater tendency to use formal modes, such as salutations and signings-off, than the ESs. Specifically, the CESs used the formal salutation form *dear* and formal signing off with writers' full names more often than the ESs. This tendency seems to be transferred from Chinese socio-cultural norms, as even the CESs wrote emails to British university instructors in this manner. As investigated above, the CSs had a greater tendency to use formal address terms, formal salutations and formal signings-off in the upward request emails. The tendency is argued to serve maintenance/upholding of the hierarchical face system against a high PD cultural background.

3) Concerning head acts. In terms of requestive strategies in head acts of the emails, it was found that the CESs had the same preference order CID > CD > NCID strategies as the ESs. The result is not in line with previous studies such as Biesenbach-Lucas and Weasenforth (2000), Biesenbach-Lucas (2002, 2004), Chen (2006) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), who contrastingly found that their NSs tended to favour direct strategies.

Such preference order might indicate that the CESs under study, similar to the ESs, but unlike the CSs, could have been more heavily reliant on restraint (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009) strategies to manage rapport and to perform relational work in their emails. The strategy could have been used to minimize the potential threat to the

recipients' 'equity rights' and to uphold the recipients' 'identity face'. Therefore, the findings might show that, unlike in most previous studies, the CESs in the current study have acquired the norms to make appropriate requests like the ESs. This similarity to the performance of the ESs, as we discussed above, might be attributed to the CESs' high proficiency of English and to the fact that they have lived for a relatively long time in Britain.

However, it might be a little abrupt to conclude that the CESs have acquired a high pragmatic proficiency in terms of their similar preference order of requestive strategies in head acts with the ESs. For one thing, it is seen that the CESs used much more direct strategies (39.77% vs. 24.2%) than the ESs. More importantly, as summarized above, the CESs could not use the four requestive perspectives as flexibly as the ESs. In addition, the CESs used markedly less syntactic mitigation modifiers and much fewer lexical mitigation modifiers than the ESs.

This finding is in line with Chen (2001) and Biesenbach-Lucas (2007), who found that the NNSs could not employ abundant syntactic devices, or lexical phrasal modifiers, to soften their requests in the emails, as the NSs of English could. According to Swan (1995), the syntactic modifiers like past progressive aspect (e.g. *I was wondering...*) and if-clauses, together with the lexical modifiers like past-tense modals (e.g. *would*, *might* and *could*) and modal adverbs (e.g. *possibly*, *perhaps* and *maybe*) could be used to suggest a less direct and less definite approach by being more distant from the immediate reality and therefore more polite. In terms of rapport management, these modifiers could help to reduce the threat to the recipients' 'equity rights'.

Moreover, only two categories of perspective, speaker dominance and hearer dominance, were employed by the CESs to make requests. The other two categories, speaker and hearer dominance, and impersonal perspective were not used at all. This might show that the CESs still have not enough knowledge to make a choice of requestive perspectives. According to (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007), the impersonal perspective of a request like *would it possible...* would be more positive and thus more appropriate in some situations of students' request emails. In the research of Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) and the current study, it was found many ESs preferred to express their requests from an

impersonal perspective and we-perspective.

Finally, regarding the CESs' high preference for *please* as a lexical downgrader device and a unique tendency to use the subjectiviser-*I hope* as lexical mitigation modifiers, these might also to some extent be interlanguage-specific problems. As Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) observed, the NNSs might use the lexical device *please* "indiscriminately as an illocutionary force indicator (i.e., a device to mark the sentence as a request) rather than a mitigating politeness device" (p.70). The NSs, however, did not necessarily use this mitigation device, perhaps because they were more able to rely on syntactic modifications. Moreover, the CESs' unique preference for the subjectiviser-*I hope* as a lexical mitigation modifier might be transferred from the Chinese request pattern *Wo Xiwang Ni Neng...* (*I hope you can*). According to Zhu (2012), several native speakers agreed that it was not appropriate that the pattern was used in students' request to professors. It seems to be used more often to express a wish on the part of the speakers.

To sum up, the CESs under study, unlike NNSs in most of the previous studies, did perform the same order of requestive strategies like the ESs. However, the CESs did not use as many requestive perspectives and internal modification features as did in the ES discourse community. The reason might be associated with their Chinese culture background. As discussed earlier, external modification (rapport-management domains other than the illocutionary domain) might be regarded as more important. As we can see in the CESs' samples, they did use more moves (or move realizations) and inductive rhetorical structure to maintain the hierarchical face system (or uphold recipients' 'identity face' and 'equity rights'). Therefore, it was possible for the CESs to choose these rapport management strategies, rather than internal devices in head acts, to manage rapport and perform relational work in their emails. Alternatively, the CESs under study, though they generally have extensive proficiency of English, might not really know how to use these internal devices of rapport management because it requires more sophisticated English skills. In other words, the CESs might still exhibit a "lack of linguistic flexibility that would allow them to craftily select lexicon-syntactic modifiers" (Biesenbach-Lucas. 2006, p.86).

7.4.3 Summary

This section discusses and provides some interpretation of rapport-management strategies in different domains of emails by the CESs. A number of significant differences in rapport management have been found between the CESs' and the ESs' emails. The different performance might be due to specific aims of rapport management. For example, as with the CSs, the CESs might expect to use some strategies such as the inductive discourse strategy and formal forms in the stylistic domain to maintain the hierarchical politeness system.

