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Data: Raenumart Kotarputh (2020) Title. Pragmatic Strategies and Politeness in Email Exchanges by Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting: Managing Miscommunication, Enhancing Intercultural Communication and Indicating Levels of Formality.
URI [dataset]

University of Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

Modern Languages and Linguistics

**Pragmatic Strategies and Politeness in Email Exchanges by Business English as a
Lingua Franca (BELF) Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting: Managing
Miscommunication, Enhancing Intercultural Communication
and Indicating Levels of Formality**

by

Raenumart Kotarputh

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2020

University of Southampton

Abstract

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Raenumart Kotarpath

Email exchange is one of the most widely chosen means of communication in this digital age in many social situations and in professional environments. It is very beneficial as it can be used as a proof of communication in the form of written interaction which is different from a face-to-face conversation. In a university, international relations affairs staff are directly responsible for dealing with internationally transactional encounters on behalf of the university frequently employing methods of online communication. Therefore, email exchanges in English are essential for their duties and responsibilities. Furthermore, appropriate pragmatic strategies are crucial in order to pre-empt and remedy communication breakdowns ensuring successful communication. More than that, the strategies are also used to achieve successful business negotiations, and even better when politeness is taken into account in such communicative interactions building good relations between the interactants. In addition, among people who use English as a lingua franca (ELF) in general and also English as a lingua franca in business encounters (BELF) particularly, various pragmatic strategies are used to understand and negotiate meaning when uncertainty of understanding occurs. Therefore, pragmatic strategies and politeness are significant factors for mutual understanding and successful interactions among intercultural interlocutors, making studies on such topics worth investigating.

This research aims to understand how (B)ELF users in a Thai university setting make use of pragmatic strategies in written communication, and how politeness is constructed in their email

exchanges in business/administrative transactions with other English language users who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to create successfully communicative interactions. The qualitative research approach was selected to capture their authentic practices in business transactions through BELF. Methods of interviews, focus groups and a corpus of emails were utilized to gather the data from the participants. The content analysis approach was considered as an analytical tool for data analysis uncovering the naturally occurring instances in communication where the awareness of intercultural interactions is to be found.

From the results, it is evident that a variety of pragmatic strategies were employed in BELF email interactions. Although the strategies handling communicative problems discovered are quite similar to those found in spoken ELF studies, a few emergent strategies were uncovered in this asynchronized written communication. In addition, strategies enhancing intercultural communication were found to be useful since they helped to create rapport between the interactants, accommodate to each other, and build intimacy, thus they encourage better relationships and business transactions in the future.

In terms of politeness in emails specifically in the aspect of formality, the opening-closing addresses used constitute different levels of formality mainly based on social factors of power and distance. The data in this study confirms that the addresses were significant indicators of levels of formality signaling the dynamic and evolving nature of the email relationships and also managing relationships in the direction of more familiarity which interactants felt would be beneficial to their negotiation through BELF emails.

Additionally, interview and focus group data showed, the perceptions of English language used and intercultural awareness were observed in that participants' perceptions and experiences considerably affected the ways they constructed and interpreted the intercultural messages. There is a contradiction between stated values and actual performance; though the ENL notion seems to be inherently embedded, the participants' actual use likely follows the ELF perspective. The participants positioned themselves at different levels of intercultural awareness in various circumstances to finally lead to mutual understanding and achieve competent communication.

All in all, the BELF emails on international affairs were more like spoken conversations, especially when the encouraging intercultural communication strategies were exploited; the communicators preferred to establish intimacy through a variety of strategies and to compensate for lack of intonation, tone and facial expression which could be found in face-to-face interactions. Emergent pragmatic strategies including politeness with more delicate opening-closing address categorization indicating different levels of formality, were revealed contributing to a better and

wider understanding of authentic use of success BELF emails which will be useful in understanding BELF email use in similar contexts.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Raenumart Kotarputh

Title of thesis: Pragmatic Strategies and Politeness in Email Exchanges by Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF) Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting: Managing Miscommunication, Enhancing Intercultural Communication and Indicating Levels of Formality

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

Signature: Raenumart Kotarputh..... Date: 6 April 2020.....

Acknowledgements

My PhD journey would have never been possible without the support of the following people.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the support from my current workplace Mahasarakham University in Thailand for the opportunity to pursue my PhD and the full-time studentship.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Associate Professor Dr Will Baker, for his academically invaluable support and guidance as well as immense patience giving me power and spirit throughout the journey. At every single stage of my study, he has played a significantly meaningful role encouraging me to successfully complete the degree. Also, I would like to thank Dr Ying Wang, my second supervisor, who has provided me feedback and advice on conducting the research work.

Besides, it would not have been possible to conduct this research without precious support from my MSU and DWLL colleagues. I am also indebted to all my research participants for their time participating in this research. Without their collaboration I would not be able to gain insightful data from authentic BELF users in the university setting.

I am also pleased to say thank you to my best friends who have made my tremendously difficult times incredibly easy. I would always remember Mameaw, who has introduced me to life on the other side of the world where I had never imagined that I would be, and she seems like my soul. Thank my Eng KCU mates: Neung, P'Moss, Nokyoong, Ying, Max, Chibi, and Dear, true friends at NPU: P'Ning and P'Koong and RMU colleagues who are always my world right beside me lifting me up when I felt like a loser, and also my PhD peers: P'Metty, P'Natty, P'Jeab, P'X, P'Bhi, P'Meow, Kelly, N'Ham, N'Birdy, Lek, Rin and Cookie who have shared amazing moments of PhD life here, including my Thai language learner who has now turned to be a good friend, Steve. I offer them my sincere thanks; they all actually mean a lot to me.

In the end, I owe thanks to my kind and generous landlady, Ingrid, for agreeing to proofread my thesis in a very short time provided. Lastly, I am very grateful to my most important people in my life, my beloved parents who always believe in me. They have given me all kinds of support, encouragement, power and motivation to accomplish the goals in my life. I would like to dedicate this PhD thesis to them, my everything.

Definitions and Abbreviations

ACE	Asian Corpus of English
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BELF	English as a Business lingua franca
CA	Cultural awareness
CMACE	Corpus of Misunderstandings from the Asian Corpus of English
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
CSs	Communicative strategies
D	Distance
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ELFA	English as Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
ENL	English as a native language
ERGO	Ethics and Research Governance Online
ESL	English as a second language
FTAs	Face-threatening acts
ICA	Intercultural awareness
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
MNC	Multinational company/corporation
NS	Native speaker
NNS	Non-native speaker
P	Power
PD	Power distance

R	Absolute ranking of imposition
VOICE	Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English
W	Weight of imposition

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale of the Study

There are a number of means of communication people use to send and receive conveyed messages nowadays. Email exchange is one of those means which is widely chosen by communicators in this digital age because of its ease and convenience. It can be used instead of telephone calls in many social situations and in professional environments (Tagg, 2015). Email is defined as an electronic mail as being messages in a text form sent via computer networks from one person to another or to many others (Tao & Reinking, 1996). This online letter processes like a postal system, but it reduces transaction time into seconds although the participants are faraway on the other side of the world. Not only text messages are allowed to transfer, but all kinds of information such as pictures, sounds, graphs and videos can be attached in the transferred processing (Vinagre, 2008). It is beneficial as it can be used as a proof of communication, especially in a formal communication, because it is in a form of a written interaction which is different from a face-to-face conversation.

The email communication is generally used in many contexts such as business and academic settings. In business contexts email is considered as the most-used means of communication for multinational companies (Shachaf, 2005). It is used to contact people within and outside their organization formally and informally. In addition, many academic institutions including universities use an email system as a tool for maintaining relationship between students and faculty members, and its use has spreading among the academic world whether they are native or non-native speakers of the common language (Bulut & Rabab'ah, 2007).

In a university setting, it is common to find connection between organizations within and outside its home country where email exchange is employed as a means for this kind of communication. When a university proceeds internationally transactional encounters, an international relations division or section is directly responsible for it. Even though assigned staff in the division do not establish internationally direct cooperation with other institutions abroad for their own sake, they are key persons who facilitate projects or activities to be accomplished successfully, and support international students and staff. Moreover, they are trusted in their ability to communicate effectively with the matters relating to foreigners where a contact language - English in particular, is the best option to communicate. This trust puts them into stressful situations and they have to work under pressure where errors are not acceptable because making errors or mistakes might mean disastrous conditions to the university. Therefore, email communication in English is essential for

their duties and responsibilities, meanwhile appropriate pragmatic strategies is crucial to be applied; a variety of strategies may well be selected to pre-empt and to remedy communication breakdowns. Moreover, they can also accommodate interactions to reach the goal of successful communication, and even much better when politeness is taken into account in such communicative interactions to build and maintain relationships between the interlocutors.

To have a look at English, particularly in Thailand contextually defined as the research site, it is generally taught and used in a perspective of a foreign language (EFL) (Darasawang, 2007; Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009; Sureepong, 2018; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015). The goal of English use is embedded that the most proficient language users are those who employ a native-like English. Similar to what Jenkins (2015: 15) calls 'norm-dependent' explaining that it is important to conform native speaker's production and reception in an EFL perspective. People are encouraged to imitate what the natives do as much as possible. English language learners believe a native speaker is more superior and powerful with the authority to criticize and judge their success of English using. This also affects the use of English by the appointed staff working on such international affairs in a Thai university, especially who learnt English at Thai schools because they are raised with this English as a native language (ENL) perspective as the best English to produce.

There is an estimate of people who have learnt English as a first language (L1) in the early 2000s; the number of native English speakers is approximately one-fourth of those 1,500 million speakers from all sources around the world (Crystal, 2012). This infers that in any communication between people whose first languages are not the same, most of them consider English a contact language. Besides, in reality the most important thing needed to be aware of is conducting effective communication among interactants, rather than focusing more on conforming native speaker norms. This is empirically supported by the perspective of English as a lingua franca (ELF) that ELF is a legitimate language employed by any English users in their own right in order to communicate successfully (Jenkins, 2006). Becoming native-like is not the goal of using ELF, but ELF is used for intelligible communication across groups of English users who do not share their first languages (Jenkins, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Because of the ELF perspective, Thai users of English should bear in mind that there is this alternative to use English even more effectively in reality and authentic situations among people from different first languages and cultures at the present time. Particularly those whose job responsibilities are mainly to contact foreigners should pay more attention to this phenomenon of using ELF and determine the most appropriate use of their English in different communicative circumstances.

In addition, among people who use English as a common lingua franca (ELF) including the English native speakers who communicate with non-native speakers, they use various pragmatic strategies to understand and negotiate meaning when uncertainty of understanding occurs (Cogo and Pitzl, 2016). The ELF speakers try to find appropriate accommodation to overcome possible difficulties in naturally occurring conversations (Cogo, 2009). Furthermore, the concern of opening-closing addresses used in emails showing different levels of formality under the umbrella terms of politeness are not considered to be included at the beginning of conducting the research, but later it was frequently mentioned by the staff, the participants in this study in the interviews, while collecting data indicating crucial elements in business interactions. The participants repeatedly expressed how they distinguished relationships with their recipients and created rapport in business email communication through the explicit and intended use of the addresses. Thus, this issue was included as another interest of this investigation afterwards. Although politeness is researched in the context of email interactions in the past, the specific point of opening-closing address is usually neglected, especially in a compound address consisting of smaller elements such as salutation, name addresses at the beginning of an email, complimentary close and signature at the end of an email. These compound addresses were frequently referred by the research informants stating how important of these email elements were to their business email communication. Since pragmatic strategies and politeness are significantly necessary components used in email communication for mutual understanding and negotiations so as to reach successful interactions with intercultural interlocutors, studies on such topics are still needed and worth investigating. Moreover, in the setting of written international communicative interactions, the international relation affairs staff naturally employing ELF in their business email communication or so-called English as a business lingua franca (BELF) are good representatives of communicators using email exchanges in the (B)ELF aspect contacting a variety of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, I am interested in researching pragmatic strategies and politeness in with emphasis of (B)ELF successful email exchanges used by staff at a university handling with international affairs contacting foreigners.

