Chapter 2
Negotiating Personal Relationship Through Email Terms of Address

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Abstract This study investigated whether and how English L2 students use terms of address to negotiate personal relationship when writing email to an English-speaking addressee and how instruction affected email writing in an English as a lingua franca (ELF) setting. The email data were collected naturally in two classroom settings where the second author was the instructor of an ESP class in scientific writing and recipient of the letters. The data, comprising various speech acts, were analyzed and interpreted qualitatively within the framework of interactive sociolinguistics and ethnography. Email writing is not a monolithic genre but varies from informal texting style to formal letters depending on the purpose of the communication. The results suggest that the desire to negotiate relationships by the use of terms of address in email writing can play a role in enhancing second-language acquisition, whereas the perceived lack of need to negotiate personal relationship might impede acquisition. Modeling of appropriate email communication was insufficient, in part due to the asymmetrical relationship between students and teachers, but specific instruction in principles of email writing was beneficial in helping students acquire the necessary skills.

Keywords Pragmatics instruction · Terms of address · Salutation · Signature · Negotiation of relationship

2.1 Introduction

Terms of address are a delicate point of departure in negotiating personal relationship in spoken and written communication (including electronic-mediated communication). Terms of address have been a particular topic of interest in intercultural

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communication (Scollon and Scollon 2001, p. 45) as they are related to negotiation of "face," an important aspect of politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987; Gu 1990). The decision of how to address the interlocutor reflects the perceived power and solidarity relationship between the addressor and the addressee. Brown and Gilman (1972) pointed out that solidarity dominates power as the most important semantic in selecting address forms in contemporary European pronouns. This symmetrical solidarity is interpreted as a reflection of the dominant utilitarian discourse system, its practices of socialization, its assumptions about face politeness, and its forms of discourse (Scollon and Scollon 2001, p. 175). Whereas symmetrical solidarity in some American business contexts leads to the practice of using first names reciprocally as an involvement strategy of politeness, symmetrical deference is preferred in some Asian business contexts using Title+last name as an independent strategy of politeness (Scollon and Scollon 2001, pp. 136–137). In academic settings, the use of address forms often assumes an asymmetrical power and solidarity relationship (Formentelli 2009). Tannen (1993) considered the linguistic strategy of power and solidarity to be ambiguous and doubly binding. Power binds two individuals in a hierarchical interdependence by which both have rights and obligations to each other. Solidarity also binds two individuals in a closeness interdependence in which both are empowering and empowered.

According to Scollon and Scollon (2001, pp. 272–273), the choice of terms of address in intercultural communication is a social action, which is not totally free but follows a restricted range of shared social norms. The norms are positioned within multiple discourses (interdiscursivity), borrow from other discourses and texts (intertextuality), and respond to prior and following communications (dialogicity) based on their proposed principle of communication; therefore, the choice of terms of address in an academic setting is by no means prefigured and unchanging but can vary depending on the particular mode of communication, the degree of familiarity between the instructor and student, the personality of the instructor, and the type of course being taught (Wright 2009). In addition, the terms of address may even vary according to the dynamics of the relationship of the same dyad as illustrated in dramas or novels (Friedrich 1972; Lin 1996).

In email communication, terms of address have been identified as a move of politeness in the script of request (Li et al. 2011). Certain terms of address in an English email sent to a Taiwanese professor can be perceived as rude in an English as a lingua franca (ELF) setting (Li 2013, p. 50). Although over half of the Taiwanese students in a sample of university students writing English email requests to their professors used "Dear teacher"[1] (Li et al. 2011), a form of address also preferred at English cram schools in Taiwan (Huang 2009), Taiwanese professors viewed this usage negatively, as "better than nothing," a direct translation of Chinese politeness rather than a standard format in English (Li 2013, p. 51).

[1]Teacher is a direct translation of the Chinese equivalent *laoshi* (老師). It is used in Chinese to address educators of all levels, including college professors.

Previous studies on terms of address have used survey methods or grouped members of the same ethnicity together for the purpose of comparison in a quantitative design (Fasold 1990, pp. 1–38). However, this practice may prevent us from noticing the variation in terms of address used in natural communication as the personal relationship is negotiated and developed in the choice of address forms. In addition, as natural data from sociolinguistic interviews are not easy to obtain due to the observer's paradox (Labov 1972; Wolfram 2011), it has become necessary to use a qualitative approach (Mackey and Gass 2005, pp. 162–184) to gather empirical data longitudinally (e.g., Lu 2012). To trace the negotiation of relationship, a discourse analysis based on the framework of interactive sociolinguistics (Schiffrin 1994) is ideal. In a classroom setting, email communication between the instructor and the students forms a natural set of data that can be collected and used anonymously (e.g., Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig 1996). Each student's email interactions with the instructor throughout the whole semester can also form a natural case study (Duff 2008) to trace pragmatic development as instruction in email politeness is introduced during the class.

In this study, development of an English email literacy is explored by focusing on the modeling and instruction that the instructor provided and the choices the students made to use not only more intelligible (e.g., Seidlhofer 2001, 2004) but also more pragmatics-oriented email communication in an ELF setting where English is used for academic purposes. The study aimed to investigate how terms of address demonstrate development of personal relationship in email communication in a classroom setting and how instruction in email writing might have a positive effect on students' development of pragmatic competence in English. The research questions are as follows:

1. What forms of address and closing do students use when emailing their English-speaking instructor? Do the students vary each to negotiate their interpersonal relationship with the instructor?
2. What role do modeling and instruction play in learning how to write socially acceptable email? What implications does this have for the importance of direct teaching of email writing as a component of ESP in an ELF setting?