However, the divergence might also indicate that the CESs, despite having high English proficiency, may still have not acquired sociopragmatic competence to operate in the English postgraduate discourse community. As discussed earlier, the ESs seemed to be inclined to maintain a balance between systems of hierarchical politeness and solidarity politeness, while the performance of the CESs under study seemed to predominantly uphold the hierarchical politeness system. Moreover, as reported in Chapter 5, the CESs perceived that they have the farthest relationship with the recipients among the three discourse communities, while they perceive the upholding recipients' negative face, positive face and their own positive face as the least importance. Following Thomas (1983, p.99), we might argue that the CESs might have "different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour" and it could therefore be asserted that they may have displayed an example of 'sociopragmatic failure' (Thomas, 1983, p.99). Such failure comes about when the CESs evaluated the relevant situational factors differently from the ESs. Finally, the CESs perceived clarity in their emails to be of the highest importance, while almost all of them used indirect (inductive) rhetorical structures.

The research findings above seem to indicate that the CESs under study still lack sufficient pragmalinguistic competence. This is mainly represented in the use of syntactic and lexical mitigation modifiers. As seen from above, the CESs could not use syntactic and lexical mitigation modifiers for rapport management as flexibly and abundantly as the ESs. They could not employ aspects and more complicated sentences with *if-clauses* like the ESs. As for lexical devices, the CESs used much fewer diversified devices like *I wonder, possibly, maybe...* than the ESs; also, the CEs had a

high tendency to use *I hope you can...* which seem to have been transferred from the Chinese request pattern *Xiwang (hope) ni (you) neng (can or could)* (Yeung, 1997). Moreover, only two categories of perspective, speaker dominance and hearer dominance, were employed by the CESs. And finally, over 90% of the CESs emails contained inductive rhetorical structures. The participants may have hoped to enhance politeness and manage rapport through the indirect sequence of discourse. This may also be an interlanguage problem because the NSs of English under study had the same tendency to use inductive and deductive requestive strategies in their emails.

7.5 Summary

This chapter reiterates the major findings from the first and the second research questions, based on which pattern similarities and differences of rapport management and doing relational work among the emails of the three discourse communities are drawn, in relation to cross-cultural variation and interlanguage variation. In general, the CSs seemed to have a greater tendency to use independent strategies, while the ESs seemed to be more inclined to use involvement strategies to manage rapport and perform relation work in their emails. The CESs' performance seemed to fall between the two discourse communities, which gave rise to some interlanguage-specific problems. In the next chapter, theoretical contributions of this research, potential research limitations, and theoretical and practical implications will be discussed. Finally, some possible directions of future research in this field will be given.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section 8.2 concludes the major findings of the study. Section 8.3 describes the theoretical and practical implications which emerge from the study. Section 8.4 reviews the strengths and illustrates the limitations of the study. Finally, Section 8.5 gives some inspired suggestions on future research.

8.2 Major Findings on the Study

This study has employed request emails as a written genre for the subject of research. The discursive practice of emails has been examined within and across three discourse communities, namely the CSs, the ESs and the CESs. More specifically, this study compares tendencies of rapport-management strategies in different domains of emails among the three discourse communities. Moreover, it approaches the performance of relational work by examining discursive elements in the emails. Based on this examination, it explores how individuals within each community manage harmonious relationships with the recipients. The community patterns and individual's choice of strategy are subsequently explained with regards to some interconnected socio-psychological factors, such as requestive goals, face sensitivities, social rights and obligations within- and across-cultures.

Four major findings are summarized in what follows:

(1) A overarching similarity in rapport management of the three discourse communities was found, which was arguably due to some common contextual factors, especially elements like the subordinate-superior relationship between email writers and recipients and shared rapport orientations, i.e. managing harmonious relationship with the recipients, in their employment of the same prototypical/core moves in their request emails - *Opening Salutation*, *Request Justification*, *Head Acts of Request*, and *Signing off*. These moves were identified as unmarked linguistic behaviour and thus norms among the three discourse communities. In other words, the three discourse

communities still follow ‘epistolary conventions’ in composing upward request emails, no matter what cultural background the members have. In addition, members of the three discourse communities seemed to share much practice in rapport management and doing relational work in request emails. This study shows that nearly all the identified marked or non-marked moves were consistently found across the three discourse communities.

By and large, this finding supports those of previous studies (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Bou-Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2005; Chen, 2006) that students generally write formal emails to university instructors. It shows that the formality of email style is heavily dependent on the sender-recipient constellations, which could give rise to a wide range of linguistic and stylistic features in emails. For example, some researchers like Baron (2002, 2003), Crystal, (2001) and Herring (1996, 2002) have found that emails have been repeatedly put on a continuum from speech style, i.e. less formal, to writing (more formal) style. In the current study, the emails have contained very few informal forms like abbreviations, shortened syntax or symbols, and have followed ‘epistolary conventions’ (Zhang, 2000).

In a word, the formal features and the high tendency to use such moves like *Justification*, *Thanks* and *Complimentary* moves might show that the email writers are keen to maintain a ‘hierarchical face system’ (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Moreover, the email medium seems not to drive the email writers under study to follow a special ‘e-politeness’ (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007) norm to formulate their emails. Members of the three discourse communities seem to still retain written style norms when composing their emails.

(2) Pattern difference in strategies of rapport management was identified in the discourse, stylistic and illocutionary domains of the emails by the CSs and the ESs. This finding gives further support to the claim by Spencer-Oatey (2000, p. 41) that “cultural differences in language use can have a major impact on people’s assessments of appropriate language use, and hence rapport-management outcomes”. Meanwhile, the findings somewhat confirm some stereotypical views from a culturally essentialist

perspective, that national culture plays a key role in determining linguistic choices by different cultural groups.