1.2 Research Motivation

What drove me, as a researcher, into conducting this study is my own experience working on international relations affairs for the faculty in the past. I had believed that anyone who could communicate in English had to be able to work on this duty efficiently. I later realized that what I had believed was totally wrong. It is not only linguistic competence which leads to success in communicating with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, especially via written

discourse. The situation triggered my concern is that one day I emailed foreign teaching staff who had been working with us at the department in Thailand at least four months, stating that they should cancel classes on 'Loy Krathong Day' – a Thai traditional festival – as students needed to participate in the activity held by the university. One of them replied me asking what 'Loy Krathong Day' was and how it was more important than attending a lecture. The first feeling came into my mind was that why he did not realize the importance of this common tradition, but then I thought that he might not know it as it is our national or religious practice though he had been living in Thailand for a certain period of time. It might be better if I had given him a brief information about it. This written communication should have been resolved when I replied him with the detail of 'Loy Krathong Day', but actually it was not. He gave me a reply of thanking for the information, but he kept asking me "Do you want me to cancel the class?". I did not understand what he really meant by that question; I thought it was ironic as all should know that no class was allowed to operate on that date. Finally, I headed to talk to him in person at his office. What I truly found was that he absolutely had no idea of what 'Loy Krathong Day' was and how it meant to Thai people. Moreover, it was because my sentence '... should cancel...' made him confused if he needed to cancel or not, so he just asked for confirmation. I was shamed of what I had thought before having the clearer conversation until we reached orally mutual communication.

Consequently, I could learn from the situation that apart from grammatically constructing English conversation with foreigners, there should be more aspects to be concerned about in order to avoid miscommunication, particularly about nationally or locally cultural practices and ways of conveying messages to individuals although they had been spending time in my country. I sent the same message mentioned to all of the foreign staff at the department, but not all of them appeared to have mis- or non-understanding like the case illustrated. In this situation, my interlocutor applied the question to ensure his interpretation of cancelling the class which is in line with the pragmatic strategies 'asking for confirmation' and 'rephrasing' (e.g. Bartolo, 2014; Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Deterding, 2013; Mauranen, 2006; Vettorel, 2018). If I had known these concepts, I would have never misinterpreted his intention of asking the question. Furthermore, this circumstance could be explained in a perspective of intercultural communication where individuals communicate differently in relation to intercultural awareness (ICA) (Baker, 2011; 2015). Here in this case my recipients were non-Thai, but not everyone replied me showing uncertain understanding of the message. Again, if I was aware of individual differences and had thought about potential miscommunication relating to a variety of cultural backgrounds, this problematic situation would have not occurred. With this experience, I have a better understanding that there should be more issues than just linguistic competence to be concerned so as to achieve intercultural communication.

Therefore, this inspired me to explore what are useful or essential in creating successful email exchanges communicating between intercultural interactants, and ended up with the research objectives and questions below.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

This research aims to understand how (B)ELF users in a Thai university setting make use of pragmatic strategies in email exchanges in business/administrative transactions with other English language users who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, how polite their email exchanges should be through the presence of opening-closing addresses explicating different levels of formality so as to create appropriate and successful communicative interactions. It is crucial for the international relations staff to successfully communicate with partner organizations because their messages represent the university in establishing collaboration, not their own personal issues. Discovering these strategies and politeness with the concept of ICA underlying in authentic conveyed emails is beneficial; it helps to raise an awareness of not only linguistic knowledge, but also multilingual and multicultural differences in a written form of communication in a higher education context for email users through BELF in business communication. Thus, the research questions that guide this investigation are as follows.

1. How are pragmatic strategies employed in business English as a lingua franca (BELF) email communication by international affairs staff in a Thai university context?
 - 1A. What are the pragmatic strategies used in the email exchanges to deal with miscommunication and enhance intercultural communication, and why?
 - 1B. How is politeness constructed as an aspect of formality through the lens of opening-closing addresses used in the email exchanges, and why?
2. To what extent does language and intercultural awareness influence the participants' email communication through BELF?
 - 2A. In what way do they adjust their email communication to interlocutors from different linguacultural backgrounds?

1.4 Thesis Structure

There are nine chapters included in this thesis briefly detailed as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction presents background and rationale of this study describing why email is used in this digital communication as well as how pragmatics and politeness are important to be

considered once interacting via email exchanges. Also, the researcher's experience of miscommunication through email interaction is shared in order to indicate the interest of conducting this investigation leading to the research objectives and questions. This states why email communication, pragmatic strategies and politeness should be taken into consideration to reach achievement of communication. The chapter ends up with the outline of the thesis structure and the details in brief.

Chapter 2: English and Email Communication illustrates what types of English(es) are incorporated in this thesis. Definitions of and previous studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as a Business Lingua Franca (BELF) are displayed, followed by how English is in Thailand. In addition, in the second half of the chapter, email communication is detailed regarding its background, linguistic features frequently found in use and previous studies particularly in relation to the context of this investigation.

Chapter 3: Pragmatic Strategies, Politeness and Intercultural Awareness explains the meanings of understanding, non- and misunderstanding including causes of misunderstanding. The core parts of this study are detailed here divided into two subcategories: pragmatic strategies and politeness in ELF. While the pragmatic strategies are useful in dealing with miscommunication and enhancing intercultural communication, politeness is another factor co-constructing smooth interactions approaching communicative business success. Besides, intercultural awareness underlying (B)ELF communication is another topic to be revealed emphasizing how this concept is meaningful in the BELF communication with a variety of intercultural interlocutors.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology explains the research design combining with where to conduct this research, who to be selected and what instruments to be generated as well as how the researcher positioned herself in the research project. Data collection procedures and analysis approach are focused to ensure that the research is conducted appropriately based on proper methodology. Finally, ethical considerations including trustworthiness and limitations are presented to cover sensitive problems relating to human rights as well as confirmation of the results and research constraints.

Chapter 5: Findings from the First Interviews provide the information gained from the participants in relation to their experiences encountering English in general and on duty. Moreover, their points of views on the topics of pragmatic strategies and politeness in email communication whereas the intercultural awareness is explicitly attached, are revealed.

Chapter 6: Findings from the Corpus of Emails and the Second Interviews illustrate the main data dataset of the study. All the pragmatic strategies and politeness evidently used in email exchanges are disclosed by the participants' application. Furthermore, the interpretations of each item found are discussed from the participants' perspectives no matter such features are used by them or their interlocutors.

Chapter 7: Findings from the Focus Groups elucidate the participants' ideas in the relevant topics mentioned all through the investigation. It is also to confirm what they have mentioned in the individual interviews and/or to notice changes of their perceptions in some particular issues being discussed on the on-the-go progress of the focus group interviews.

Chapter 8: Discussion provides the information gained from all the research instruments corresponding to the two research questions revealing pragmatic strategies and politeness employed in the encounters as well as the participants' perceptions of English and intercultural awareness invoking their authentic written intercultural communication. The discussion covers the objectives of the study with the results linking to the previous studies including the emergent data occurring in the investigation.

Chapter 9: Conclusion summarizes the thesis in brief. It restates research rationale in the beginning, followed by research questions and methodology. Then, the findings are recapitulated based on the research questions. Research limitations is given noticing what troublesome concerns are. The chapter further indicates contributions and implications that the investigation has made to the field.

Chapter 2 English and Email Communication

The information given in this chapter is about the concepts of English and the method of email communication which play an important role in this study. The chapter starts with the part of English. The English approaches counted the focus of this research are English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF). Though they are mainly defined in a similar way, the clarity and mutual understanding are more important than linguistic correctness, BELF is specifically used in a business context where business jargon and genre conventions are commonplace rather than general English (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Furthermore, English and its functions in Thailand are also explained as well as how ELF and BELF exist in the country. The chapter includes a description of previous studies on these concepts and reveals the link between (B)ELF and English in the country at the present situations. Later on in this chapter, the information about email communication and its use is described since it is the core method of communication researched here in this investigation. It firstly describes the background of emails in order to have an overview of how emails were introduced into the circle of human communication. Then it describes how it has become a significantly essential means of communication at the present time. In addition, linguistic features exposing distinct meaning and solely employed in written communication including emails are clarified. Some examples of previous studies in email communication in both academic and business fields are given specifically in relation to pragmatics and politeness which are the two main foci of this study. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter is presented.

2.1 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

2.1.1 Definitions of ELF

English as a lingua franca (ELF) is a term to describe English that is used for communication between interlocutors who have different first languages, and also different cultural backgrounds, regardless of whether they use English as a native language (ENL), as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL) (Jenkins, 2006; 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004). Brumfit (2001) asserts that English is no longer to be considered as the language of one who possesses it as their mother tongue or first language. In particular, Jenkins (2006) states that ELF is legitimate employed by any English users in their own right to communicate successfully, and it is used in situations where combinations of first-language speakers are involved (Mauranen, 2018). Supported by empirical studies, Cogo (2008: 59) claims "ELF research rejects the monolithic, native-speaker ideology, and refers to a bilingual

proficient speaker as an empirically based alternative to the native norm". However, this does not mean that native speakers of English (NSs) are excluded from the use of ELF; NSs also take part as ELF users in intercultural communication through English (Baker, 2009; Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011). Moreover, Seidlhofer (2011: 7) strengthens the clear definition of ELF; it is "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option".

ELF is used for intelligible communication across groups of English speakers in contexts where acquiring native-like fluency of English is not the goal. Although NSs are also counted as ELF interactants, the majority of ELF users are non-native speakers of English (NNSs) (Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). The norms of communication are not decided by NSs since it is perceived that ELF does not belong to any specific groups of English users (Cogo, 2008; Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2011). Jenkins (2015) suggests that many so-called 'errors' made by 'deficient' language users in an ENL approach, should be considered as variants in ELF as well as bilingual resources which might come along with the use of code-mixing and code-switching; the achievement of this is considered as 'evidence of linguistic adaptability and creativity, not deficiencies' in ELF (p.45). Proficient ELF speakers use multilingual resources to create their preferred forms; code-switching is sometimes used to promote solidarity and to project cultural identities, moreover, accommodation strategies are used for affective reasons and comprehensibility. Specifically, Pakir (2009) affirms that languages and cultures of ELF users in the Expanding Circle are legitimate to be developed in their rapport; this phenomenon will promote pluricentric forms of Englishes. Therefore, communicative effectiveness is much more important than correctness according to an idealized form of native speaker English.

2.1.2 Previous research on ELF

ELF research has been investigated by a number of scholars in the field over the past few decades (e.g. Baker, 2009; Cogo, 2009; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Ehrenreich, 2012; Jenkins, 2000; Mauranen, 2012; Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2017; Wang, 2015; Widdowson, 2015 etc.). In the early stages of ELF research, its focus was mainly on spoken language. Initially, Jenkins (2000) studies linguistic-based research on ELF pronunciation relating to intelligibility problems and the critical role of phonological accommodation in terms of surface linguistic features. Later, several ELF corpora were developed: the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English or VOICE (see Seidlhofer, 2001), English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings or ELFA (see Mauranen, 2003) and the Asian Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca or ACE (See Kirkpatrick, 2014). Additionally, Seidlhofer (2004) identifies characteristics as a set of

hypotheses that appear to support subsequent studies in the field of lexicogrammatical and morphological features of ELF.

Since then, further investigations have been carried out in many contexts, for example, in the business domain or so-called 'BELF' (e.g. Cogo, 2016; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010), in academic English medium instruction or EMI (e.g. Baird, 2013; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Murata, 2018; Smit, 2018) in Policy (e.g. Chen, 2017), in testing or assessment (e.g. Harding & McNamara, 2017), in intercultural communication (e.g. Baker, 2009; 2012; 2015; Lopriore & Grazi, 2016) and in a framework of multilingualism (e.g. Jenkins, 2015; Cogo, 2018). The focus of ELF research is not only on forms, as found in its early stages, but also on its pragmatics (Cogo, 2009; Cogo, 2010; Jenkins, 2018). Besides, there are also distinctively ongoing and increasing studies and activities regarding ELF such as an international ELF conference series, journal and book series, a great number of publications and PhD theses (Jenkins, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2011).

2.2 Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

'Business English as a Lingua Franca' or 'BELF' also plays an important role in this study because it puts more emphasis on ELF in business which is the particular focus of this investigation. The definition of this term and related research work will be described below.

2.2.1 Definitions of BELF

The concept of 'BELF' (Business English as a Lingua Franca or Business ELF) was introduced by Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, and Kankaanranta (2005) in the study of ELF used by business professionals from multicultural and different linguistic backgrounds in their business activities; they define BELF by indicating a clear understanding of what it is and who is using it:

BELF refers to English used as a 'neutral' and shared communication code. BELF is neutral in the sense that none of the speakers can claim it as her/his mother tongue; it is shared in the sense that it is used for conducting business within the global business discourse community, whose members are BELF users and communicators in their own right – not 'non-native speakers' or 'learners'. (2005: 403-4)

Even though it was originally known as Business English as a Lingua Franca or a Lingua Franca in business contexts, it is later referred to as English as a Business Lingua Franca (EBLF) due to its clearer emphasized concept or function; its new focus is more characterized by the domain of English use in business ELF communication rather than the specific type of English (Kankaanranta &

Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Furthermore, Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen (2018) recently emphasize the connotation of the 'B' in the concept of BELF in that it is business knowledge which makes similar sense of Wenger's (1998) dimensions of a community of practice where mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire are needed in business communication. That is, BELF seems to be focused more on the language itself whereas EBLF is the developed idea of BELF to be used as a social practice in a business context where English is included in such communication to achieve the communicative success differently in particular authentic situations that multilingual and multicultural backgrounds of interlocutors involved.