2.2 Methods

This study followed a qualitative[2] ethnographic research design combined with action research to identify best practices in teaching and learning email writing. The methodology of ethnography follows Scollon and Scollon's (2001, p. 17)

[2]An anonymous reviewer suggested that a statistical analysis in the quantitative research norm might be more appropriate to address the effect of direct instruction, but as the available data from the small sample did not meet the requirements for meaningful statistical analysis, we believe that a discourse analysis of individual cases is the best choice given the circumstances.

"interdiscourse communication," which is based on "fieldwork, participant observation, 'strange making,[3] and contrastive observation." Action research is defined by Wallace (1998, p. 1) as "the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some aspect of professional practice."

2.2.1 Research Site

The research site is a university in central Taiwan where graduate students in science and technology are required to publish scientific papers in English before graduation. To assist students with limited English proficiency, the extension program at the university offered a course on English scientific writing, taught by the second author, a native speaker of English with extensive academic background in biology, science education, and English editing. Each section of the course met for 24 h, covering genre analysis (Swales 1990; Swales and Feak 1994, 2000) and writing tips.

The course was offered twice during 2012–2013. The spring section, from March 2012 to May 2012, consisted of 22 students, all of whom were graduate students at the university. The fall section, from October 2012 to January 2013, consisted of 9 students, of whom five were graduate students at the university while four were working. Of these, two had recently obtained their Ph.D.s and were seeking to publish research related to their Ph.D. while working in the same field, and two were teachers, one simultaneously working on a second master's degree. A distribution by major and gender is shown in Table 2.1. Some of students were

Table 2.1 Participants: Spring and Fall

Position	Field	Male	Female
Graduate student	Electrical Engineering	7	1
Graduate student	Chemical Engineering	3	0
Graduate student	Mechanical Engineering	1	0
Graduate student	Physics	1	0
Graduate student	Chemistry/Biochemistry	3	1
Graduate student	Life Science	1	2
Graduate student	Seismology	1	0
Graduate student	Finance	0	1
Total Spring		17	5
Graduate student	Electrical Engineering	4	0
Graduate student	Communication Engineering	1	0
Employed	Neuroimaging	1	0
Employed	Psychology	0	1
Employed	Teacher (Special Education)	1	0
Employed	Teacher (English)	0	1
Total Fall		7	2

signed up by their advisors to take this course, but the majority took it based on their own perceived needs.

Lacking access to the electronic course pages at the university, the instructor used email to send copies of the course materials to students. Students were likewise asked to submit their homework electronically to the instructor via email, making email the natural means of communication outside class. Nevertheless, since the course was ungraded and did not count for credit toward graduation, many students attending the class did not submit homework on a regular basis. Although the degree of their previous experience emailing to instructors was unknown, it is assumed that graduate students in Taiwan are quite familiar with receiving English emails from instructors who were trained in English-speaking countries.

Based on the importance of email in current academic communication and previous studies that have shown the importance of direct instruction in pragmatics (Cohen 1996), one class period in the middle of the course was devoted to email pragmatics. Data were collected before and after instruction to compare how students improved due to instruction.[3] To ensure ethical practices while ensuring natural communication (Rossman and Rallis 2003, pp. 61–87), the study was explained to students during the last class meeting and they were given the opportunity to opt out of having their emails used, which none did. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each to ensure anonymity.

2.2.2 *Email Instruction*

Email instruction was conducted in the seventh week of each 12-week course. In both sections, the instructor began with general principles of email etiquette. The instructor then introduced three factors affecting relationships (power, distance, and imposition) and discussed how these affect the degree of formality expected in communication, with higher levels of each leading to greater formality. In the first section, this was followed by instruction in what salutations, closings, and signatures were considered more or less formal. Specific suggestions were also given for communicating politeness in the body of request and apology emails. In the second section, this was placed within the framework of five principles of communicative success (Appendix 1, modified from Chen 2011):

1. Terms of Address (Relationship);
2. Amount of Information (Clarity);
3. Recognition of Imposition (Cooperation);

[3]We agree with an anonymous reviewer's comment that it is difficult to draw the conclusion that the development of students' pragmatic skill in email writing during the whole semester is purely the result of direct instruction, as the email instruction only took one class period. In fact, as our method is a qualitative discourse analysis, we tried to avoid jumping to such a reductionist conclusion.

4. Manner of Asking (Politeness); and
5. Correctness of Form (Comprehension).

2.2.3 Data Analysis

The data constitute email correspondence between the instructor and 22 students (5 females and 17 males) in the spring section and 9 students (2 females and 7 males) in the fall section. An initial coding of speech acts was done by the first author, on an intuitive basis, revealing the main email functions to be homework submission, request, apology, gratitude, question, and response to the instructor's email. The data were then recoded by the second author, noting the occurrence of all possible combinations of these categories. The correlation between the two codings was greater than 90 %.