Specifically, in the discourse domain, the CSs shared a predominant tendency to use the inductive rhetorical strategy, i.e., putting *Justification* and/or *Providing Background* prior to the *Head Act of Request*, in their emails. However, the ESs had similar a preference for the inductive rhetorical strategy and the deductive rhetorical strategy (putting *Justification* and/or *Providing Background* after *Head Act of Requests*), and a small number of emails contained the bald rhetorical strategy (no *Justification* or *Providing Background* before or after *Head act of Request*).

It is argued that this difference is influenced by culture difference. Chinese culture is classified as a high PD (power and distance) and collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2005). This cultural model has great impact on the Chinese traditional writing rhetoric model, and describes how Chinese discourse is usually structured into four parts: *qi cheng zhuan he* (cf. Kong, 1998). Corresponding to this structure, head acts might be treated as a conclusion (*he*) which is usually put in the end after the request justifications and elaborations. Moreover, according to Scollon and Scollon (2001), the inductive rhetorical structure is regarded as an independent strategy to be used by speakers when they are not sure whether they have rights to put forward a topic. It thus may help to maintain a hierarchical face system. Therefore, the CSs may prefer to dedicate the inductive rhetorical structure to recognizing and respecting the social distance between themselves and the email recipients (university instructors). As a result, the recipients' superior position might be acknowledged and highlighted. A harmonious relationship might thus be managed and a compliance of request from the recipients might be expected to be more easily attained.

In contrast, against low PD and individualist culture background, the ESs' general tendency to maintain the hierarchical face system with the inductive rhetorical structure seemed not be as strong as that of the CSs. More than half of the emails which used the deductive rhetorical structures (including the bald-rhetorical structure, i.e. no *Request Justification/Background* prior to or after the head act of request) might show these email writers are more willing to claim their sociality rights to request help from

university instructors. They might hope to maintain a solidarity face system in which the recipients' power is not treated as a primary factor.

Furthermore, the cultural difference is argued to give rise to other pattern differences of choice (the discourse domain) and to the realization of some moves (the stylistic domain and the illocutionary domain) between the CSs and the ESs discourse communities. For example, with respect to using the *Subject Lines* move in the emails the CSs have less preference for an explicit message (as is generally in the case of a high-context culture),. In contrast, the ESs (generally regarded as having a low-context culture) had a much greater tendency to make the request aims explicit in subject lines.

Moreover, the high PD culture of China may lead to the CS students' predominant tendency to use formal stylistic forms in openings and closings, i.e. formal address terms, honorifics, and stressing their subordinate status in moves of *Self-introduction*, *EWCP* and *Signing off*. However, the ES students had a great tendency to use informal stylistic forms in openings and closings, such as informal address terms, informal salutations (using *hi* instead of *dear*), not stressing their status in moves of *EWCP* and *Signing off*. They showed a great preference for using these involvement strategies in order to maintain a solidarity face system (i.e. maintain email writers' 'association rights' and 'equity rights').

Finally, in terms of rapport-management strategies in the illocutionary domain, the findings support those general findings of previous studies under the CCSARP (1989) framework (e.g. Ding, 2006; Kong, 1998). The CSs had a greater tendency to use direct requestive strategies and the ESs had a greater tendency to use indirect requestive strategies. In other words, the CSs seemed to rely less on the strategies in this domain to uphold the recipients' 'equity rights' than the ESs. However, a closer look helps us to know that some requestive sentence patterns like *xiwang ni neng* (wish you can) and duplicated verbs may help to soften the request force of the head acts. From this perspective, it could be reinterpreted that both the CSs and the ESs had a high tendency to address the recipients' 'equity rights' in the illocutionary domain of rapport management.

3) In terms of the CESs' pattern choice of strategies of rapport management, the CESs' performances were often located in the middle of the continuum between the CSs and the ESs, or more precisely, to be closer to that of the CSs. Specifically, the CESs, like the CSs, had a very high tendency to use the inductive rhetorical structure, to communicate a more implicit message in the move of *Subject Lines*, and to use more formal address terms, like the salutation form *dear*, and more full names in the *Signing off* move.

The findings on the part of the CESs, which deviate from those of the ESs, might be influenced by some different contextual variables and rapport orientations. Among the three discourse communities, the CESs perceived that they had the highest-distance relationship with the email recipients, possibly due to their newcomer and non-native identity. This might have made them more inclined to emphasize their foreign-student status and to use deferential politeness most of the time. Moreover, under the influence of the Chinese culture, they might be more inclined to maintain the hierarchical face system. Consequently, unlike their British counterparts, they used more deference politeness strategies, such as more inductive rhetorical strategies, self-introduction, formal stylistic features, and more moves like the *Complimentary* and *Thanks*.

The CESs' pattern tendency to choose rapport-management, however, might be, to some extent, an interlanguage-specific representation. The CESs had lived in China for over twenty years and had experienced most of their education there. Therefore, it might be very easy for them to apply Chinese cultural norms to their English language use in Britain, though they had a relatively high English proficiency and had been in Britain for at least half year before the time of data collection. The fact that this is the most commonly transferred strategy is represented in the way they used more inductive rhetorical strategies and more formal stylistic features in their emails than the ESs. However, the way they perceived the importance of the three face values, i.e. positive face and negative face values of the recipients and positive face value of the email writers, was significantly lower than that of the ESs.

Finally, the research findings of this study show that the CESs might, despite their high proficiency in English, still lack sufficient pragmalinguistic competence. This is mainly

inferred from the fact that the CESs, in contrast with the ESs, used limited requestive perspectives and less syntactic and lexical mitigation modifiers. The requests by the CESs may thus be less appropriate than those of ESs in the upward request emails, because students are expected to use more indirect strategies to soften request modification. In fact, the necessity of using more indirect strategies in the upward request emails by NSs of English has been confirmed by a large amount of research (e.g. Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2001, 2006; Liao, 1997)

The sociopragmatic competence of the CESs under study might also not be sufficient. As discussed above, the CESs' choices of rapport-management strategies seemed not to correspond exactly to their judgement face value. In other words, they did not correlate social variables with choices of rapport-management strategies like the ESs, which thus displays an example of 'sociopragmatic failure' (Thomas, 1983, p.99).