Moreover, BELF is owned by nobody, but it can be shared and 'is used in the business discourse community' (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2006: 31-34). Its users take English for granted in their business communication; they use it to get the job done by avoiding misunderstanding and making communication successful although it sometimes includes 'nonstandard' usage (Pullin, 2010). The model of ENL does not necessarily predominate over the language used by NNSs. It is even suggested that NSs should learn how to accommodate with non-native speaking business practitioners on international business operations (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). To master grammatically correct English is not the ultimate goal of BELF speakers in global business communication, but rather to achieve communicative success through business knowledge and shared norms and strategies (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Additionally, it is not only the ability to use English that achieves successful business communication, it is also supported by business knowledge. Kankaanranta & Planken (2010: 399) assert that "Competence in BELF, that is, expertise in the use of English in the business domain and knowledge of how it can serve business goals best, was compared to the ability to use the computer: you could not do your work without it in today's international workplace". This is confirmed by Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta (2012) in that "BELF is business communication via ELF, and being a competent BELF speaker involves knowing how to do business via ELF, and the two cannot be separated" (p.137).

That is to say, though BELF seems to be a language used in a business ELF context, it clearly functions as a social practice (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018a), not a particular type of English. This social practice can be inferred that BELF or what is currently called EBLF is a key element in a business community of practice bringing into mutual understanding by sharing similar concepts or repertoires in successful business communication in the same sense of a particular community of practice (see Wenger, 1998). Its users create their own ways of communication where no interactants claims this linguistic practice as his or hers, and also no parties needs to completely

follow their interlocutor's fixed language norms. Besides, the EBLF which is still consistently called BELF in this thesis is determined as a multilingual practice (see Cogo, 2018; Jenkins, 2015b) in business communication as English used is one of languages employed by the interactants bringing into the communicative success among them. Also, BELF is a more well-known, widely used and 'pronounceable' label undeniably. All in all, the mutual goal of the BELF communication is business achievement as well as rapport building and maintaining where the use of BELF is necessarily included.

2.2.2 Previous research on BELF

The interest in BELF has been initiated in European countries as we can see the definition was first proposed by researchers in Finland (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Its use among NNSs had been found (e.g. Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999; Rogerson-Revell, 2008) before the term 'BELF' was introduced, and it has been applied in various disciplines such as business or management communications and English for specific purposes (Takino, 2016). This section will exemplify some research on BELF communication in European environments as the research trend is widely blooming in the region. Then I will narrow the focus to the Thai setting where the present investigation takes place; however, more research is necessary in this setting so that a clearer picture of how important BELF is can be gained.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010) reveal their study of professionals' perceptions of daily English use in international interactions occurring at Finland-based companies; most of the respondents are Finnish and western European. The informants revealed through their use of English in a business context that grammar was less essential than knowledge of business. They would use more simplified language with their business partners when it seemed like their interlocutors had limited skills and did not understand them, although misunderstandings seemed not to happen often. Moreover, the participants perceived that both of their first languages and English were necessary for their work. Knowing the interlocutors' first language, national cultures, as well as organizational roles, was highly beneficial in constructing rapport with them. More importantly, their successful BELF interactions succeeded in achieving their goal by utilizing pragmatic strategies based on shared concepts of BELF competence, and business know-how.

In addition, Kankaanranta and Planken (2010) affirm their research findings from European business professionals regarding the perceptions of communication through BELF use and achievement in international communication success in multinational corporations (MNCs). It was found that the employees perceived the characteristics of BELF as consisting of language that is simplified,

hybridized and dynamic. Most BELF interactions take place with NNSs from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds (see also Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013), hence its competence was mainly focused on clarity of content-based accuracy whereas linguistic correctness was not the prime concern. Specifically, vocabulary and genre were more important in light of business knowledge. Also, it is suggested by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) that BELF is a tool to convey messages so as to achieve a specific goal, while at the same time maintaining the importance of building rapport. That is, a better business relationship helps BELF communicators communicate more easily and is likely to be effective in business communicative circumstances.

Furthermore, Ehrenreich (2010) investigates perceptions of upper management at a German multinational corporation (MNC) regarding English and other languages roles. English was a 'must' language to be used by all staff at all levels, however, the participants perceived that conformity with standard English was mostly irrelevant to their authentic use. Both NSs and NNSs had to handle diversity occurring in the company, and were aware of business community of practice when English was exploited so as to facilitate optimum communicative effectiveness. Interestingly, the BELF communicators also paid attention to other languages apart from English since the other languages were considered as meaningful pragmatic and strategic resources in the interactions; all the languages were valuable in different contexts establishing successful business transactions.

In 2013, Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen report the findings from the projects conducted at their university in Finland during 2000-2009 investigating language and communication practices of international business professionals. There are three points discovered from the results of the merger project that are interesting from a BELF aspect. ELF was chosen at work by both the Finnish and the Swedish business professionals in order to reach a successful outcome or to get the job done in the business domain, while their first languages were needed in daily-life communication depending on speakers' preferences and who their interlocutors were. Besides, the participants perceived English as neutral because it was none of the interactants' mother tongue. Lastly, it is found that their BELF use also noticeably reflected their linguistic and cultural backgrounds in interactions. In another project called 'the knowhow project', BELF competence is revealed as an essential tool in doing business; its context-specific and dynamic nature enables users to manipulate knowledge and skills to build rapport and get the job done. Furthermore, multilingualism is noticed in the quality of BELF indicating that individual cultural backgrounds embedded in the BELF users nowadays are involved in the business communication through English.

To shed more light on strategies used, there are related studies previously conducted (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2008; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Marra, 2014). Some are applicable to written BELF which is the main concern of this study, and these are selected and elucidated below.

Marra (2014) conducts research in a company in Sweden aiming at exploring the use of NNS's communicative strategies (CSs) in coping with a conversational breakdown and pre-emptive measures preventing misunderstanding or non-understanding in telephone negotiations. The clarity strategy is required when there is a need for further clarification to meet shared understanding and to get the job done which is the quintessence of business interactions. Additionally, repetitions are a pre-empting strategy maintaining successful interactions (Cogo, 2009) although misunderstandings in ELF and BELF contexts rarely occur (e.g. Charles, 2007; Cogo, 2009; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Rogerson-Revell, 2008). Rogerson-Revell (2010) presents her investigation on the role of speech accommodation by both NSs and NNSs in international business interactions building on the previous survey studying the English use in MNC meetings in a particular European organization (see Rogerson-Revell, 2007). The data illustrate an awareness of the need for accommodation and accommodation strategies to deal with linguistic differences and difficulties. The responses from both parties indicate the awareness of multilingual and multicultural communicators in such international meetings. They attempted to understand, guessed the meanings of some utterances, and prioritised overall mutual understanding – this is how they used normalization strategies to cope with different levels of linguistic competence and sociocultural backgrounds. This study concludes that not only the NNSs but also the NSs need to be aware of and to adjust their use of language to accommodate to the international interlocutors. As a result, it is clear that a two-way consideration of conversationalists in lingua franca contexts will enhance successful accommodation in international business communication settings.

Alsagoff (2010) explains that the nature of English in Singapore is divided by its users' sociocultural orientations into two perspectives: global and local. The Singaporean model of English use is significant in four aspects: alignment of functional complementarity, representation of a linguacultural resource used to vary the style of identity and communicative purpose, representation of multicultural and multiethnic Singaporean, and embrace of their own wider linguistic ownership called 'Singlish'. Similar to Nair-Venugopol's (2000) study, the findings clarify codes and styles of choice occurring in two Malaysian business companies. It is found that Malaysian English was unmarked in Malaysian business: the most commonly spoken language in these settings comprises the code-mixing of English and Malay, and the code-switching into Malay. So, their own

social and cultural identities played a crucial role in their notions of corporate language and communication in business environments as same as in the case with most of the Japanese, the Korean and the Chinese workers in Harzing & Pudelko's (2013) study.

Based on the research above, it can be summarized that business communicators prefer simplified English to be used in business environments because they avoid misunderstandings which might be related to linguistic and sociocultural differences from individuals' backgrounds and cause communication breakdowns. In a shared business context, the interactants focused more on how they dealt with business-related matters effectively through BELF competence rather than on the linguistic forms of ENL. BELF users should be aware of business contextual knowledge, create good relationships and make them last in order to maintain business success with their business counterparts, meaning intellectually manage business situations with skills and strategies leading to business communicative achievement. The communicators employed many strategies to accommodate their interactions to co-create mutual understanding without concerns about interlocutors' superior or inferior language competence. Moreover, it is obvious that NNSs outnumber NSs in globalized business interactions (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Such strategies as code-switching and code-mixing strategies are important aspects of successful business interactions. The most crucial need is to get the message across and get the job done - thus they should also pay attention to is multicultural factors including pragmatic strategies, rather than the ENL standard or native-like linguistic accuracy. It can be said that the ways to gain mutual understanding and to accommodate to intercultural interlocutors are similar to those found in line with general ELF research as BELF is considered underneath the umbrella of an ELF approach.

2.2.3 Successful BELF communication

There are several communicative features or components to be considered in order to boost BELF communication. Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) propose that the use of BELF is context-based with three important features: simplified English, specialized vocabulary and genres in the field of expertise, and reflection of the interactants' mother tongue discourse practices. These proposed components are in line with Ehrenreich's (2016) elements to be taken into account on success in constructing business communication through BELF. She proposes three essential components generating English as a communicative resource in global business contexts. Firstly, all kinds of English used by both NSs and NNSs are considered as a base of communicative language, which is similar to the idea proposed by Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, (2012) in that they accept different kinds of English in the business communication. The second component is domain-specific factors that the requirements are constructed in business communicative interactions; it is

the same as in Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta's (2012) feature indicating the importance of expertise in a particular domain, business. The last element is the lingua franca mode with the focus on English use in communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

In addition, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011) propose an additional three factors considered important in successful communication in international business: directness, clarity and politeness. These three elements do not directly involve lexical and syntactical aspects, but they indicate levels of sociolinguistic competence carefully employed by effective communicators. Directness means to make the point without wasting the interlocutors' time with unrelated or redundant content. Clarity is the ability to simplify or repeat subject matter so as to make sure of clear communication between interactants. The last one, politeness, is based on the selection of appropriate linguistic choices and behaviors when dealing with people from different linguacultural backgrounds. Politeness "reflects a strong orientation to people" and it is "the lubricant of social relationships" (ibid: 26). However, what will be the most important to assure a professionally global business amongst the three features depends on situations and contexts regarding multilingual and multicultural interlocutors' preferences in specific instances – no fixed criteria or the best chosen feature fits in all circumstances at all times.

In contrast, Gerritsen & Nickerson (2009) have summarized the three causes of unsuccessful BELF transactions based on previous studies due to the communicators' different cultural discourse strategies and the knowledge and skills of the language: lack of comprehensibility, cultural differences, and stereotyped associations. Lack of comprehensibility means that messages are misinterpreted; this is because either senders or receivers are influenced by their knowledge of their native languages leading to sticking in their understandings of the familiar environments, while another or other parties are not able to construe the intended messages. That is, lexico-grammatical differences in BELF encounters might be the main cause of this problem. Second, cultural differences lie in communication strategies in accordance with multicultural and multilingual encounters. People possibly interact with others by using different socio-cultural norms influenced by their own language and culture even if they communicate in another language, not their mother tongue, in a multilingual environment. Also, directness, politeness and pragmatic strategies are differently used by people from multicultural contexts. Finally, the last factor is stereotyped associations. Most of all (B)ELF speakers come from different first languages and cultures; they certainly have their own specific identities. One's own prejudices and cultural assumptions or individuality might interfere in their communicative practices leading to miscommunication.

In summary, the information presented above suggests various concerns to be taken into consideration when communicating successfully through BELF. Although the three causes of communication failure, as perceived by Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009), are potentially common in (B)ELF interactions, other research suggests that they are ones that successful interactants frequently encounter and deal with. Besides, competent BELF users have both knowledge and skills to be applied in a dynamic process based on various contexts with the aims of getting the job done as well as building rapport (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). That is to say, all of the mentioned issues are involved in and utilized differently depending on individuality. Different language(s) and the cultures will not typically cause communication breakdown because BELF communicators are aware of this multilingual and multicultural communication and have a positive approach to it. They also apply appropriate pragmatic strategies to eventually handle any issues in intercultural communication; many of the negative issues in intercultural communication seem not to be problematic in BELF interactions.