Table 2.2 displays the distribution of email functions found in our students' data in descending order. The number of students' emails to the instructor ranged from minimally one to maximally 33. It is clear that homework submission (with request expressed or implied) is the most frequent email function. Eight students emailed the instructor only once, that email being homework submission. Although acknowledgement of receiving email had the second highest frequency, all of the occurrences came from one student, who acknowledged receipt of every email from the instructor. The most frequently occurring speech acts in our student email data are request (30) and apology (25), with far fewer occurrences of gratitude (13) and question (11). It is interesting to note that most of the requests and apologies accompanied homework submission, either a request for comments or an apology that it was submitted late, whereas most of the occurrences of gratitude and question did not accompany homework submission, but were in response to the feedback provided by the instructor when returning homework.

As shown in Table 2.3, the instructor used email primarily to return students' homework with attached comments, to send class materials to the whole class, and to respond to students' emails. Among teachable speech acts, request (14), apology (6), and gratitude (3) stand out as the most common. In addition to comments within the returned homework, the instructor always wrote something in the text of the email, as illustrated in Appendix 3. Typically, if many students submitted something the same week, the instructor would write a very brief comment in the email, but if there were fewer student submissions, he would take the time to write more. Many students submitted homework early in the semester, when they were asked to submit a model article from the journal they intended to submit to, or a prewrite of their own article, but progressively fewer submitted later in the course as later stages of the writing process were discussed, because they had not reached that point in their own research and writing. Samples of emails sent with class materials as attachments can be seen in Appendix 4. Examples of request, apology, and gratitude expressed to the whole class can be found in Appendices 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Table 2.2 Students' email functions

Function	With homework	No homework
Homework submission with brief text	26	
Homework submission with no text	25	
Acknowledgement of receiving email		20
Homework submission with request	18	
Homework submission with comment	16	
Homework submission with apology	11	
Gratitude		7
Response		6
Homework submission with request and apology	7	
Apology		4
Question		4
Homework submission with question	3	
Request		2
Apology and question		2
Request and gratitude		2
Homework submission with gratitude	1	
Homework submission with request and gratitude	1	
Question and gratitude		1
Apology and gratitude		1
Response with question		1
Total	108	50
Total with request	26	4
Total with apology	18	7
Total with gratitude	2	11
Total with question	3	8

The fact that students' use of email functions mirrored the instructor's use indicates an important emergent pattern, called a Zipfian type of organization of language (Goldberg 2006), which has been demonstrated to facilitate language development. According to Ziph's law, as cited in Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008, p. 120), "the more common words in a language account for geometrically more word tokens in a language than do the less common ones." In other words, as the same words and patterns are used on a smaller scale, they are repeated on a larger scale. As a result, the pattern of email writing is not prefigured by rules but emerges as frequent usages accumulate in the interactions. This is why Larsen-Freeman and Cameron posited that language use is a fractal, a geometric shape that is self-similar at different levels. This pattern not only emerges in phonological (Rau et al. 2009) and morphosyntactic acquisition (Rau et al. 2012), but also in development of pragmatics, as evidenced in our data. Our finding provides support for exemplar-based theories of second/foreign language acquisition in

Table 2.3 Instructor's email functions

Function	To class	To student
Return of homework with brief comment		29
Return of homework with comments		22
Response		19
Sending class materials	19	
Sending class materials with request	7	
Request	5	1
Return of homework with apology		3
Gratitude	1	1
Sending class materials with apology	1	
Question		1
Response and question		1
Response with apology		1
Return of homework with request		1
Return of homework with apology and gratitude		1
Totals	33	80
Total with request	12	2
Total with apology	1	5
Total with gratitude	1	2
Total with question		1

which "frequency of exposure to, and use of, constructions play a vital role…" (Gries and Wulff 2005, p. 196).

Negotiation of relationship can be most clearly observed in the terms of address, including salutation, closing, and signature. Our research thus focused on whether these three loci of discourse changed and if so how that might mark politeness, hierarchy, and distance.

Finally, we explored whether email teaching can facilitate students' communication in academic settings. For the spring section, the students were specifically requested to submit an email to the instructor before the instruction on email was delivered on April 26, 2012. Appendix 2 contains the letter of request from the instructor to elicit email samples from the students. At the end of that class, students were asked to "write an email in the form of a request and ask for feedback on your homework."[4] Differences in email writing before and after instruction were compared. The email instruction was delivered on November 28, 2012 for the fall class, so comparisons of data were made before and after this date.

[4]An anonymous reviewer questioned whether this could have influenced the relative frequency of email types, but few students responded to the request (Spring: 1 request before instruction, 3 requests and 2 apologies after; Fall: 1 apology after = total 4 requests and 3 apologies). All of the others were at the initiative of the students, so the pattern still holds.

2.3 Negotiation of Relationship

The first research question investigated what terms of address the students used in addressing their English-speaking instructor and whether the students varied these to negotiate their interpersonal relationship with the instructor. We will first look at the email sent from the instructor, to see what model the students had for English email, then at the forms used by students, and finally whether there was any indication of negotiation of personal relationships.

As shown in the appendices, when the instructor emailed the whole class he regularly addressed the letter, "Dear class." Materials for the first class in the first section were sent from the extension program, so students had already met the instructor when he sent them email in that section. In the first email sent to the second section, sent before the beginning of the course, the instructor addressed the class as "Dear Students in English Scientific Writing" to make sure they understood the purpose of the email, but reverted back to "Dear class" in the rest of the correspondences. In his first email to the first section, he used "Dr. Rau" as his signature, a habit carried over from his previous high school teaching indicating a hierarchical relationship. However, in the rest of the emails, he consistently used "Gerry Rau" as his signature to maintain an egalitarian but distant relationship.