(4) Last but not least, following the observation method, this study examined the performance of relational work in the emails within the three academic discourse communities. It documented types of relational work in discourse, stylistic and illocutionary domains of rapport management. Moreover, it explored some individuals' performance of rapport management in the emails of each discourse community.

Consequently, the study identified three types of linguistic behaviour: marked, non-marked and unmarked ones. The identified unmarked behaviour, like the inductive rhetorical structure employed within the CS discourse community, was generally regarded as a normative/appropriate behaviour in the discourse domain. Furthermore, the identified non-marked behaviour such as moves of *Showing Thanks* and *Complimentary Close* in the emails of the ES discourse community are safely judged as appropriate. Finally, some identified marked behaviour, like formal address terms (title + surname) in the ESs discourse domain, was examined. These address terms showed respect to the email recipients (i.e. markedly designed to uphold the recipient's 'identity face' and are judged to be open for an interpretation as polite). Other identified marked behaviours, like direct requestive strategies in the head acts, seemed to be at risk of being interpreted as impolite, in contrast with the normal behaviour of indirect requestive strategies in the ES discourse community. However, as some case studies

show, they might have been intentionally used by email writers to address other aspects of rapport, i.e. email writers' sociality rights. With respect to this, the behaviour is still appropriate at least from the email writers' perspective. Alternatively, it is also possible that the behaviour was unintentionally used by email writers. For example, in Case 4 of the CESs' data (see Section 6.3.3.4), the head act of the request seemed to be too imposing in terms of the relationship between the interactants. In this respect, the writer might not have grasped the norms of proposing appropriate emails.

This work has helped to provide a deeper insight into some systematic similarities and differences across the three discourse communities summarized in the above. More importantly, it was found that some specific communication styles were not absolutely linked to cultural norms or rules; rather they might be a function of 'self-construal' (Gudykunst, et.al, 1996) or just self-preference. For example, through several case studies in the ES discourse community, it was found that the inductive discourse strategy might be a self-construal/preference, because it was used by Alice for two different social contexts (perceived high PD and medium PD). Therefore, the above work has lent solid support to Locher and Watts' (2005) proposition on the importance of interactants' norms and expectations. Meanwhile, it has demonstrated a wider variety of forms of social behaviour, which go beyond the traditional binary notions of politeness and impoliteness.

In summary, the findings of this study, especially the identified pattern differences and similarities of rapport-management strategies between the CSs and the ESs discourse communities, generally support Spencer-Oatey's (2008. pp.5-6) assertion that "'culture' is operationalized primarily in terms of ethnolinguistic and/or national or regional political identity [and] is manifested through co-occurring regularities within the social group". The pattern differences are thus to some extent manifestations of differences between Chinese and British cultures. More exactly, the findings (pattern similarities and differences) are manifestations of differences and similarities of group cultures (i.e. three discourse communities under study). As discussed in Chapter 2, we also adhere to Holliday's (1999) small culture model that national culture is attached to small groups wherever there is cohesive behaviour.

At the same time, the findings of this study also support Spencer-Oatey's (2008, p.6) assertion that cultural patterns can influence but not determine people's linguistic behaviour, nor are they "the only factors influencing people's behaviour". With regards to the findings of this study, culture is only an important mediator to the socio-psychological factors, i.e. the three bases of rapport, contextual variables and pragmatic principles and conventions, all of which give rise to the individuals'/groups' performance of rapport management and doing relational work in emails. Moreover, the discursive approach to the relational work highlights the individuals' constructive role in communication. Individuals might adjust their behaviour to what is considered as appropriate according to difference socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, the findings of relational work confirm the assertion that linguistic behaviour (like direct strategies in the ES discourse community) is neither inherently polite nor impolite, and the nature of politeness is inherently aligned to norms (Locher & Watts, 2005).

Finally, the findings of this study are, to some extent, to add to the body of research on social presence in computer-mediated communication (CMC). Social presence is regarded by most researchers as "the degree of salience of another person in an interaction and the consequent salience of an interpersonal relationship" (Tu, 2002, p. 38). However, according to Tu, this definition does not present a clear picture because it does not explain in detail what components social presence contains and how to measure the degree of it in the CMC setting. Adapting two instruments – CMC attitude instrument (Steinfeld, 1986), and perceived privacy (Witmer, 1997) into an evaluation of the CMC users' perceptions of social presence and privacy, Tu came up with three coefficient factors – social context, online communication and interactivity, and privacy (system privacy and perception of privacy) to measure social presence, and he confirmed that CMC could be perceived as a high social-presence medium.

With respect to the three measurements of social presence, the findings of this study are not fully consistent with the one by Tu (2002) on general academic emails. Specifically, in Tu's study, emails were perceived as an informal/casual way to communicate, and email writers tended to use online socio-emotional language to express their ideas or communication intentions. In this study, as reported above, most emails are formal in terms of their linguistic behaviour in the stylistic domain of rapport management, together with plenty of marked politeness behaviour. This is because, as we have

discussed, the special email genre employed for this study is for making requests, i.e. a rapport-sensitive linguistic behaviour from lower-status students to university instructors. Meanwhile, the findings of this study may indicate that the email writers of this study, especially native speakers, have a similar high person-to-person awareness (social presence) in the computer environment with the participants in Tu's study. However, the non-native speakers of this study might still lack some social-presence awareness in proposing appropriate emails, which is shown above, as their pragmatic competence was still insufficient.