2.3 ELF and BELF in Thailand

Before discussing ELF and BELF in Thailand in more detail it may be helpful to provide a brief background on English in Thailand. Thailand has never been colonized by European countries or America (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005), so the Thai language, so-called 'Standard Thai', has its own strength as it is the only one national official language. Although dialects are used in different regions over the country, the 'Standard Thai' is mandatory considered the central dialect in communication by the citizen. English has never become the official national language, but it is considered as one of the foreign languages in the national education system (Darasawang, 2007). In 1921, the English language took on an important role in formal education as a compulsory subject in all government school curriculum (Baker, 2012; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015). At that time, English was more likely to be considered as a subject rather than a means of communication, whereas in recent times it has become a medium of communication (Baker, 2012). Turning into one of the means of communication, English is increasingly becoming more important in Thai education, including in the field of business (Boode, 2005). Among many different foreign languages, English was the first preference because it played a crucial role in professional development and careers as well as in the fast-growing tourism industry and foreign investment in the 1980s (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011)). Moreover, it is the foreign language commonly taught as it is an entry or exit fundamental for universities in the country (see Wiriyachitra, 2002).

2.3.1 ASEAN policy of English language

Thailand pays much attention to English due to the fact that this relates to the cooperation among the countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed in 1967 of which Thailand is one of the ten members. English is treated as a contact language in this association as stated in the Article 34 of the Charter that, "The working language of ASEAN shall be English" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008: 29). The awareness of promoting the use of English in education and workplace is clearly mentioned in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint in the Roadmap for ASEAN Community 2009-2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009: 69) as stated that "support the citizens of Member States to become proficient in the English language, so that the citizens of ASEAN region are able to communicate directly with one another and participate in the broader international community" and "promote the use of English as an international business language at the work place". As Kirkpatrick (2010: xi), in addition, points out, "The lingua franca role of English, coupled with its status as the official language of ASEAN, has important implications for language policy and language education". In an agreement with Baker and Jarunthawatchai (2017), English is mainly used among multilingual communicators in ASEAN countries as a working language in ASEAN. English is, therefore, inevitably used in various circumstances in Thailand such as education at all levels, international organizations, business transactions, tourism and media in order for Thailand to be connected with ASEAN partners (Baker, 2012; 2015).

2.3.2 Perceptions and studies of ELF and BELF in Thailand

The EFL perspective, which its users are deemed to follow or imitate NSs norms as English learners and is completely different from ELF, has been promoted in the Thai educational system for many years (e.g. Darasawang, 2007; Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015). It was originally influenced by the western powers, especially of the US and the UK, in the Southeast Asian countries. However, attitudes of Thai people towards English are gradually changing from conforming to the language norms of NSs as in an ENL approach to the more tolerant and flexible approach of ELF.

Particularly, English is used in Thai social practices with the majority of non-native interactants (Foley, 2005). Ploywattanawong and Trakulkasemsuk (2014) conducted a survey of Thai graduate students studying at a university in Thailand and majoring in diverse fields relating to the most highly demanded jobs in ASEAN. The participants reported on perceptions of their own familiarity with the use of ELF in the ASEAN context, grammatical features in particular, in terms of acceptability and understandability. The overall results show that they accepted their use of the language at an

average level – not good or bad. In terms of understandability, they said that non-native grammatical traits had a high degree of understandability. In addition, Trakulkasemsuk's (2015) survey of English use by typical Thai educated English users in Bangkok, uncovers more tendency of ELF use than EFL. With the authentic and sufficient exposure to the use of English in daily life by the participants from various professions, the findings show that the role of English is a means of communication and the respondents found that NSs seem to be minority whom they contacted from their experiences, so a specific variety of English like NS norms are not meaningful to them whereas only mutual understanding does. Thus, Trakulkasemsuk suggested from the results of her study that instead of putting much effort on teaching the language accuracy, communication strategies are more looked forward to as they encourage how to construct intelligibility and raising awareness of intercultural differences leading to successful communication amongst different lingua cultural interlocutors.

Similarly, Rattanaphumma's (2013) study reveals that Thai students employed specific communication strategies in order to achieve their own understanding. They used English to get messages across, did not pay much attention to grammatically correct English with native-like accents or norms, were aware of mutual understanding, and maintained their own English to express their cultural identity. Kongkerd (2013) also claims that focusing too much on native speakers' norms in pronunciation and grammar is ineffective because it may not enhance learners' motivation and confidence in speaking English. Supported by Boonsuk (2015), his study is focused on the construction of nativeness in English language teaching in a Thai university perceived by Thai university students, teachers, and program administrators. It is found that from the participants' perception whether the teachers are NSs or NNSs, this factor does not reflect their effectiveness in teaching English. Rather, what is worth evaluating are the teachers' personal and pedagogical characteristics, cultural sensitivity, and linguistic and professional characteristics. This could infer that NSs norms in all aspects are not the main goal of the Thai learners of English. In other words, they did not stick to such ENL practices but instead were more focused on being able to communicate effectively with others. These perceptions and practices are declared in an aspect of ELF where the English is considered as a tool to communicate successfully and no specific groups of people own the language (see Jenkins, 2006).

In relation to use of pragmatic strategies, Jaroensuk (2018) reveals the touristic ELF encounters between Thai locals and international tourists in her study. There are two main categories of the strategies found useful in this spoken interaction: self-initiated and other-initiated. Nevertheless, the strategies used in this kind of a brief and quick interaction differ from those discovered in empirical

studies of academic and business ELF in that the participants strived for successful communication through the strategies and spent less time and effort to negotiate meanings and/or to deal with non-understandings.

These examples suggest that the Thai users of English do not put much effort into conforming to a native-like model of English use, but more importantly, they are more flexible and adaptable with emerging features of fluid varieties of the language and mutual intelligibility – the nature of ELF. Imitating the ideal ENL notion seems not to be meaningful to the Thai students; it is not vital for them, rather it might discourage their practices of using the language to express their own identity (see also Boonsuk, 2015). They preferred to construct their English communication in their own ways, of which mutual understanding was the goal, and independently selected appropriate strategies to help them achieve intercultural communication. The aforementioned studies derived from the participants' perceptions of ELF in general. Turning the focus to empirical studies specifically in ELF occurring in business settings or BELF in Thailand, it has to be recognized that this is still a small field of research in the country. There are not many studies pinpointing written BELF, but at least the following studies which mostly focus on spoken discourse will shed some light on authentic ELF encounters occurring in the business environment in Thailand.

Rajprasit and Hemchua (2015) explore perceptions of English of Thai engineers working in international companies in Bangkok metropolitan areas. The up-to-ten-year working experienced participants confirm that intelligibility is more important than using perfect English in their professions achieving communicative success. It is in line with Louhiala-Salminen et al.'s (2005) concept of BELF that English is a communicative tool where none of the users own the language as their L1, but it is a shared code used by communicators in their own right in conducting successful business.

Nevertheless, there are some studies showing nativized inclination; confidence comes with the ability to conform NSs norms. In Boode's (2005) study, the Thai employees in the MNC preferred to keep quiet when they feared losing face by making linguistic mistakes though they had some ideas to share in the meetings or communicative interactions. This is in line with Kongkerd's (2013) data in that if someone is expected to follow NSs norms, he/she may lose confidence in English communication in his/her own way constructing individual identity. The speakers cared much about their own face, in this case, thinking that it was better not to say anything rather than making themselves look foolish by being ungrammatical English users. Additionally, the Thai engineers in Hart-Rawang and Li's (2008) investigation pretended that they understood what was said by the foreign colleagues by nodding head or saying 'yes' instead of asking for clarification even though

non-understanding occurred. This is because they did not want their interlocutors to lose face, and it later caused misunderstandings due to cultural differences and practices. That is, the concern of losing face (Archer, 2017; Goffman, 1967), which has a link to the concept of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), is significantly considered by Thai speakers of English in business interactions whether they are message senders or receivers.

Moreover, in a sense of politeness, some typical Thai cultural traits appear problematic in international business interactions where Thais are involved as Thais have a strong sense of seniority and hierarchy (Kantabutra, 2018). For example, the Thai subordinates in Sriussadaporn's (2006) study were likely to entirely agree with their bosses although they had different opinions. It is because they avoided arguing with the superiors. It is commonly considered inappropriate in a Thai culture when an inferior disputes with a superior (see also Chaidaroon, 2003; Darasawang, Reinders, & Waters, 2015). Interestingly in the recent study, Kantabutra (2018) has revealed that her Thai participants promptly contested with superiors in their international business interactions once they disagreed with another party holding higher positions. The participants, Thai business professionals, and Asian business partners carried out their verbal meetings in BELF. They exploited shared content knowledge, professional expertise, specific lexis altogether with a wide range of pragmatic strategies in order to reach successful communication. The findings confirm that the English used is a shared resource and not based on the ENL model; the participants paid attention to intercultural sensitivity and multicultural competence. This illustrates the gradual change concerning perceptions of seniority and hierarchy, more importantly, her participants show how they genuinely performed in the intercultural business communication which more effort was put into the communicative achievement by using BELF with a variety of pragmatic strategies. That is to say, English is only a medium of the business communication, not a core part indicating achievement of the interactions.

Regarding the point of multicultural competence (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011), it is an important factor leading to successful intercultural communication. Baker (2011), specifically in relation to Thailand and based on data from Thai users of English, suggests that linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary, grammar according to native speakers' norms are not sufficient to achieve successful communication, but contexts and cultures of multilingual and multicultural interlocutors are also crucial. In the same line with Kongkerd (2013), it is recommended that Thai learners of English should gain knowledge of intercultural competence in order to avoid misunderstanding from cultural differences. In the empirical study of Thai undergraduate students majoring in English by Baker (2009), the results show a positive relationship between English used for intercultural communication and ICA. More experiences of intercultural communication drive communicators

more successful communication with a higher degree of ICA. Supported by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), BELF users should be encouraged to consider multicultural competence as effective multinational business communication, and multilingualism is also promoted in successful business interactions (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018b).

To clarify the context of this study, not only ELF and BELF are involved in, but also the medium of conveying messages – email interactions. The next section will explain email communication and provide some previous studies relating to this investigation.

2.4 Background of Electronic Mail (Email)

Email or electronic mail falls under the broader term of text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC). CMC is extensively well-known in the field of digital communication (e.g. Santoro, 1995; Herring, 2004; Soler, 2013). It is direct human-to-human communication in which computer applications are encompassed virtually; computer systems are developed to send and receive data for human purposes such as email, group conferencing systems and interactive chat systems (Santoro, 1995). This kind of interaction involves people mediated by tools that transmit information in digital form over the internet via a variety of communicative devices such as desktop computers, laptops, notebooks, tablets and smartphones on various media. It can be categorized into two groups: synchronous and asynchronous (Tagg, 2015). Synchronous technology happens in real-time and requires simultaneous participation, on the other hand, an asynchronous mode does not need the simultaneous responses from the interactants; delayed interactions can be found to take place (Warschauer, 2001; Johnson, 2006). A synchronous CMC mode such as chat is composed and sent right away, similar to turns in spoken exchanges (Herring, 2010), whereas an asynchronous mode such as email provide communicators with more time to compose and reply than oral speech (Vinagre, 2008).

In the 1980s, ordinary people began to use emails, and by the 1990s emails became the Internet's most popular service (Warschauer, 1995 cited in Greenfield, 2001). It is an online letter composed and sent from a human computer user to another one, and the recipients have time and alternatives to immediately read it once they receive an email, discard it, reply to the sender, save it, print it or even forward it to another person online (Santoro, 1995). By knowing recipients' email addresses, the online letters – emails, can be processed from one computer user to another or others immediately. Since email is asynchronous human communication, the recipients do not need to be online simultaneously. Participants have time to compose and think about what and how to reply like those of traditional letters due to its asynchronicity, and this helps decrease the pressure of

face-to-face encounters because the interactants can take their time constructing their thoughts (Gonglewsky et al., 2001) and employing critical reflection. Sent emails will appear in the recipient's mailbox instantaneously after the sender presses the 'send' button, and they will be ready to be dealt with whenever it is convenient for the recipient to respond to the emails.

Email is processed like the postal system, but it reduces transaction time into seconds, even if the participants are far away on the other side of the world. It is a popular means of communication replacing postal mails and international phone calls since it is much cheaper, more convenient and easy to communicate, especially in international and intercultural communication circumstances (Ren, 2016a). Tagg (2015) adds that it is widely used in this digital age, and people decide to communicate through written conversation far more than ever before; it can be used instead of telephone calls in many social situations and professional environments because of its ease and convenience of use. Only Internet access is necessary, and there is no need to pay for any additional fee by communicating via email. As it is a written form of communication and it can be more detailed than conversing on phone (Shea, 1994), it can be used as a record, and automatically stored in the recipient's email program so that it can be recalled any time for the information. Not only text messages can be transmitted, but all kinds of information such as pictures, audio, graphs and videos can be attached to the message (Vinagre, 2008).