When the instructor emailed homework back to students with comments, he usually addressed them by first name only without endearment. When responding to individual questions, however, he would use "Hi" or "Dear" before the name of the student. Also, in returning homework the week of instruction he used a more formal style, with "Dear XX," and "Sincerely," to model that for the students.

The instructor is a middle-aged white male who frequently uses an analyzer's reporting style (Tannen 1995) for professional email correspondences. In his email to the students in this class, the contents were mostly informational (Biber et al. 1994) as they served mostly the functions of sending course materials and making comments on the students' homework (see Table 2.3). As the instructor's email rarely included examples of gratitude and questions (see Table 2.3), the students must have learned those two speech acts elsewhere.

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 present the student data from the two sections, showing the various terms of address used by students before and after instruction, listed in order with the earliest first. A"*" indicates the first email for that student after instruction in email. The symbol "–" indicates that there is no address form, no closing, or no signature. Data are not shown for students whose data were consistent throughout the course or for whom we have insufficient data.

The majority of the students in the class, those whose data are not shown, showed no evidence of feeling a need to negotiate a relationship with the instructor. Twelve students (nine in section 1, three in section 2) wrote only one email to the instructor, usually the first or second week, or used email only as a means of homework submission two or three times without any personalization. Their purpose apparently was to learn what they could by attending the class without written interaction with the instructor. Seven other students (four in section 1, three in section 2) used

Table 2.4 Terms of address in spring section

Email function[a]	Salutation	Closing	Signature
Bob			
HB	Dear Dr. Rau,	–	Bob (I Hong Tsai)[b]
HB	Dr. Rua	Thanks!	Bob(I Hong Tsai)[b]
HC	Dear Rau,	–	Bob (I Hong Tsai)[b]
HR#	Dear Rau,	Sincerely,	Bob (I Hong Tsai)[b]
HAR#*	Dear Gerry,	Sincerely,	I Hong Tsai (Bob)
Oscar			
Q	Dr. Rau		student Oscar
HC	Dr. Rau,	Sincerely yours,	Lai, Da-Nian
HC	Prof. Rau:	Sincerely yours	Oscar
G*	Dear Dr.Rau	Sincerely Yours,	Oscar Lai
Nancy			
HB	–	Best regards,	Nancy
H	–	–	–
HR#*	Dear Dr. Rau,	Sincerely,	Nancy Lin
HB	Dear Dr. Rau,	Sincerely,	Nancy Lin
G	Dear Dr. Rau,	–	Nancy Lin
Lisa			
HB	Dear Teacher Gerry,	Best Regards,	Shu-Fen Yao (Lisa)
AQ	Dear Teacher Gerry,	Best Regards,	Shu-Fen Yao (Lisa)
HR	Hi Teacher Gerry,	Best Regards,	Shu-Fen Yao (Lisa)
Q	Dear Teacher Gerry,	Best Regards,	Shu-Fen Yao (Lisa)
GA*	Dear Prof. Rau	Sincerely,	Shu-Fen Yao (Lisa)
Janet			
HB	Dear Teacher:	–	Janet Lai
HA	Dear Professor:	–	Janet
HB	Dear Teacher:	Thank you.	Janet
HR#*	Dear Prof. Rau:	Sincerely yours,	Janet
HG	Dear Prof. Rau:	–	Janet
G	Dear Prof.Rau	Sincerely yours,	Janet
Harold			
HC	Dear Mr. Rau	Sincerely,	Harold Chen
HB	Dear Mr. Rau:	–	–
HA	Dear Mr. Rau:	Sincerely,	Harold Chen
HB	Dear Mr. Rau	Sincerely,	Harold
H	–	–	–
HR#	Dear Mr. Rau:	Sincerely,	Harold Chen
HAR#*	Dear Prof. Rau:	Respectfully yours	Ph. D Harold Chen

(continued)

Table 2.4 (continued)

Albert			
H	–	–	–
HQ	Dear Prof. Rau:	best regard	Albert Chia-Min Kuo
H	–	–	–
HB	–	–	–
H	–	–	–
H	–	–	–
H	–	–	–
A#*	Dear Prof. Rau:	Sincerely,	Albert Chia-Min Kuo
Scott			
HR	Hi Pro. Rau,	BRs,	Scott, Yi-Ming Wang
HRA	Hi Pro.Rau,	–	Scott
HB	Hi Dr. Rau,	BRs,	Scott
R	Hi Dr.Rau,	Thank you very much!	Scott
HR	Hi Dr.Rau	–	EMing
HR	Hi Dr. Rau	–	Scott
HR#	Hi Dr. Rau	BRs,	Scott

[a]*H* homework sent as attachment with no text; *HB* homework sent/returned with brief note; *HC* homework sent/returned with comment; *R* request; *A* apology; *G* gratitude; *Q* question; *K* acknowledgement of receipt; *S* response to questions or comments. # Response to instructor's letter requesting special email submission.
[b]Date included on line with signature
*First email after email instruction in class

essentially the same terms of address throughout the class. Four of these students consistently used a formal letter style, apparently drawn from former instruction for writing letters. While it was unclear whether they had had any formal instruction in email writing before, they certainly came with a general schema of letter writing in English. Two wrote something the first time and copied it each successive time, changing only the information regarding the particular assignment, as evidenced by identical spacing and typographical errors in the unchanged sections. One who knew the instructor outside of class used an informal style consistent with their personal relationship.