8.3 Implications of the Study

This study has provided a number of theoretical and practical implications for cross-cultural pragmatics and education. Firstly, the analytical framework of this study integrates the theory of rapport management into genre studies. The research results have established that rapport management is a robust theory of communication that is able to provide reasons for similarities and differences in communication styles and cultural beliefs. It could facilitate our understanding of the complexities of communication, which is not only motivated by face sensitivities, but also by obligations and interactional goals. As a result, the combined approach could provide a systematic way to examine social, cultural and linguistic issues in the text. The analytic framework can hence be applied to studying more discourses and genres for cross-cultural pragmatics studies.

Moreover, the research has pointed us toward incorporating theories of rapport management and relational work in one study of cross-cultural pragmatics. It has lent much support to the two theories from empirical perspectives. On the one hand, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the framework of rapport management, which is complementary to Swales (1990), has helped to make us fully investigate pattern similarities and differences of linguistic behaviour across cultures. Meanwhile, the framework of relational work has highlighted the idiosyncratic performance of linguistic behaviour within the continuum of relational work relevant to the socio-cultural context and the individual's own judgement. In a word, the combination of two theories in one analytical framework could give rise to a "methodologically sound cross-cultural

research” (Gudykunst, 2000, P.294) for it is equivalent to a combination of etic and emic approaches in one study.

Thirdly, the research results have implications for studying appropriate linguistic behaviour across cultures and for a further examination of the ways in which these behaviours are manifested in other genres. Specifically, it can help people to develop a better understanding of the differences and the nature of communication from multiple-cultural perspectives. In addition, it can help people to explore specific ways of achieving a highly appropriate genre. As a result, people’s cross-cultural generic competence might be improved.

Finally, the research has implications for understanding intercultural competence in general, since it targets appropriate behaviour in emails. According to the research results, even advanced learners of English under study tended to produce emails which were divergent from NSs’ norms, which might reduce the efficiency of these request emails. Therefore, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) points out, pedagogical intervention with regard to instruction for appropriate emails is needed. For example, some existing studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; House, 2003; Kasper, 2001) have proved that NNSs could benefit from explicit instruction in writing emails as well as activities like discovering and raising meta-pragmatic awareness. With reference to the current research findings, NNSs could be explicitly trained to use a full range of syntactic and lexical mitigation devices. In addition, as Kasper (1997, p.9) argues, the consciousness-raising activities might help learners to “make connections between linguistic forms, pragmatic functions, their occurrence in different social contexts, and their cultural meanings” and to ultimately improve the learners’ sociopragmatic competence.

8.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

There are strengths of, as well as limitations to this study. The strengths of the study lie in four main areas. Firstly, the study captured authentic emails as research data to investigate the actual linguistics behaviour across three discourse communities. Thus, it has avoided the inadequacies of some previous studies which heavily relied on elicited data, i.e., written discourse completion tests, the linguistic performance of which might

not be the same as in an actual one. Secondly, the study has offered a fuller picture of the cultural differences and interlanguage features in request emails. By integrating other domains, such as the discourse and stylistic ones in the analysis, this study goes beyond previous studies which focused their treatment on the illocutionary domain of rapport management. It is thus hoped that this study adds to the body of cross cultural studies. Thirdly, the study has proposed an efficient analytical framework to examine the complex picture of request emails which counts on the culture-dependency of socio-psychological variables. Specifically, it demonstrates that a lot of intervening social (i.e. rapport-management orientations), cultural (i.e. western and eastern cultures) and contextual factors (power, distance and imposition judgement) interact with one another in order to determine email writers' linguistic choices. This approach addresses some of the insufficiencies of previous studies, which mainly adopted three variables by Brown and Levinson (1987), i.e. power, distance and imposition, as explanatory variables. Fourthly, the study has not only focused on the strategies of rapport management and performing relational work from a pan-cultural and etic perspective, i.e., the perspective of the outside researcher, but also from an emic perspective, i.e. the individuals' own perceptions of the appropriateness of the strategies in relation to their own judgement on the immediate contextual factors.

However, the current study is not without limitations. A number of points need to be listed so as to warrant attention for future research. The first limitation concerns the participant profile, the subject pool and the number of request emails. The participants in this study were limited to postgraduates and it is hence important to be aware that the findings in the current study might not be generalized to other social groups/discourse communities. The number of emails for analysis might be larger and the emails might not be limited to just one university from each culture. Moreover, this study was mainly involved with the emails in which the request imposition was generally regarded as low or middle across the three discourse communities. Almost no high-imposition request emails were contained, possibly because most of the participants never wrote such emails or they did not want to provide these emails due to ethical considerations.

A second limitation concerns the current study being solely focused on the relationship between the email writers' own perception of social psychological bases of rapport

management (face, rights and obligations, and interactional goals) and their pragmalinguistic choices. Due to practical difficulties, it did not make enquiries into the emails recipients' perception of social situations and strategic use of request emails. Therefore, the emails recipients' perception of linguistic behaviour is not clear. Also, it is hard to ascertain whether the email writers' perceptions match those of the email recipients.

Thirdly, as for the methodology of this research, although the results of this study have shown that a number of intervening social, contextual and cultural factors interact with each other to influence linguistic choices in emails, the intricate ways in which these variables interact are still not very clear. In other words, whilst these objective factors and email writers' subjective factors could efficiently explain the linguistic choices in the emails under study, it seems problematic to assert a one-to-one causal relationship between these factors and linguistic choices in each specific domain of rapport management in the emails. Moreover, some other contextual factors, like gender and age of email writers and recipients, which might also influence the linguistic choices, were not taken into consideration. Finally, although the coding of the research data (cf. Chapter 4) and this 'holistic' analysis of individual emails (cf. Chapter 6) have strictly followed the previously well-established frameworks, the analysis was mainly conducted by the researcher himself (and under the supervision of his supervisor). Therefore, the analysis might be a little personal, given that the data analysis was performed by several experienced linguists.