Originally from the military use and then in academic contexts, email communication later became a common form of written communication in business. It is used in both classifications of internal- and external-written communication among people who are colleagues, customers, contractors and others who are not working for the company (Rush, 2017). In addition, in international business communication where English is considered as the 'common language' (Poncini, 2004) and 'lingua franca' in spoken and written discourses (Evans, 2013), both native and non-native English speakers are involved in business communication. In Kankaanranta and Planken's (2010) study, the participants in their study who are employees in western European multinational companies (MNCs), tend to use English more than their own native languages in email messages. Likewise, professionals in Hong Kong participating in Evans's (2013) study reveal that they use English-based communication in their email exchanges among themselves in service industries.

The growing use of email is comparatively high. Statistically, the trend of using email in business is increasing (*Email Statistics Report, 2019-2023*, 2019) in that nearly 3.9 billion worldwide email users employ email accounts, and it is expected to grow over 4.3 billion by the end of 2023. In terms of business email transactions daily, the estimated number is over 293 billion in 2019 and continuously reaching over 347 billion emails by the end of 2023 (*ibid.*, 2019). The statistics mentioned can

confirm that up until now the tendency of email use is still increasing at a high rate. For this reason, more detailed information about the use of email, especially in effective intercultural communication, which is the focus of this study, needs to be further studied. The following sections will reveal linguistic features found in emails and previous investigations in relation to pragmatics and politeness in the authentic email exchanges in intercultural communication contexts.

2.5 Linguistic Features

As a means of computer-mediated communication (CMC), email is a written conversation in which writers also create or manipulate messages with paralinguistic features so as to let their recipients understand intentional feelings or expressions attached in the emails. Definitely, this written mode lacks promptly verbal response as in face-to-face interactions possibly causing misunderstanding or offence, so non-verbally supporting cues can be added expressing or emphasizing contents of emails (Pavan, 2019). There are various features that can be used to suit different contexts (Thurlow, 2003) such as contractions, shortenings, letter/number homophone, emoticon, creative spelling, excessive use of punctuation, capitalization, opening and closing, etc. (e.g. Dresner & Herring, 2010; Kadir, Maros, & Hamid, 2013; Rebecca & Oppenheim, 2002; Vandergriff, 2013).

Functions of these features vary depending on users' intentions and interpretations. Generally, by employing such paralinguistic features, it is hoped that recipients will be able to comprehend the meanings. Thurlow (2003) argues that the use of paralinguistic elements in written communication is the way to replace the absence of body language happening in physical face-to-face communication. Meanwhile, Anis (2007) asserts that the features have pragmatic functions of reflecting common human characteristics. Rebecca and Oppenheim (2002) claim that they are differently used to explicitly display emotions, to make it easier because of the laziness of expressing things, to save time on typing, to emphasize contents, and even to be a sign of informality.

As a method of conveying or expressing emotions in CMC, emoticons are of interest to many researchers (e.g. Dresner & Herring, 2010; Jibril & Abdullah, 2013; Petrie, 1999; Rebecca & Oppenheim, 2002; Sakai, 2013; Vandergriff, 2013). Jibril and Abdullah (2013) confirm that an emoticon itself can contribute particular meaning as socio-emotional suppliers to the CMC, not only compensatory to language. Sakai (2013) further explains the use of emoticons in Japanese mobile phone emails that they are placed at the end of sentences working as closure devices aiming at adding the extra-textual feature to messages indicating some feelings or implications.

In addition, Thompsen (1996) and Krohn (2004) argue that emoticons are useful in some cases as they mitigate perceptions of flaming, and they are normally used among the younger generations without the intention and perception of flaming. Dresner and Herring (2010) clarify how emoticons function in CMC in three possible ways. The emoticons work as direct emotion indicators showing feelings like happy or sad, indicators of non-emotional meanings – mapped conventionally onto facial expressions such as a wink showing joking intent, and illocutionary force indicators that do not map onto facial expression such as a smile downgrading a complaint. Furthermore, emoticons can mitigate or aggravate disagreements in communication that affect politeness in communication concerning face-saving (Vandergriff, 2013).

In contrast, many scholars disagree that such linguistic features enhance meanings, rather they believe the use of the features inappropriate, causing miscommunication or conflict among communicators or so-called 'flames' (Landry, 2000; Baruch, 2005). For instance, all capital letters in email messages demonstrate screaming, large bold font in uppercase seems aggressive, red letters illustrate swearing, as well as emoticons and acronyms, are inappropriate (Extejt, 1998; Cleary and Freeman, 2005; Turnage, 2008). It is suggested that these linguistic features are gradually becoming utilized in almost all forms of CMC interactions (Jibril & Abdullah, 2013) including emails. Moreover, they have crucial effects of enhancing and also challenging relationships (Vandergriff, 2013). Turnage (2008) reports her survey of university students' responses to actual emails scaling the variables of flaming determinants. It is found that there are six items likely to be the main causes of conflict in email exchanges: hostility, aggression, intimidation, insults, offensive language or tone, and unfriendliness. Moreover, insufficient mitigation, omission of greeting and/or closing, and omission of deference using the appropriate form of address tend to lead to perceived impoliteness (Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Therefore, it should be taken into consideration how to construct proper email messages in aspects of creativity and politeness as they are creatively formed somehow against the conventional standard of formal writing (Rebecca & Oppenheim, 2002)

2.6 Previous Studies on Email Exchanges

Research regarding email exchanges has been conducted in numerous areas over the world, but the information in this section specifically concerns previous studies in email communication conducted in relation to pragmatics and politeness. They are classified into two distinct groups based on the contexts: academia and business because both of these areas have a link to this investigation. The research site is an educational institute where the participants had communication via email exchanges among academic staff between university workers themselves, and/or the staff and

students. From this point of view, these email exchanges are considered 'academic'. On the other hand, the significant feature of the email users is that they are in need of knowledge and skills of what was being discussed such as work-related lexis and they aimed to achieve a successful outcome strategically and successfully, which relates to 'BELF competence' (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013); the emails are their 'business'. That is to say, the emails, in this case, are allocated in the category of business mainly due to the goal of the interactions whereas the setting is an academic environment.

2.6.1 Email exchanges in academic contexts

Previous studies on pragmatics and politeness in emails used among people in educational institutes are exemplified in this section (e.g. Bulut & Rabab'ah, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012; Pan, 2012; Soler, 2013; Wei-Kong Ko et al., 2015). There are a number of investigations comparing NSs and NNSs' performances in emails. Ford (2006) investigates the pragmatic features employed by native English-speaking students and international students making email requests in an academic mode. There were great differences between the email requests from international participants and those from native speaker peers; the NNSs produced overly polite messages compared to NSs giving the requests with low perlocutionary effect. He also suggests that pragmatic features of emails are teachable to NNSs so that they can create emails with a positive effect on the perlocution, and contain explicit structural features and pragmatic features. Bulut & Rabab'ah's (2007) study of the email communication between Saudi female graduate students and non-Saudi male professors at a Saudi university shows that the students prefer using positive politeness strategies in their requests from their professors; the students were direct and explicit in the requests. However, they tend to use negative politeness-oriented addresses in the openings of the messages making the emails more formal.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) identifies the importance of appropriateness of email requests written in English by Greek-Cypriot university students to the faculty focusing on the degree of directness and forms of address through the professors', as recipients, perspectives. The data were authentic email interactions requesting for information and action in an academic setting. The findings show that non-native speaking students were more likely to employ direct strategies that relate to pragmatic infelicities. Additionally, Soler (2013) reveals the result of her study regarding a degree of directness and mitigation in requestive emails by British English speakers and international English speakers. It was found that both groups frequently rely on direct requests, and the international speakers tended to use direct strategies more often than the British partners. In contrast with Pan's (2012) study, both American English native students and Chinese learners of

English tended to be indirect when making request email messages to their professors. This also confirms the findings in Sabater et al.'s (2008) research emphasizing the use of formality in email communication in an academic context that non-native writers are more formal in one-to-one communication – indirect strategies were preferred. They claim that it is possible because of their linguistically insecure feelings.

Panina and Kroumova (2015) address the impact of culture-based communication styles on e-communication, email in particular. Among the American, Japanese and Jordanian undergraduate students attending US universities, the Japanese and the Jordanians are considered from high-context cultures whereas the Americans are from a low-context culture. The results of the study indicate that emails written by the low-context writers are relatively longer, clearer, less polite and direct, while the high-context communicators, on the other hand, rely more on cultural context rather than the content of the message to preserve harmony and maintaining their own face and their interlocutors'.

For the study conducted with the emphasis on formality, politeness and directness, Chen (2001) reports cross-cultural communication made by Taiwanese and American students to professors in email exchanges emphasizing institutional requests. The results of the study show that both groups used the opening and closing email textual features, in relation to politeness, in different ways with different functions. The Taiwanese participants intended to use formal opening-closing addresses to show deference politeness, while the American students used first names or last names to address professors to show either solidarity or deference politeness. The formality depended on social distance with their professors; the distance variables determined which ones to be selected when making requests.

Wei-Kong Ko et al. (2015) study the pragmatic development of non-native-English speaking students in request emails. They claim that there is not much pragmatic development in frequency and types of strategies, but the students employ a more deferential style in the opening and closing of their emails compared to their native peers. This phenomenon reflects their own cultural values in linguistic and pragmatic choices, moreover, the higher power distance between faculty and students in most of the Asian countries reflects their sociocultural values in linguistic choices (ibid., 2015).

Nevertheless, shifted to an interest of pragmatics or politeness in emails in an ELF setting, research works in ELF are in a different line from the studies mentioned above regardless particular national cultural issues. They are not aimed to determine or predict the same or fixed ways that people indicate or practice with particular cultural groups. Moreover, there are not many studies focusing on these concerns in ELF via the written communication these days (Ren, 2016a).

Ren's (2016b) study is one of the pieces evidently conducting in this field informing the findings that the Chinese university students employed different strategies when encountering misunderstanding in ELF emails. The inquiring English emails in his study are interacted between the students and their interlocutors whose L1 could be either same or different from theirs, asking about program information, financial disputes, appointments, help and daily-life conversation. The participants signalled understanding problems right away by using 'metalinguistic comments' and 'focused questions' strategies. The 'building shared knowledge and common ground' and 'confirmation checks' strategies appeared as pre-emptive strategies ensuring the success of communication in order to avoid the occurrence of misunderstandings. The participants particularly selected strategies differently in situations where individuality was the prime concern; they were not stuck with the interlocutors' national cultures, but flexible and adjustable based on the case-by-case basis.

It seems like many studies on emails in academic settings in the past conducted with an essentialist embrace where national cultures are the main concerns. They are more likely to compare specific groups' use of pragmatic strategies and/or politeness, especially in particular cultural practices of NSs and NNSs, whereas this research is not included in such perspective. To be clearer, this piece of study aims to investigate pragmatic strategies and politeness used by (B)ELF users in a non-essentialist aspect. In the next section, a context of business is introduced and a more variety of findings are observed comparing to the studies in the academic setting.

2.6.2 Email exchanges in business contexts

In a business atmosphere, email is considered as the most-used means of communication for multinational companies (MNCs) (Shachaf, 2005). The research mentioned below elucidates previous papers detailing related issues to the focus of this study in the context of email communication among people from multicultural and multilingual backgrounds working in organizational environments conducting business transactions.

Kankaanranta (2006) surveys internal English email exchanges in making requests between Finnish and Swedish employees at a multinational company (MNC). Although English is not the participants' L1, it works as a shared language in this case called 'business English as a lingua franca' or 'BELF' (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007, 2013; Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Interestingly, their native languages of the participants in Kankaanranta's (2006) study were also exhibited in the English email interactions; their own cultural identity was to some extent presented in the interactions. Moreover, it is obvious that ungrammatically perfect English was not the main cause of misunderstandings or communication breakdowns; the participants could eventually construct

successful interactions with the occurrence of non-standard English in emails. Additionally, in order to create a good relationship between interlocutors, she recommends to better apply the strategy of making an apology when making a late reply, although a late response is never preferred by any email communicators. Millot's (2017) study also reinforces the idea that correct English grammar is not the priority in business email interactions. The analysis of 400 emails exchanged by 14 French professionals in English communication in their jobs unveils that the lack of English proficiency could be compensated by the use of a professional voice which indicates a powerful form of knowledge in the specific field and of corporate voices where the participants strategically co-constructed the effective communication. Some emergent expressions were newly created by the email interactants using the professional voice and were expressed between the parties.