We next examined the eleven students showing evidence of change in their terms of address to see if any of that change could be attributed to negotiation of relationship. At least four cases demonstrate evidence of negotiation of personal relationship with the instructor by choosing various terms of address in the emails.

Table 2.5 Terms of address in fall section

Name Email function[a]	Salutation	Closing	Signature
Allan			
H	–	–	–
Q	Hi Gerry	–	Allan
S	Dearf Gerry	–	Allan
H	–	–	–
S	Dear Gerry	–	Allan
H	–	–	–
SQ	Dear Professor	–	Allan
S	Dear Professor	–	Allan
H	–	–	–
A	Dear Professor	–	Allan
HGR	Dear Gerry	–	Allan
HQ	Dear Gerry	Thank you	Allan
HQ	Dear Gerry	Thank you	Allan
A	Dear Gerry	–	Allan
G	Dear Gerry	Thank you every much	Allan
Edgar			
HC	Dear Dr. Rau:	Many thanks	Edgar Ho
HC	Dear Mr. Rau :	Best regards	Edgar [Chinese]
HC	Dear Mr. Rau:	Best regards	Edgar [Chinese]
HA	Dear Mr. Rau:	Best regards	Edgar
HA	Hello Mr. Rau:	Thanks! Have a nice day!	Edgar
Doug			
HB	Dear Professor Rau	Best regards	[Signature line]
HA	Dear Sir	–	Doug
HB	Dear Sir	cheers	Doug
HB	Dear Rau	Best regards	Doug Chen
G	Dear sir	Take care!	[Signature line]
H	–	–	–
H	–	–	–
A*	Dear Dr. Rau	Sincerely	Doug

[a] *H* homework sent as attachment with no text; *HB* homework sent/returned with brief note; *HC* homework sent/returned with comment; *R* request; *A* apology; *G* gratitude; *Q* question; *K* acknowledgement of receipt; *S* response to questions or comments.

* First email after email instruction in class

2.3.1 *Four Cases of Negotiating Personal Relationships with the Instructor*

Bob used various forms (e.g., "Dear Dr. Rau," "Dr. Rua" (sic) and "Dear Rau") when his purpose was homework submission. As there is no need to negotiate relationship when submitting homework, he did not even pay attention to typos in the address forms (Excerpt 1). But after instruction, he sent a letter of apology to the instructor (Excerpt 2), not only using the expressions that had been taught but also apparently expressing a feeling of growing closer to the instructor, as expressed in the choice of greeting, "Dear Gerry." At the same time, he used his Chinese name first and dropped the date in closing. This seems to indicate a move from relating to the instructor in a hierarchical relationship with his English name preceding his Chinese name to a solidary relationship but with his Chinese identity preceding his English identity. After the class was over, he has seen the instructor on campus several times and has waved and sometimes talked briefly.

(1) From Bob, 2012/3/20

Dr. Rua

The attached files are my prewriting and the model article.
Thanks!

Bob(I Hong Tsai) 2012.03.20

(2) From Bob, 2012/5/2

Dear Gerry,
I am sorry for inconvenience that I handed in the assignment late. The attached file is my evaluation about the model article. I wonder if you could give me advice or feedback on my evaluation.

Sincerely,
I Hong Tsai (Bob)

Oscar also seems to give evidence of negotiating relationship through terms of address. He began using "Dr. Rau" and "Prof. Rau" without endearment. After instruction, he decided to add the endearment "Dear Dr. Rau." What is more interesting is that his signature varied from "student Oscar" to "Lai, Da-Nian," then to "Oscar," and finally to "Oscar Lai," a progression from Chinese solidarity, Chinese distance, English solidarity, to English distance, the last in a voluntary expression of gratitude sent after the class was over.

Allan, who is older than most of the other students and teaching while working on a second masters degree, moved from "Hi Gerry" or "Dear Gerry" to "Dear Professor," and back to "Dear Gerry" at the end. The reason he used "Dear Professor" in the middle of the class can perhaps be attributed to an interlude when he asked for special help with his MA thesis writing. At that point, both authors of this paper were involved in responding to his questions on research design. The

instructor took an advisor's role and thus was addressed accordingly. Allan's continued use of "Dear Gerry" was not affected by the instruction because he took a sick leave on the day of instruction, but rather was a reflection of his personal relationship with the instructor who shared his background working with mentally retarded children.

Edgar also seemed to move toward a solidarity relationship as the course progressed. His greeting changed from Dear Dr. Rau to Dear Mr. Rau and then to Hello Mr. Rau. At the same time, his signature changed from Edgar Huang to Edgar, followed by his full name in Chinese characters, to Edgar. He was also the only one who used "have a nice day" in the closing of his email, showing concern for the addressee's life and desire to construct a relationship with him. This also was independent of instruction, as he did not email the instructor after the instruction in email writing.