Fourthly, for some practical considerations, this study did not/could not collect more emails than two from one email writer, or more emails written by one email writer to a same email recipient. Therefore, it is hard to know whether the linguistic choices in the email were a "one-shot occurrence" or possibly extended over a longer time period (Walther, 1994, p.491). In addition, the study did not/could not collect feedback emails from the recipients, though the feedback might have given insights into the research into the linguistic behaviour of these email writers.

8.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This study explored cross-cultural, sociopragmatic and interlanguage variations on the strategies of rapport management and relational work in emails of three discourse communities. However, further research dimensions have been opened up, which could extend this study. Some of these dimensions also reflect the above-described limitations of this study.

First, further research is needed to test the proposed framework and examine the feasibility of extending it into other cross-cultural genre studies. Moreover, further research, especially on student-teacher email interaction, needs to be replicated with a different and larger population. Since this study has been conducted in connection only with Chinese and British cultures, more replicated studies from other languages and cultural backgrounds, as well as from other groups of students rather than postgraduates, needs to be undertaken, so that findings can be verified.

Secondly, more socio-cultural dimensions, like age and gender, could be explored in future research on student-teacher request emails. In addition, a lot more emails than the current study are needed in future, which is expected to involve a lot of high-imposition requests. Furthermore, more research of interpersonal contexts in emails, such as downward request emails (from teacher to student) and bilateral ones (student-to-student), is needed. As a result, a well-rounded picture could be offered in order to give a fuller understanding of rapport management and relational work in emails.

In addition, rapport management and relational work could be explored from the perception of email recipients or university instructors in the future. As Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, p.103) emphasized, a study of appropriateness judgements would illuminate “those factors of students’ email messages that produce positive and negative evaluation by faculty recipients, those request strategies, internal modifiers, and supportive moves that enhance or diminish the effectiveness of messages in hierarchical communication in cyberspace”. Furthermore, this will help to make clear whether email writers’ perceptions are equivalent to that of recipients/university instructors. This will,

in turn, give guidance to email writers on how to develop more positive rapport and appropriate relational work in their emails with the recipients.

Fourthly, more wide-ranging research might be conducted on the complicated picture of how the socio-psychological and cultural factors interact with one another in order to explain email writers' linguistic choices. More specifically, what the exact role of factors such as face sensitivities, rights and obligations, requestive goal and appropriate consideration needs to be examined in greater depth, and probably utilizing different methodological tools. In other words, the expected wide-ranging research should probably explore the intricate causal relationship between these factors and choices of strategies of rapport management in different domains. Moreover, if possible, longitudinal studies could be undertaken following Chen (2006), who conducted a case study to gain insights into how NS and NNS students may change and adapt their practice of email writing to their professors over the course of several semesters.

Last but not least, in special consideration of the CESs under study, more NNSs from a wider variety of language backgrounds are required to be examined in terms of email performance, in order to form a broader spectrum of research. Moreover, as for the pragmatic competence of CESs, it is suggested that some pedagogical intervention might be carried out for them. Therefore, future research could also be done to investigate what type of instruction (such as explicit, implicit, or awareness-raising) is more effective in cultivating Chinese EFL learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence respectively.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire (The English version)

A Survey on Academic E-mail Requests

Hello, everyone! I am a PhD student currently investigating academic email requests to academic staff (tutors) by **Chinese and British** students. I would appreciate it if you could provide one or two of your emails and complete a short questionnaire which is designed to collect information about the emails involved. This will possibly take you around 20 minutes.

The study has received ethics approval from the School of English Ethics Sub-Committee. All the data collected will be used for research only. In accordance with ethical guidelines, all information you provide will be anonymised (i.e. no names or personal details will be used). You can also withdraw from the study at any point.

If you wish to join in the survey, please follow the link below (or paste it into your browser):

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2DKZNGL>. Or you can fill the questionnaire in the attachment and return to me at the email address z.wuhan@sheffield.ac.uk.

If you wish to leave the study simply close your browser before completion. If you have any requires about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Wuhan Zhu

Supervisor: Prof. Susan M. Fitzmaurice

boxes, information about the recipients of your e-mails and your considerations of the emails.

****Note:** Please do not include any confidential or personal e-mails.

[9] E-mail 1 Copy and paste the message content of your first e-mail here (please do not modify the message content at all).

9a: subject line (please copy and paste the entire subject line)

9b: What is the academic position of the recipient (personal tutor, lecturer, etc.)? _____

9c: What is the recipient's gender? _____

9d: How close would you say your relationship is with this recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
 < -----not at all the closest ----->

9e: How big or difficult do you think the request is for the recipient to carry out?

1 2 3 4 5
 < ----- not at all the most difficult----->

9f: In this email, how important do you think it is to avoid hurting the recipient's feelings?

1 2 3 4 5
 < ----- not at all the most important----->

9g: In this email, how important do you think it is to avoid imposing on the recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
 < ----- not at all the most important----->

9h: In this email, how important do you think it is for your message to leave a good impression on the recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
 < ----- not at all the most important----->

9i: In this email, how important do you think it is to make your point as clearly and directly as possible?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----- >

9j: In this email, how important do you think it is to get the recipient to do what you want?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----- >

9k: Do you want to build, maintain or enhance a good relationship with the recipient through this email? Please **tick one** if so: build maintain enhance
If you ticked one, how important do you think it is?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----- >

9L: How appropriate do you think this email (its language and the structure) is for being used as a general request?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most suitable ----- >

9M: Would it be possible for you to use this email as a model for other academic requests in the future?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most possibly ----- >

*** Thanks a lot for providing an email and filling out the survey above. If you are willing to provide the other email and answer the questions concerning the email, please go on. ***

[10] E-mail 2: Copy and paste the message content of your second e-mail here (**no modification at all**).