In terms of linguistic features, Skovholt et al.'s (2014) study shows that emoticons function meaningfully in email communication in the corpus of 1606 email messages from three different Nordic companies where Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish and English languages is counted in the study. There are three functions of the emoticons used in the emails discovered in their study: signaling positive attitude when used with signatures, being joke/irony markers, and being unidentified hedges. Within these, the last function seems to be complicated and more important in that the emoticons can either soften speech acts which are threatening to the recipient's negative face (or face-threatening acts) or strengthen positive feelings of thanks, greetings, wishes, and appraisals. In other words, emoticons build better interpersonal relations in the workplace, create solidarity as well as informality, thus decreasing distance between the email users.

Another element to be concerned about conducting successful email interactions is pragmatic strategies. Ren (2016a) presents pragmatic strategies found in authentic emails by Chinese-English bilingual professionals in different professions. He points out different strategies to prevent miscommunication from occurring and also to solve misunderstandings. They are 'metalinguistic comments' used when noticing a possible misunderstanding, 'providing local knowledge and building common ground' used when anticipating some topics which might cause problems in understanding, acknowledging 'confirmation checks' so as to see if the understating is correct, and making 'innovative use of questions' which means adding a question mark at the end of a declarative sentence as a reminder or highlighter to the recipient's attention. In this study, the participant directly pointed out when they encountered misunderstandings or non-understandings, but did not appeal to employ the 'let it pass' strategy (cf. Firth, 1996). Interestingly, it found no evidence of non-understanding and few misunderstandings from the data; this infers that most of

the pragmatic strategies used were for preventing miscommunication which might or might not occur in the interactions.

Cultural difference is another aspect that should not be overlooked in email interactions. In Holtbrügge et al.'s (2013) study of cultural determinants of email communication styles, the empirical study of IT and service industry professionals shows the findings that business communication styles through email are culture-influenced. To be more specific, the participants who are from high-context cultures understand why emails from the senders in low-context cultures are less offensive; it is because their communication style is less formal than what they usually see in their own environment. This phenomenon can be referred to the studies previously mentioned in academic contexts (see 2.6.1). Hence, multicultural backgrounds may also be the source of differences in promptness, preciseness, work-relatedness and task-relatedness in email communication. Supported by Bjorge's (2007) view of a level of formality in email exchanges in her study, it is indicated that people raised in a relatively high-power distance (PD) culture tend to be more formal in English lingua franca communication. That is, an individual's cultural issue is an interesting key factor influencing different performance in email communication.

Turning to directness, in Ly's (2016) study, the findings illustrate that the European employees made requests in the internal business email communication at the company more directly when they wrote to Asian colleagues. However, they indirectly expressed criticism and disagreement with the same recipients; this is because they did not want to offend or make their Asian colleagues lose face. Also, the Asians recipients preferred a precise requestive email in a direct way, but not for criticism and disagreement. They believed both of the last two mentioned speech acts should be expressed indirectly because it showed a more friendly and polite way of communicating.

In addition, Waldvogel (2007) admits that an organizational culture signifies a more important factor accounting for the frequency and form of opening-closing addresses than those of relative social status and distance. The data were gained from the use of opening-closing addresses in 515 emails from two New Zealand workplaces: an educational organization and a manufacturing plant. The presence or absence of the addresses in email messages displays interpersonal relationships at the workplace, moreover, it helps to create and/or develop a friendly or less friendly workplace culture. Thus, the opening-closing addresses significantly imply relationships among communicators through emails in organizational settings. Similar to Kankaanranta's (2001) study exploring openings and closings addressed by Finnish and Swedish employees in a European company, the participants employed different addresses depending on their closeness. Once the social distance (see Brown &

Levinson, 1987) between the participants decreased, they shared more context and developed more intimacy leading to the use of less formal opening-closing addresses.

Drawing from 92 email messages communicated by the business personnel from five garments business organizations in Bangladesh, Roshid, Webb, and Chowdhury (2018) reveal the results of the study on international BELF email practices revealing that email messages tend to be personalized, flexible and informal. They are more like spoken ELF; neither ELF academic discourse nor standard business letter writing. The NNSs working as business personnel at the companies exchanged emails with their NSs and NNSs counterparts in six countries. Different opening addresses with different counterparts were selected based on social status, gender, and relationship; in doing so though the openings are various, they were certainly sure to maintain appropriate politeness with the recipients. It was discovered that European email users preferred more informal styles comparing with the Asians. Nevertheless, the Asians variously selected opening addresses ranging from formal to no salutations due to their social power or position and distance from whom they were contacting. More importantly, the participants hold no fixed rules of selecting the addresses, rather they considered 'rapport management' (Cogo, 2016a; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013; Spencer-Oatey, 2000) as well as individual cultural differences.

2.7 Conclusion

There are two main topics given in this chapter picturing the overall context of this study: English and email communication. It can be said that English used by Thais nowadays in reality is more likely to be ELF. Many of the previous studies elucidate how English is perceived, and what factors are taken for granted in successful intercultural communication. Also, influenced by the ASEAN language policy in which Thailand is counted as one of its members, the use of ELF is encouraged to be a means of communication in real situations. The perceptions of English used in daily-life communication seems not to be solely attached to the NS-norm base or the EFL approach. On the other hand, ELF is apparently applied in communicative situations in both academic and business contexts. Furthermore, in the use of BELF, there are a few more things to consider apart from ELF. BELF is also emphasized on business knowledge, vocabulary in specific business-related areas and relationships with communication partners bringing into business communicative success. Despite of the fact that English is an important lingua franca for business in Thailand, there is evidently little research on BELF in Thailand. Most of the previous research studying English used in a business context in the country seem to be relating to the importance of standard English sticking with NS norms. More studies are required to encourage better understanding and ascertain its use

contributing to business achievement in communication as BELF is a frequently used element as a social practice in successful business communication in particular communities culturally, not a language used to be assessed the accuracy grammatically, and this thesis is aimed at doing so.

In addition, the second half of the chapter provides information about email interactions which describes how it is used in communication in different contexts: academic and business. It is noted that most of the studies in academic contexts were conducted either in a form of NSs-NNSs comparison or students-teachers interactions. Meanwhile, the studies in business contexts clarify how the staff working in companies communicate through emails where English is believed to be the main contact language – BELF. Not only to successfully reach mutual understanding by all the parties involved in, but business email communication based on the BELF paradigm is also concerned more about rapport management at presence and in future contacts as well as specific business knowledge required in general business transactions. Moreover, administrators working for educational institutes contacting a variety of international and intercultural interlocutors, should be claimed to create business communicative interactions through BELF as they need to build/maintain relationships with their business partners who construct/or share repertoires while business knowledge is also necessary, and definitely mutual understanding is the goal of the communication.

Email users in international connections are people whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds are different and have their own styles of communication which they perceive as appropriate. A better understanding of factors relating to these features would help to avoid miscommunication which might unintentionally cause problems later, especially in written discourse communication where facial expressions and verbal discourse are not presented clarifying the intended meanings of the messages conveyed. Consequently, (B)ELF email communicators who do not share their first language should be equipped with useful strategies. Furthermore, Ford (2006) claims that the strategies are teachable in order to prevent dissatisfaction or conflicts or to be able to manage the situations and finally to achieve a successful outcome to their business interactions . It is suggested that further investigation of these concepts would be helpful in order to find out useful elements in achieving successful in communication via emails in BELF. Distinct methods of creating such successful communication could be explicitly expressed in emails through the use of pragmatics and politeness. These workers seem to be ignored in being researched in the contexts mentioned these days. Therefore, more investigations, especially in a non-essentialist perspective are required because most of the previous studies aforementioned are likely to pay attention only to specific geographical or cultural contexts comparing NSs and NNSs' practices, whereas the business communication in the real world is not limited to such issues but everyone in a (B)ELF scenario is

counted. Such studies may elucidate how to save face of both sides of interactants, make messages polite, emphasize meanings inoffensively, mitigate imposition, create mutual understanding and building rapport.

Specifically in this thesis where email communication is undeniably accepted to be widely used dealing with international business in a higher educational institute, the contact language is BELF (i.e. English *used* as a business lingua franca, not a particular variety of English). The employed BELF in the email exchanges in this research is considered as a trigger or common practice between the users since it is not only the language conveying interlocutor's meanings but also the shared repertoire directing relationships and building rapport between them where individuality in terms of language and culture is included – not in an essentialist aspect where particular geographical concerns are based like many other previous studies revealed. Furthermore, within this email interactions, business knowledge, shared norms, various types of pragmatic strategies as well as politeness in terms of the opening-closing addresses are included aiming at achieving successful business communication (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). In short, the BELF here works as a multilingual tool used in particular contexts, not a variety of English, bringing about mutual understanding and building a shared repertoire in a business community of practice (see Sing, 2017) where multilingual and multicultural people are involved (Baker, 2011), leading to successful business transactions through the email mode.

Chapter 3 Pragmatic Strategies, Politeness and Intercultural Awareness (ICA)

When communication is concerned, there are a great number of aspects affecting how successful interactions are constructed. Particularly in international communication where interactants' first languages are not shared, English is commonly used as a contact language (e.g. Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007). ELF, fits the context of this study as the interlocutors are ones whose first languages and cultures are different; besides, they are more likely to employ BELF because the domain of business use is the focus (see 2.1-2.2). Moreover, pragmatic strategies are found useful in ELF communication (e.g. Cogo, 2009; 2010; Ren, 2018; Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018), as well as politeness which can indicate spaces among interlocutors and enhance rapport development in long-term interactions (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013). Within such interactions between people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, intercultural awareness is often unconsciously within interlocutors perceptions and practices influenced by individual differences (Baker, 2011; Jenkins, 2015). This infers that although people use the same contact language, (B)ELF in this case, there are many factors to be considered in creating successful intercultural communication.

This section illustrates patterns of understanding in communication; detailing the meaning of understanding, non-understanding, and misunderstanding in order to define and distinguish them from the same reference point. After that, the commonly discovered causes of miscommunication in ELF interaction in the previous studies are presented. Although most of them are found in spoken discourse, some are noticed to potentially occur in written communication. Then, the most essential parts, pragmatic strategies and politeness in written ELF communication, specifically in email interactions, where the setting of this investigation is, will be presented including a review of the related literature of intercultural communication awareness.

3.1 Patterns of Understandings in Communication

It is essential to elucidate terminology relating to understanding in communication since the same terms might be used differently depending on researchers' perspectives. In this study, three terms or patterns of understanding are illustrated: understanding, non-understanding, and misunderstanding.

Firstly, an 'understanding' is classified into three different types by Smith (1992): intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability, based on an individual's ability to access understanding in detail. Intelligibility focuses on the ability to recognize words and sentences, while comprehensibility refers to listeners' or recipients' ability to understand words and utterances. The last type, interpretability, involves the implications hidden behind the meaning of words and utterances. According to Roberts' (1996) social perspective, understanding is a dynamic and cooperative interaction in which all parties in a conversation are involved. The communication is collaboratively constructed by all participants who share responsibilities of reaching mutual understanding. Moreover, Ren (2016a) affirms that both speakers or senders and listeners or recipients have to cooperatively pre-empt anticipated problematic understandings, as well as signalling and resolving non-understanding and misunderstanding when they occur.

Secondly, a 'non-understanding' refers to situations when a listener or recipient cannot make sense of what is said; it is consciously noticed by at least one participant that there is a more or less complete gap in understanding (Bremer, 1996; Pitzl, 2005). On the other hand, a 'misunderstanding' occurs when a listener or recipient has an understanding of what is said, thinking that it makes sense to him or her, but actually has a different idea from the speaker's or sender's intended meaning; this is troublesome since no one immediately notices the occurring misunderstanding when communicating (Cogo and Pitzl, 2016). There will not be a communicative breakdown or unsuccessful communication if all interactants reach a mutual understanding at the same time. It is inevitable to say that it is not easy for people from different first languages and cultures to communicate completely without any flaws. Non-understanding and misunderstanding are sometimes noticed in their daily communication, and they should be aware of and avoid it so as to reach successful and efficient communication.

In this study, 'understanding', 'intelligibility', 'comprehensibility' and 'interpretability' are used interchangeably concerning the recipient's understanding of the meanings of utterances in the same direction as the sender's intention. The term 'miscommunication', on the other hand, is used to describe an occurrence of either non-understanding or misunderstanding since both invoke problems of understanding in some ways.