2.3.2 Salutation, Closing, and Signature

The connection between the choice of specific terms of address and the desire to negotiate personal relationships is mediated by the purpose of the email. For example, in an email which intends to perform the speech act of apology, the addresser tends to use a more friendly and polite salutation, a kind and sincere closing, and a formal signature to express the desire to build a close and solid interpersonal relationship with the addressee. It is also hard to decide whether the choice of specific terms of address is due to earlier formulaic instruction the addresser has had or due to heartfelt consideration of solidarity relationships. Therefore, the specific communication context is important when asserting a direct link between terms of address and negotiation of relationship. We will discuss specific examples in Sect. 2.4.

In the 11 students' emails, most closings were formulaic with no regard to the addressee's personal life. This is probably a reflection of the fact that the major function of email in this class was sending homework. The only examples we found of personal closings were Edgar's "have a nice day" in his email sending homework with an apology and Doug's "Take care" in his email expressing gratitude. This indicates that although salutations and signatures have provided evidence of negotiation of personal relationships, closings appear to be an underrepresented politeness strategy, at least in our limited data.

2.4 Role of Instruction

The second research question explores how modeling and instruction assisted students in recognizing the need to negotiate relationship by the use of terms of address in email writing. We discuss several cases to illustrate how explicit

instruction in email writing plays a role in second-language acquisition, especially when there is a need to negotiate personal relationship in a speech act.

During the email instruction, the second author as the instructor specifically addressed degree of formality, parts of an email, and essential components in request and apology (Li et al. 2011; Yang et al. 2011), as shown in Appendix 1. In particular, the instructor emphasized how the different address forms to the instructor in the salutation and the various forms of closing and signature reflect power/solidarity and distance/closeness relationships. There is evidence from the data that this instruction in how to express various degrees of politeness and establish interpersonal relationships (Lantolf and Thorne 2006) encouraged students to choose to assert their own identity and their relationship with the instructor.

When the class was asked to send an email of request or apology to the instructor before instruction, Harold showed his proficiency in email writing using good structure and many frozen expressions (Excerpt 3), using Dr. Rau as a term of address as he had consistently up to that point. After instruction, during which the instructor talked about how Mr., Dr. or Prof. might all be appropriate in different social settings, he decided to use Prof. Rau as the address form (Excerpt 4). At the same time, he changed his signature to "Ph. D Harold Chen," apparently to assert his academic identity, although he was a Ph.D. student not a Ph.D. at that time.

(3) From Harold, 2012/4/25

Dear Mr. Rau:

As requested in your email, I am writing to inform that I have submitted my file.
With regard to figure 2 in my file, I would like to put five curves in a figure.
However, I am uncertain whether this formation is clear or not for you.
I would appreciate it if you give me any suggestion.

I look forward to hearing from you.
Thank you

Sincerely,
Harold Chen

(4) From Harold, 2012/5/3

Dear Prof. Rau:
I am sorry that I submit it to you late.
The attachment is the word file about the evaluation of my model paper
I would appreciate it if you could recept it.

Respectfully yours
Ph. D. Harold Chen

Albert also benefited from instruction. Although he used a formal address "Dear Prof. Rau" in his first email (Excerpt 5), he did not use a consistent style, following a formal greeting with use of exclamation and small letters at the beginning of sentence, similar to a texting style. After instruction, he submitted a letter of

apology to fulfill the instructor's request (Excerpt 6), demonstrating a consistent formal style. All of his other emails, however, were mere homework submission, attachments with no text in the email. This evidences that only when there is a perceived need to negotiate interpersonal relationship will there be an opportunity for second-language acquisition. Scott also showed a mix of formal and informal use in his email. Unfortunately, he did not send an email after instruction, so we have no way to judge whether the instruction was effective in his case.

(5) From Albert, 2012/3/20

Dear Prof. Rau:
Hello professor! I have no idea about the file "[name] article.pdf". what do I have to sent about this assignment ? thanks!!
The attachment file is my "pre-writing" assignment.

best regard
Albert Chia-Min Kuo

(6) From Albert, 2012/5/3

Dear Prof. Rau:
I apologize that I cannot finish the homework on time because I was preparing my mid-term exams this week.

Sincerely
Albert Chia-Min Kuo

Three of the female students in the class also provided evidence of the importance of instruction in learning how to negotiate relationships in email. Nancy started with no address form in her emails, with a signature of "Nancy." After instruction, she used "Dear Dr. Rau" to address the instructor and signed her name as "Nancy Lai." Two other female students transformed their relationship with the instructor from Chinese politeness to English academic hierarchy as a result of instruction. Lisa began with "Dear Teacher Gerry" or "Hi Teacher Gerry." After instruction, she used "Dear Prof. Rau." Similarly, Janet began with "Dear Teacher" or "Dear Professor" and ended with "Dear Prof. Rau." All of these illustrate how specific instruction on email writing made a difference in socializing the students into English academic culture.

Doug, who has a Ph.D. and is working at a nearby hospital, moved from "Dear Professor Rau" to "Dear Sir" and "Dear Rau," and finally to "Dear Dr. Rau" after instruction. His signature also moved from a fixed email signature to "Doug" and "Doug Cheng" and finally back to "Doug." His variation in terms of address and signature indicates a process of negotiation of relationship, and that the instruction helped him position himself appropriately in the academic hierarchy.