10a: subject line (please copy and paste the entire subject line)

10b: What is the academic position of the recipient (personal tutor, lecturer, etc.)?_____

10c: What is the recipient's gender?_____

10d: How close would you say your relationship is with this recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
< -----not at all the closest ----->

10e: How big or difficult do you think the request is for the recipient to carry out?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most difficult----->

10f: In this email, how important do you think it is to avoid hurting the recipient's feelings?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10g: In this email, how important do you think it is to avoid imposing on the recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10h: In this email, how important do you think it is for your message to leave a good impression on the recipient?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10i: In this email, how important do you think it is to make your point as clearly and directly as possible?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10j: In this email, how important do you think it is to get the recipient to do what you want?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10k: Do you want to build, maintain or enhance a good relationship with the recipient through this email? Please **tick one** if so: build maintain enhance

If you ticked one, how important do you think it is?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most important----->

10L: How appropriate do you think this email (its language and structure) is for being used as a general request?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most suitable ----- >

10M: Would it be possible for you to use this email as a model for other academic requests in the future?

1 2 3 4 5
< ----- not at all the most possibly ----- >

*** This is the end! Thanks! ***

Appendix 2

Questionnaire (The Chinese version for Chinese students in Britain)

同学你好!

在网络邮件系统发达的今天, 越来越多的人选择用电子邮件(email)作为与他人交流的工具, 电邮也成为学生和教师交流的重要手段, 本调查旨在了解大家用英语和英国老师进行交流(只调查请对方做某事的email)时的语言使用及其观念和意识, 请你认真地阅读下面的问卷, 并写下你的真实想法。谢谢!

注: 本次调查已得到谢菲尔德大学 ethics committee 的批准, 研究结果只运用到学术研究, 在研究结果发表时决不会透露任何有关的私人信息。

本研究分为两个部分, 第一部分调查个人的信息, 第二部分请大家提供一到两份你用英语写给英国学校老师(或职员)的 request email (请求对方做某事)并回答相关的问题。

第一部分: 个人信息:

1: 姓名(可以不填): _____ 性别: _____ 年龄: _____

专业: _____ 年级: () (请注明是 MA 或 PHD)

2: 你用过英语电子邮件和老师交流吗? 请选择: ()

A 从不 B 很少 C 一般(一周一次) D 常常(一周2次以上)

3: 在写英文电子邮件之前, 你用中文打草稿吗?

1 2 3 4 5

<-----几乎从不 几乎所有----->

4: 你什么时候开始来英国学习的? ()

你入学时的英文成绩是多少(如 IELTS 成绩)? ()

5.: 你觉得现在自己的英语水平如何? ()

A 初级 B 中级 C 高级(接近母语)

第二部分: 本部分旨在了解大家用英语写 email 的实际情况, 请大家提供一到两篇写给老师的真实 email (涉及学习方面的请老师的话题, 特别私人的话题除外), 并就这篇 email 回答相关的问题。

1: 请将你的 email 的内容粘贴 (或写) 到下面空间里 (注意如果是粘贴, 不要对原 email 做任何修饰改动)。

Email 内容:

2: 请将 email 的主题粘贴到下面空间里 (注意如果是粘贴, 不要做任何修饰改动)

subject line:

3: a. 这位老师的学术身份 (讲师/博士/教授等):

b. 老师的性别 (请勾选): 男 () 女 ()

c. 你认为你和这位老师的关系如何? ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 不认识 极其亲密----->

d 你认为这个请求难度大吗? 请选择一个数字代表: ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其难----->

4: 写这篇电邮时, 你将考虑避免伤害对方的面子/感情重要性吗? ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->

5: 写这篇电邮时, 你将考虑避免强加于对方的印象重要性吗? ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->

6: 写这篇电邮时, 你将考虑给对方留下好的印象重要性吗? ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->

7: 写这篇电邮时, 你将考虑使你的请求非常直接和简洁的重要性吗? ()

1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->

8: 写这篇电邮时, 你将考虑你请求的有效性 (使你的语言更能助你达成目标) 的重要性吗?

<----- 一点也不 极其难----->
4: 写这篇 电邮时, 你将考虑 **避免**伤害对方的面子/感情重要性吗? ()
1 2 3 4 5

<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->
5: 写这篇 电邮时, 你将考虑**避免**强加于对方的印象重要性吗? ()
1 2 3 4 5

<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->
6: 写这篇 电邮时, 你将考虑给对方留下好的印象重要性吗? ()
1 2 3 4 5

<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->
7: 写这篇 电邮时, 你将考虑使你的请求非常直接和简洁的重要性吗? ()
1 2 3 4 5

<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->
8: 写这篇 电邮时, 你将考虑你请求的有效性 (使你的语言更能助你达成目标) 的
重要性吗?
1 2 3 4 5

<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->
9: 写这篇 电邮时, 你希望用这封电邮来构建 () 保持 () 或加深 () 你与
收信人 (老师) 的关系吗? 请勾选一个合适的选项。

根据以上的选项, 你认为这在你的电邮中的重要性如何?
1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其重要----->

10: 就请求而言, 你认为你使用的语言得体吗?
1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其得体----->

11: 你会考虑将这封电邮作为你将来 email 请求 (只适用于写给老师) 的模板
吗?
1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 肯定会----->

Appendix 3

Questionnaire (The Chinese version for Chinese students in China)

同学你好!