3.2 Causes of Miscommunication

There is a significant amount of research explicating key factors that may cause miscommunication in ELF, and most of them are in spoken discourse (e.g. Bailey, 1997; Bjorkman, 2011; Bremer, 1996; Kaur, 2009; Sharifan, 2005). Due to the fact that the aim of this study is to illuminate intercultural

written communication via email exchanges in a (B)ELF perspective, miscommunication that can possibly occur in a written mode is included, while those that can only be seen in a spoken-language interaction such as pronunciation (Mauranen, 2006) and back-channeling (Bjørge, 2010) are not the focus.

Deterding (2013) produced the Corpus of Misunderstandings derived from the Asian Corpus of English (CMACE) indicating features that cause understanding problems in the Asian context. They are divided into four main parts from their findings: pronunciation, lexis, grammar, and code-switching. Apart from variant pronunciation which is seen in spoken interactions, unfamiliar lexis, grammar and code-switching can be causes of misunderstandings in some ways in written discourse. He also points out that code-switching can be included in a matter of misunderstanding due to the words, phrases, or sentences unknown by the interlocutors employed in the communication. It is because the senders believe that the recipients will understand the code-switched messages, but it does not happen as expected. Therefore, the code-switching strategy is possibly a cause of miscomprehension.

In addition, miscommunication does not mean only the language use as mentioned above, but it comprises other hidden elements affecting the way it is constructed. Here in this study I will point to a cultural strand since the communication in ELF inevitably involves intercultural dissemination—language, culture, knowledge, and experience are not separable. Hua (2014) states that sources of misunderstanding attribution are inadequate linguistic proficiency, pragmatic mismatch, clash of styles, mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes, and mismatch in contextualization and framing.

Inadequate linguistic proficiency is identified at a linguistic level that it can cause lexical comprehension problem, mishearing a lexical element, and syntactic complexity (Bremer, 1996), which repeats some points proposed by Deterding (2013). The pragmatic mismatch is misunderstanding at an illocutionary level; situations where recipients fail to interpret the utterances or messages – failure of interpreting the exact meaning of what is said so-called pragmatic failure. Two possible pragmatic failures can be seen in misunderstandings: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures (Thomas, 1983). The former happens when the forces in the utterances in L1 differ from L2 and induce in an inappropriate pragmatic transfer, while the latter causes inappropriate assessment of the degree of imposition, social distance and so on in the application of politeness, face, directness, etc. Clash of styles is another source of misunderstanding in Hua's (2014) presentation that can hardly be seen in interactions because it comes in the form of an action rather than an utterance. Different types of schemas include knowledge about people's

traits, roles and behaviours (Nishida, 2005), and knowledge about other cultural and ethnic groups are also taken into account. Both mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes can be a source of misunderstanding when an individual's background knowledge and culture are different and they cannot be understood by another party in any circumstances. The last cause of misunderstanding is a mismatch in contextualization and framing. Contextualization cues involve prosody, paralinguistic signs, code choice and choice of lexical forms or formulaic expressions (Gumperz, 1992), and frames are tools used to define the boundary of instances.

Although the causes of miscommunication listed above rarely cause severe miscommunication, it does not mean that they do not exist and impel problems of communication. Hence, pragmatic strategies and politeness to be used in constructing successful communication are still important in the process of negotiation and/or conveying intended meanings in communicative interactions.

Although there are different names of strategies proposed by different scholars such as interactional, communication and pragmatic strategies, they have some qualities in common which are to prevent and/or resolve communication problems. While communication strategies which are firstly discussed in an SLA paradigm (Björkman, 2014), are regarded as problem-solving techniques avoiding communication breakdowns, interactional strategies work in a similar aspect that Cogo and Dewey (2012) further emphasize their functions of encouraging the speaker to continue speaking, showing sustained interest of talk and managing turn-taking in conversations. Pragmatic strategies are more like communication strategies in a way of communication resolution (Cogo & Dewey, 2012) with the extension of applying rapport co-construction and not necessarily to be handled promptly in simultaneous talks, particularly in an ELF environment where the strategies use signifies language development or evolution (Sato, Yujobo, Okada, & Ogane, 2019) – not as a case of lack of linguistic knowledge proposed by Ellis (2003) (Bataineh, Al-Bzour, & Baniabdelrahman, 2017). Therefore, in the next section I will classify pragmatic strategies and politeness as well as concerns of intercultural awareness (ICA), generally seen in written intercultural interactions in (B)ELF.

3.3 Pragmatic Strategies

The pragmatic strategies previously observed in (B)ELF communication are presented in two main categories based on their functions in the interactions. Many of them have been proposed in the context of spoken discourse (e.g. Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Cogo and Pitzl, 2016; Deterding, 2013; Firth, 1996; Mauranen, 2006; Smit, 2010) whereas a few studies explicitly reveal strategies found useful in a written mode (e.g. Ren, 2016a; 2016b). Even though most of the strategies are found in spoken instances, I will detail them as potential strategies to be utilized in written phenomena since

my focus is on a written discourse, specifically email communication. The first category is 'pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication' which are used to facilitate understanding when communicators indicate understanding problems; either speakers or senders are afraid that the messages sent will probably cause problems in understanding, or to signal unclear or incorrect messages interpreted by their interlocutors aiming at resolving such miscommunication. Another main theme is 'pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication'. They are utilized to illustrate multicultural identity, affiliation, and solidarity in a community of practice of (B)ELF users, but not to signal, prevent or resolve non-understanding and misunderstanding. The following describes in detail some of the commonly found strategies in (B)ELF interactions illustrating the sub-strategies mentioned.

3.3.1 Pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication

All the strategies categorized under this heading identify a variety of ways of handling the interactions once miscommunication occurs. Focusing on how to deal with situations, two modes are engaged; either a communicative problem can be solved by the message sender or a reaction from the interlocutor is needed as the sender is certainly sure that the recipient has got the meaning wrong and correct confirmation is required. The two sub-categories are 'self-initiated self-repaired' and 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed' strategies.

3.3.1.1 Self-initiated self-repaired strategies

Deterding (2013) clarifies his repairs of communication breakdowns into four categories: self-initiated self-repairs, self-initiated other-repairs, other-initiated self-repairs, and other-initiated other-repairs. Only self-initiated self-repairs and self-initiated other-repairs are taken into consideration in this study as the context is based on only one side of the interactions – the data are collected from the participants' email exchanges and perceptions, whereas their interlocutors' are excluded. The self-initiated self-repairs are classified in this sub-category, and the self-initiated other-repairs are under another sub-category which will be detailed later. Since email communication is asynchronous, writers have time to reconsider messages before sending them to recipients. They might add more detail into the emails for a clearer comprehension of the recipients in case they think that there might be something not clear in their utterances. Then, they will rephrase or give more explanation of what seems to be problematic in understanding. More detail is illustrated as follows to give a clearer understanding of particular strategies applied in certain circumstances.

Cogo and Pitzl (2016) present three categories preventing miscommunication in ELF communication: 'partial repetition or paraphrase', 'self-repetition in an on-going turn', and 'spelling out potentially ambiguous terms'. The strategy of spelling out potentially ambiguous terms is not taken into account as it focuses on pronunciation (see also Bjorkman, 2014) which is not counted in the written discourse of email communication. The partial repetition or paraphrase is used to disambiguate the potential miscommunication. In the same way, the self-repetition in an ongoing turn is a rephrasing of what has been expressed many times in order to make it easier to be understood by the recipients. These two strategies have mutual utility – applying synonyms in a conversation where senders foresee potential miscommunication from recipients who seem not to be clear about the messages received. These two strategies have the potential to be used in email interactions when writers consider revised messages necessary, then they will exploit a variety of word choices or phrases repeating what has been said in different ways in their writing. Here in this study, these strategies are grouped in the same category called 'self-repetition' due to their similar process of pre-empting and remedying which is solely created by only one party of the interactions.

Ren (2016a) explains the strategies discovered in his study investigating pragmatic strategies used in their authentic ELF emails by Chinese-English bilingual professionals of news reporter, educational consultant, faculty member and (international) company worker. The findings are supported by another study investigating the strategies used by Chinese university students in their inquiry of daily communication (Ren, 2016b). The results of both studies were similar. When senders introduce some topics of communication relating to their local cultures or beliefs, they will include more information about their local knowledge in order to build a common understanding or so-called 'providing local knowledge and building common ground' strategy to ensure that the recipients will understand their messages correctly. This is consistent with the findings in Cogo and Dewey's (2012) study that they use 'we say' phrase to give interlocutors a local cultural perspective in a multicultural conversation.

3.3.1.2 Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies

Deterding (2013) mentions the 'other-initiated self-repairs' to be used when senders are asked for clarification, and they have to restate what they really mean to another communicative party. This strategy is conducted more often in the form of direct questions asking for clarifications (see Mauranen, 2006) when communicators know each other quite well (Smit, 2010).

Mauranen (2006) proposes a feature to manage miscommunication called 'confirmation checks'. This strategy is used when senders are asked for clarification in the form of either a complete

question or a minimal check. It includes the repetition of problematic items where the unclear meaning happens. It is used to make sure of both a sender's and an interlocutors' understanding so that they receive and interpret the intended messages received correctly.

Furthermore, Cogo and Pitzl (2016) explain two pragmatic strategies called the 'repetition with interrogatory intonation', and the 'explicit minimal query'. The former is considered similar to the 'innovative use of questions' in Ren's (2016a; 2016b) category; a question mark is placed at the end of an affirmative in emails, but the strategy mentioned in their study is in a spoken mode using a high pitch of an affirmative sentence as if it were a question. Meanwhile, their 'explicit minimal query' is less specific, but more explicit because it is a repetition of a short word or phrase asking for more explanation which is somehow similar to the 'confirmation checks' in Mauranen's (2006). However, this strategy might be sometimes interpreted as too direct, too short or even impolite, so it will be used in a very informal situation (Cogo and Pitzl, 2016). These strategies are re-grouped and renamed in this study so as to make it easier to distinguish and avoid confusion of different terms used in different research studies. The 'asking for clarification' strategy is used for a complete question form, while the 'confirmation check' is a short form of questions, such as question tags or affirmative sentences ending with a question mark, which are ungrammatical forms of direct questions.

In addition to the strategies where a reaction is necessary for making sure of a miscommunication resolution, Ren (2016a; 2016b) proposes the strategy called 'metalinguistic comments'. It tends to be employed when a probable misunderstanding is noticed. It uses explicitness to directly point out communication problems. For example, the metalinguistic comment like 'you've got a misunderstanding...' (Ren, 2016a: 6) is used when the recipient received the email with recognition of the miscommunication, and then the sender elaborated in more detail to ensure that the interlocutor received the correct information or intended meaning, rather than use the 'let it pass' strategy proposed by Firth (1996) where an unclear expression is intentionally ignored to let the conversation continuously flow. This, however, will be more infrequently used by Asians as Ly (2016) reveals in the findings from her study that the Asian informants preferred not to directly express their criticism or disagreement with their colleagues in the workplace. Nevertheless, to make more sense of miscommunication indication here, this kind of strategy is called a 'direct comment' instead as such expressions are released by a message in which the sender directly specifies the existence of a misunderstanding or miscommunication which needs to be corrected by a communicative partner.

In sum, there are six pragmatic strategies found from the previous research that pertain to the category of 'pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication'. They are sub-categorized into

two: 'self-initiated self-repaired' and 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed' strategies, and three strategies are under each sub-category. 'Self-repetition' (Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; see also Deterding, 2013), 'providing local knowledge and common ground' (Ren, 2016a; 2016b; see also Deterding, 2013), and 'let it pass' (Firth, 1996) are classified to the sub-category 'self-initiated self-repaired' with the goal that a message sender can resolve the miscommunication without assistance from others. On the other side, in another sub-category of 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed' where an interlocutor's reaction is required to meet the correct information mutually, the strategies 'asking for clarification' (Mauranen, 2006; see also Deterding, 2013), 'confirmation check' (see Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Mauranen, 2006; Ren, 2016a; 2016b), and 'direct comment' (Ren, 2016a; 2016b) are included. All of the pragmatic strategies are employed with the aim to prevent and repair miscommunication happening during email exchanges. The use of particularly appropriate strategies eventually facilitates the goal of the business interactions in each case. Apart from the strategies dealing with miscommunication, there is another type called the 'pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication' to be described in the following section. They are used in situations where interactants want to demonstrate ways to satisfy another communicative party, let the communication run smoothly and easily, and create rapport through particular strategies.