Although comprehensible output is necessary for second-language acquisition (Swain and Lapkin 1995), it is not sufficient in itself, as it ignores the difference in forms appropriate for different interpersonal relationships. Modeling by the instructor alone was insufficient to help students choose appropriate forms, in part

due to the asymmetrical relationship. When the instructor wrote a request, as illustrated in Appendix 5, he would normally use 'please,' followed by the request. This is considered appropriate in an asymmetric power relationship, from high to low, but considered socially inappropriate when students copied the same form, as in (7). Instruction helped students understand the nature of interpersonal relationships and choose appropriate forms of making requests, as shown in Excerpt 8.

(7) From Jack, 2012/4/25

Dear Dr. Rau,
I am writing in response for the homework this week. I have attached the document to this email.
Could you please send me some feedbacks about the figure?

Best regards,
Jack Liu

(8) From Jack, 2012/5/3

Dear Dr. Rau,
The attached file is my analysis of the model paper. I would appreciate it if you could look over the analysis and give some comments.

Best regards,
Jack Liu

Finally, there was one case in which the student manifested development in email writing due to instruction through the content of the email, rather than the terms of address. Henry, whose data are not shown in the table, had the most frequent email interactions with the instructor. He always wanted to talk to the instructor before class and during the break. He also always acknowledged receipt of email from the instructor and asked where the PowerPoint was if the instructor was late sending materials. Although he demonstrated no change in forms of address, closing, or signature, apparently being comfortable with the formal style he used consistently, there was evidence of the importance of instruction in other areas. In (9), written before instruction, he uses the phrase "Would you please give me some comments on my assignment about figure?" After instruction (Excerpt 10), he applied the principles taught in class by modifying the request to the more polite form, "I would appreciate it if you could look over my assignment and give me comments on it." Even after the course was over,[5] he continued to apply the principles and frozen expression of email politeness in his writing, expressing various speech acts (Excerpt 11).

[5]An anonymous reviewer suggested that retrospective interviews could be conducted with the research subjects to figure out the real reason for their choices. While we agree that this would have strengthened the research, most of the students have graduated and moved elsewhere in the 2 years since the data were collected. Even if the subjects were successfully located, their ability to recall and accurately analyze their motivation 2 years prior is far from certain.

(9) From Henry, 2012/4/24

Dear Dr. Rau,
The attachment is the assignment for this week.
Would you please give me some comments on my assignment about figure?
Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
Henry Hsu

(10) From Henry, 2012/5/3

Dear Dr. Rau,

Attached is the assignment for the discussion section.
I am sorry that I miss the deadline of my assignment this week.
I apologize for the inconvenience my mistake may cause.
I would appreciate it if you could look over my assignment and give me comments on it.
Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Henry Hsu

(11) From Henry, 2012/6/8

Dear Dr. Rau,

Thank you for giving me good guideline for scientific writing.
I also learn a lot from the class.
In addition, I appreciate it very much that you give me comments on my weekly assignment.
Finally, I could not find the attachment from the email.
I would appreciate it if you could give me the new syllabus that I could take a look on it.
Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,
Henry Hsu

2.5 Conclusion

In summary, email is not a monolithic genre but is inherently fluid, varying according to the demand and the function of the speech events. As a mode of electronic communication, it can take the place of an e-course platform for homework submission, overlap with the functions of informal texting, or exhibit a more formal style. In two of most frequently occurring speech acts in academic email, i.e., requests and apologies, the negotiation of personal relationship can be observed most clearly in the use of

terms of address to position the addressor and the addressee. It is also clear from the data that email politeness is both teachable and learnable because those who continued to email the instructor after email writing was taught indicated an informed decision to choose socially appropriate and consistent address forms and signatures, as well as using models to lessen the imposition of a request.

There is also evidence that in ESP instruction in an ELF setting, as in biliteracy, both instructor and student actions are essential. While the instructor was able to both model and provide instruction in principles of email writing, if students viewed email as simply a platform to submit homework rather than a place to negotiate relationship, there was no evidence of learning. Perhaps, the goal in ELF email instruction should not only simply be mutual intelligibility but should also include the importance of negotiation of relationship.

Although negotiation of interpersonal relationship is a key notion in the research, the major part of the discussion was restricted to a description of students' changing terms of address. Due to the limitation of the available data, we have not been able to provide a full account of how the change in terms of address reflected or lead to negotiation of interpersonal relationship, what kinds of negotiation were made in terms of email terms of address, what specific changes of interpersonal relationship occurred as a result of negotiation, or why the students chose to make those negotiations in email terms of address. Since the focus of the class was scientific writing rather than email writing or writing in general, and since the instructor wanted to ensure that the email communication was as authentic as possible, students were never asked to practice email writing skills, nor were they asked to consider what their relationship was with the professor and how that should be reflected in their email correspondence.

We do not claim that students' change of use of terms of address or the negotiation of interpersonal relationship in terms of address is solely caused by explicit instruction. Changing personal relationships over time undoubtedly plays a role in choice of terms of as well. We also acknowledge that the changes of terms of address in the students' emails may not be solely caused by the need to negotiate interpersonal relationship, but may be motivated by their desire to try out what they learned in class about email pragmatics. However, this study has provided some evidence from a few limited cases that students benefit from email instruction, and that since terms of address are important in negotiating personal relationships, this component should be actively incorporated into email instruction.