在网络邮件系统发达的今天, 电子邮件(email)成为学生和老师交流的重要手段, 本调查旨在了解大家运用电子邮件向老师提出**请求(request)**的**语言使用及其观念和意识**, 请你认真阅读下面的内容, 并写下你的真实想法。谢谢!

注: 本次调查已得到谢菲尔德大学 ethics committee 的批准, 研究结果只运用到学术研究, 在研究结果发表时决不会透露任何有关的私人信息。

本研究分为两个部分, 第一部分调查个人的信息, 第二部分请大家提供一到两份你用中文写给学校老师(或职员)的**请求**电子邮件(请求对方做某事)并回答相关的问题。

第一部分: 个人信息:

1: 姓名(可以不填): _____ 性别: _____ 年龄: _____
专业: _____ 年级: _____ (请注明是硕士还是博研)

2: 你用过电子邮件和老师交流吗? 请选择:

A 从不 B 很少 C 一般(一周一次) D 常常(一周2次以上)

3: 你对电邮写作和日常书信的写法是**不一样**的这一观念有多大的认同? 请选择一个数字代表:

0 1 2 3 4 5
<----- 一点也不 极其认同----->

第二部分: 与 Appendix 2 完全相同, 故省略。(The second part is omitted for it is totally the same with the one in Appendix 2.

.....

Appendix 4

Sample Emails from the CS discourse community

NB. All the Chinese sample emails have been translated into English in Section 6.3.1.

Sample Email 1

subject line: 学生请教

王老师:

您好, 首先感谢您在百忙中抽出时间关注学生的邮件, 我是农学院的学生, 因为实验需要, 要进行烟叶的超微结构观察, 我通过查阅文献看到了一篇您曾经指导过一项类似的课题, 想请教老师一点问题: 使用固定液固定烟叶时如何选择溶液的 pH、渗透压, 由于我的实验田在贵州, 一些样品要回南京处理, 在固定液选取以及中间的操作上, 您能给我些建议吗?

衷心感谢老师的帮助, 祝老师身体健康、工作顺利。

此致

敬礼

学生

X

2010.5.17

Sample Email 2

subject line: 课程请假

尊敬的老师:

您好!

谢谢你这学期教了我很多东西, 从中我收获也不少, 一直很喜欢上你的课。临近毕业, 忙这找工作, 不巧星期二有个面试, 与你的课刚好冲突, 可能不能来上你的课。希望老师能谅解并准予我假。落下的课程我会自学, 不懂的地方会向你请教。

祝老师身体健康, 工作顺利!

此致
敬礼！

XX
2010年5月18号

Sample Email 3

subject line: (without subject line)

周老师：

你好，现将我们 09 果树党支部拟发展及拟转正的党员名单发给您审核（见附件）。请您审核后，再通知我审核是否通过，可以吗？谢谢。

XX

Appendix 5

Sample Emails from the ES discourse community

Sample Email 1

Subject line :Teaching Next Semester.

Dear Professor X,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to inquire about the status of Old English teaching next semester. As the end of my PhD approaches, I'm thinking about what to do next; I would very much like to carry on teaching here at Sheffield, and was wondering if that looks like a possibility.

Thank you very much for your time; I look forward to hearing from you.

With all best wishes,

Y

Sample Email 2

Subject line: Interlace Article

Hello X,

I know this is a long shot, but I remember you using a really interesting article on interlace back when we did OE: Language, Texts and Culture... It had lots of lovely pictures. Can you by any chance remember who it was by?

Thank you. All best,

Y

Sample Email 3

Subject line: Language analysis assignment.

Dear X

I would like your suggestions on my language analysis assignment (on...) which has been posted to you today. I will bring one in on Thursday but as it's the holidays and the Easter weekend I thought it might be safer to put a copy in the post anyway. I hope it is not too late and that it is satisfactory.

Thank you and have a good Easter.

Kind regards

Y

Sample Email 4

Hi X,

Is there way of saving the final sequence produced from hitting build unit in the masher program on Hotpots? I've been trying for a while now but have so far only managed to save the masher program with the list of activities. Sorry to bother you again with this.

All the best,

Y

Appendix 6

Sample Emails from the CES discourse community

Sample Email 1

Subject line: MA...dissertation proposal-- X

Dear Ms Y,

I am X doing MA ... and also from your ...class on Monday afternoon. I am thinking of doing my dissertation within the subject of discourse analysis so I hope I could have the opportunity to have a word with you and have your advice on my proposal. When will be your office hour? Since we have to hand in the proposal the Monday after Easter vacation, I do hope I could meet some time this week.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Your sincerely,

X

Sample Email 2

Subject line: Meeting together with Z.

Dear Professor,

Z has told me she would meet you at 12:00am tomorrow, and she would like to show you something about Neixiang Yamen. I hope to join with you. So can I change my meeting time from 14:00pm to 12:00am?

Thank you!

Best Regards,

Y

Sample Email 3

Subject line: Marketing Communication

Dear X:

This is Y, one of the students from MA Marketing. I got one question for Marketing Communication. That is when we talk about the forces, it refers to competitors, technology, PEST..etc. Just want to know if the 6 types of perceived risk and time are kind of forces as well? I think it should be!!

Thanks for answering :)

Regards,

Y

Sample Email 4

Subject line: (without subject line)

Hi, Dr.X

i am a DC student, you are my second maker.

So i'd like to make an appointment with you to discuss my project.

When do you have time tomorrow? Thank you very much.

Best Wish

Y