Appendix 1: Instruction on Principles of Communicative Success in Email

1. Terms of Address (Relationship)
   A. Salutations

      Dear Prof. Rau/Dear Dr. Rau (Formal, academic)

Dear Mr. Rau (Formal, non-academic)
Dear Gerry (Formal, close)
Dear Professor (Particular individual unknown and unimportant)
Dear Sir (Particular individual unknown and unimportant)
Hello Dr. Rau (Less formal, academic)
Hello Mr. Rau (Less formal, non-academic)
Hi Gerry (Informal, close)
Hi (Informal, close, frequent contact)
No salutation (Very informal, text/chat style)

B. Closings

Respectfully yours, Truly yours (Very formal)
Sincerely (Formal, general business)
Cordially, Best regards/wishes (Less formal)
Thank you (Informal)
No closing (Very informal)

C. Signature

Dr. Gerald A. Rau (Very formal)
Dr. Rau (Formal, distant)
Gerald Rau (Formal)
Gerry (Informal)

D. Salutations to avoid

Dear Teacher (Translation from Chinese)
Dear Dr. Gerald Rau (Do not use first name with title/last)
Dear Prof. Gerry (Titles attached to last name, not first)
Dear Rau (Last name should have title)

E. Closings to avoid

Your student (Avoid, Chinese use)

2. Amount of Information (Clarity)
Example from apology email: I cannot come to class tomorrow:

For personal reasons (too little information)
Because I need to take my mother to the doctor (appropriate)
Because my mother has chronic arthritis, and can't get around by herself, but my brother has a meeting in Taipei, so I have to go up to Miaoli to take my mother to see the doctor, and won't be able to get a bus back in time to make it to class (too much information)

3. Recognition of Imposition (Cooperation)
Example from request email: Can justify by emphasizing

Their ability: 'Since this is your area of specialty …' (best)
Relationship: [Often implied by talk of shared work] (typical)
Your need: 'Since the deadline is tomorrow …' (worst)
Leave decision in their hands, with reasonable time frame

'If you could' (expressed or implied)

4. Manner of Asking (Politeness)
   Example from request email: (most to least polite)

   I wonder if you could help me
   Could you please help me
   Could you help me
   Can you please help me
   Can you help me
   I hope you can help me
   I want/need you to help me
   Help me

5. Correctness of Form (Comprehension)

   Simple better than complex, less likely to be misstated or misinterpreted

Appendix 2: Letter Requesting Email Before Instruction

2012/4/24

Dear Class,

Tomorrow evening we will talk about writing email (requests and apologies) in addition to the discussion section. In order for me to see what you already know, I have a request: I would like each of you to write me an email this week.

If you are submitting a Figure, please write the email as a request—ask me to give you feedback on the Figure. If you are not submitting a Figure, please write the email as an apology—that you are not submitting a Figure.

Thank you.
I will send you the ppt handout tomorrow.
See you Thursday.

Sincerely,
Gerry Rau

Appendix 3: Letters Sent to Individual Students: Returned Homework, Showing Examples Coded as Brief Note (HB) and Comment (HC)

2012/3/25 Gerry Rau

XX,
Attached is a copy of your prewrite, with comments.
Gerry Rau

2012/4/12 Gerry Rau
Dear XX,

Here is your methods section, with comments. Please feel free to ask in class if there is anything you do not understand. Take the time to go through the corrections (using the track changes, move to the next change feature) to see what types of mistakes you tend to make, then pay attention to that issue in future sections. I have not made every necessary correction, perhaps, but have tried to call attention to common mistakes, and correct some of the occasional ones.
Gerry Rau

Appendix 4: Letters Sent to the Whole Spring Class: Sending Attachment

2012/5/24
Dear Class,

As last week, I will provide copies of the handout on the results/discussion section, which you will need to do the work in class, but if you want to make copies of the ppt or other pdf files, that is up to you. Sorry this is getting to you so late this week.

Please bring your Model Article to class (printed or electronic form).

See you tonight.
Gerry Rau

Appendix 5: Letters Sent to the Whole Spring Class: Request

2012/3/20
Dear Class,

Please remember to send me your assignments today. As I said, please send me whatever you have, even if you do not feel it is complete. Everything you submit

for this class is part of a work in progress, not a final product. If you are having problems, tell me about it and send me what you have and I can help you take the next step.

See you Thursday.
Gerry Rau

Appendix 6: Letters Sent to the Whole Spring Class: Apology

2012/4/19
Dear Class,

Attached you will find a copy of the handout for tonight. It is larger than usual due to the number of figures included, so give it time to download.

I am sorry to be sending it to you later this week than usual, and hope it does not cause too much inconvenience. It has been a busy week for me, as I am sure it has been for some of you. I should be able to get it to you earlier again next week.

I look forward to seeing you this evening.
Gerry Rau

Appendix 7: Letter Sent to the Whole Spring Class: Gratitude

2012/6/7
Dear class,

Thank you for the learning experience. Teachers always learn as much as students, if not more. I have learned a lot about the writing process in helping you through it, and hope you have as well. I have modified the syllabus based on my experience, to make it more useful to future classes (see attached). There will be another session in August/September, if you know anyone else who would benefit from it.

I think I have returned all of your work with comments, but if you sent something and did not get a response let me know and I will take a look. Otherwise, best wishes for your future careers.

Gerry Rau

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