3.3.2 Pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication

3.3.2.1 Accommodation strategies

The first group of strategies presented here enhancing intercultural communication is 'accommodation strategies'. These are used to support mutual understanding while at the same time mutual accommodation is established through reformulating and hybridizing interlocutors' use of ELF concerning each other's native schema (Guido, 2015). Also, pragmatic ability is more necessary than language proficiency to spark effective ELF communities or consolidation (Björkman, 2011), so accommodation to the interlocutors is crucial in successful communication (Tsai & Tsou, 2015). The following sub-categories are classified as the accommodation strategies as they create co-construction and/or linguistic alignment encouraging solidarity in communication.

(B)ELF interactants come from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, so they sometimes code-switch into other languages aside from English – it may or may not be the first language of the interactants involved in the communication. However, the phenomenon of code-switching here is not seen as a deficiency as in an ELT perspective following ENL norms, but it is a variety of language use in multilingual resources where communicators want to address shared repertoires and accommodate their interlocutors (Cogo, 2010). This is supported by her study in 2009 that 'code-

switching' is a strategy for getting ELF participants into the feeling of solidarity in the same community such as the community of multilingual speakers who can code-switch into a language which is none of the speakers' mother tongues, and it is considered as a communicative activity conducted in their normal practice.

In a similar way, Seidlhofer (2009) argues that ELF speakers 'co-construct idiomatic expressions' by negotiating the linguistic resources existing in their community, regardless of the NSs' idiomatic phrasing (see also Cogo & House, 2017). The communicators create or make use of particular idiomatic phrases that can be understood only amongst the parties involved. Whereas the expressions are created by the interlocutors, other people might have no idea of what they mean as the expressions do not match existing native-norm based phrases.

Additionally, when interactants sometimes perceive their interlocutors' lexical selections and idioms to be unmatched with NSs' linguistic forms or even incomprehensible, they employ the 'make it normal' strategy (Firth, 1996). That is, they adjust their own ways of conveying messages by following their interlocutors' linguistic features, so as to accommodate them to the interlocutors' practices and make the communication run smoothly and naturally. Moreover, NSs norms are not a concern whenever their interlocutors exploit a variety of creative expressions because they would never let their interactants feel offended by correcting or changing the forms conveyed.

To summarize, the 'co-construct idiomatic expressions' (Seidlhofer, 2009; see also Cogo and House, 2017), the 'code-switching' (Cogo, 2009; 2010) and the 'make it normal' (Firth, 1996) are used to show shared repertoires among ELF users in intercultural settings even though they are not used to deal with communication problems. This infers that all of the accommodation strategies enhancing intercultural communication in (B)ELF interactions can be used to adapt or adjust ways of expressing messages so as to conduct successful communication through the users' mutual cooperation and satisfaction of the process of interactions.

3.3.2.2 Intimacy reinforcement strategies

It seems like intimacy and/or less formality shows significance in email communication; it may be created via non-linguistic which are multimodal features, and textual features which are making apology, abbreviations, contractions without apostrophe, including in messages conveyed. Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran (2016) assert that multimodality is a term for multiple means that people use to make meaning in communication. Various terms for this have been used by scholars in the past (Guo, 2017). Examples of the features are language, signs, images, music, gestures, texts, audios, videos, and so on (see Jewitt et al., 2016; Sangiamchit, 2017). For the potentiality of multimodal

features in email communication, such semiotic emoticons and emojis are considered to be used indicating or explaining the sender's feelings. Emoticons are a combination of two words: 'emotion + icon', while emojis is 'e + moji' meaning a picture and character in Japanese (see Rodrigues, Prada, Gaspar, Garrido, & Lopes, 2018). Concerning differences between these two features, emoticons are basic linguistic punctuations, numbers or letters, but emojis are non-linguistic generally coloured and put in multiple face shapes (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Rodrigues et al., 2018; Skovholt, Grønning, & Kankaanranta, 2014). Such features are commonly employed in computer-mediated communication (CMC) replacing nonverbal cues (Luor, Wu, Lu, & Tao, 2010). Particularly in emails, Rezabek and Cochenour (1998) state that emoticons work as augmentation of the meaning of textual electronic messages since visual cues like facial expressions and eye contact cannot be attached as in face-to-face communication. Thurlow (2003) determines a trigger of using emoticons in that such features can replace the absence of physical communication such as body language. He further insists that the messages containing paralinguistic features are created with a specific intention, and they are comprehensible as they implicitly reflect typical human characteristics in written communication. More importantly, Skovholt et al. (2014) conclude that these multimodal features function as 'solidarity markers' creating in-group membership, reducing social distance between email interactants, and developing informal style in email. That is, using these features in emails in the working environment encourages and builds a better relationship between all parties involved in a friendly way, and certainly decreases formality in such communication.

Apart from such multimodal features, more practices – linguistic features in particular – are applied to let the written communication be more like a spoken interaction mitigating formality and building intimacy. One typical method observed in email interactions is making an apology. It is beneficial in a sense of responsibility. Supported by Kankaanranta's (2006) findings, the Finnish and Swedish employees in a multinational company (MNC) contributed to communication effectively using a pragmatic guideline by making the recipients feel good, while sending an apology were recommended in case of a late reply because no one expected or were happy to wait so long. Thus, the apologies were commonly found from her informant's emails building a good rapport between the interactants. Additionally, De Jonge and Kemp (2012) surveyed the use of 'textisms' – contractions and nonstandard spellings by 105 Australian adolescents and young adults. It is found that both groups used textisms in a similar way and the most frequently category observed is apostrophe omission. It is likely used by better spellers as they intended to have fun with the language or tailor to suit the message recipient; textism spelling shows no standardization, but relying on individual texters. Its use infers broader social reasons – group membership (see also Green, 2003 cited in De Jonge & Kemp, 2012; Lewis & Fabos, 2005).

That is, these features exploited in emails encourage a rapport between interlocutors creating intimate atmosphere and bringing into ease in communication. Particularly in the interactions where interactants' L1 are different, intercultural communication comes into play; the communication participants need to be aware of cultural differences and intercultural awareness (ICA) which helps to construct the communication without misinterpretation regarding cultural issues. In other words, the concept of intercultural awareness (ICA) which is another concern in this study because the participants and their interlocutors have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, always accompanies intercultural communication in ELF; whenever interactions between them occurred, they are called 'intercultural communication'. To avoid communication breakdowns in intercultural communication, Mariani (2015 cited in Pavan, 2019) claims that it is good if interlocutors should be able to predict possible response from another party so that they can plan their communication. Besides, an awareness of intercultural politeness is suggested to be developed so as to have a better understanding of what really happens in intercultural communication since language and culture cannot be absolutely separated as well as the relationship between culture and politeness; they all are interconnected (Pavan, 2019). Consequently, not only the pragmatic strategies previously mentioned are taken into consideration in successful communicative interactions, ICA and politeness are also critical factors to create intercultural communicative success. The next sections describe these two relevant topics to the dataset of this study: politeness and ICA.

3.4 Politeness

In situations where people communicate with each other, one of the ways to avoid or reduce communicative vagueness is making assumptions about the interlocutors' thoughts. It would be good if communicators can realize how their communicative partners are in terms of their characteristics, ways of thinking as well as how they normally express themselves or perform in communication (Mariani, 2015 cited in Pavan, 2019). This brings into focus the concept of 'face' (see Goffman, 1967) and politeness (V. Batziakas, 2016; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Findlay, 1998; Richards & Schmidst, 2010) which is a feature determining relative statuses of the participants in the interactions. This section gives an explanation of the concept of face, social variables influencing communicative practices, politeness systems clarifying relationships between the social variables in certain situations and politeness in terms of formality in email interactions.

3.4.1 Concept of Face in Interpersonal Communication

Face is defined as a self-image based on what others think or assume about us (Goffman, 1967). The negotiation of face in interpersonal communication also contains an issue of shared assumptions. Two opposite popular terms relating to the concept of face are 'lose face' and 'save face' where the former happens when a person cannot ratify his/her self-image which is also called a negotiated public image, whereas the latter is when other communicative partners support or help the person to maintain the image in any communicative events (Archer, 2017). Hence, one's own face usually depends on being maintained and enhanced by others (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Two types of face which are frequently mentioned: 'involvement' and 'independence' (Scollon et al., 2012), have totally different meanings in communicative circumstances. The involvement aspect is also called 'positive politeness' (Brown and Levinson, 1987); it involves taking a point of view of others in an interaction, paying attention to, and indicating being a member in the community even just calling people by their first names. On the other hand, the independence which Brown and Levinson (1987) call it 'negative politeness', focuses on the individuality of people – be free from the impositions of others, use more formal names and titles, and show the rights of the others to their own freedom of choice. The two pairs of terms 'involvement and positive politeness' and 'independence and negative politeness' are used interchangeably in this study. If one is offered too much involvement, they might see their independence threatened; conversely, too much independence limits the feeling of being a part of the community. Therefore, this is a difficulty and a challenge to be concerned about both one's own face and the other's and at the same time not to put at risk and pay respect to the balance of both involvement face and independence face when communicating. This is in agreement with Scollon et al. (2012: 49) in that "There is no faceless communication".

The face relationships between interactants will remain the same or different in particular situations depending on social factors. The sociological variables presented by Brown and Levinson (1987) in order to calculate the threats to face or to assess the seriousness of face-threatening acts (FTAs), are undeniably subject to change in different cultural contexts. Moreover, these variables are also mentioned by Scollon et al. (2012) and described in terms of a politeness system in communication which is explained in the next section.

3.4.2 Social variables and degrees of politeness

There are three main factors affecting the seriousness of an FTA in intercultural communication: a 'social distance' (D), a relative 'power' (P), and an absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These inspire the concept of global face systems in Scollon et al. (2012) in intercultural communication, which contains 'power, 'distance' and weight imposition (W)'.

The distance (D) between interlocutors is determined by social relationships in terms of intimacy or closeness. For example, the distance between two close friends is classified as $-D$. On the contrary, for those who do not know each other or have a distant relationship such as staff from different companies, they occupy a $+D$ form of relationship.

Differing from the social distance, the relative power (P) emphasizes social status. For example, the form of power between a manager and a staff is $+P$ even though they know each other quite well. Scollon et al. (2012) propose a $+P$ relationship which is a hierarchical structure in which someone has entitlement over the other(s), and a $-P$ relationship which is an egalitarian system where little or no hierarchical differences are discovered.

The last factor, the weight of imposition (W), focuses on the importance of the content of the message. When the weight of imposition increases, the use of independence strategies will also tend to increase. In contrast, if the topic is not so important or serious, involvement strategies will be more employed. However, Scollon et al. (2012) suggest that generally power (P) and distance (D) are the two factors that are relatively fixed in interpersonal communication in business or organizations, but the weight of imposition (W) changes frequently. Therefore, the first two components are selected to be the focus of this study leading to the politeness systems illustrated in the following section (see 3.4.2) since all the data collected, especially in their authentic communicative business interactions, are solely business discussion or negotiation meaning that the levels of seriousness in the topics communicated are in the similar criteria.

Relating to politeness, there are some examples of research works that reveal the use of strategies in written discourse with the focus of social variables mentioned above. As shown in Getkham's (2014) study on research paper discussions which can be identified as formal as it is an academic paper, the Thai graduate students used negative politeness strategies more frequently than positive strategies because research writing is considered very impersonal and limited by its conventions. However, there are a few positive politeness strategies employed to gain approval from readers and to lessen the distance between the writer and the reader.

In addition, in Al-Ali's (2006) study of Jordanian Arabic-English bilingual students writing job application letters in English, the results show that the writers preferred positive politeness strategies in the discourse. Since the writers had less relative power than the addressee, their feasible employer in the future, the writers believed that the use of politeness strategies should reduce the threat of face to the addressee in this case – lower social status writers were likely to employ indirect strategies to show respect to the recipient. The more frequent use of positive politeness strategies is supported by Maier's (1992) study revealing that non-native writers tended to be direct and used more positive strategies in business letter writing. However, in addition to the study of English business letters, Goudarzi, Ghonsooly and Taghipour (2015) note that the non-native employees tended to use more negative politeness strategies to reduce FTAs of the recipients. They applied more formal salutations in the cases that a high degree of social distance existed between the interactants to mitigate the FTAs to preserve the receiver's face.

Interestingly, in email communication, Vinagre (2008) explores linguistic features of politeness used by equal-power students who have a high degree of social distance, and it is found that they used positive politeness strategies indicating closeness and solidarity co-construction instead of negative politeness strategies showing high distance fostering formality and impersonality. This means that the participants relied more on equal power than a high degree of distance, so politeness in emails is expressed in an informal way creating intimacy between the interactants. It is inferred that the positive politeness strategies create proximity in a friendly and informal way – informality, whereas the negative politeness strategies generate more formality illustrating the socially high distance between interlocutors. Nonetheless, the findings in Alafnan's (2014) investigation illustrate disagreement. The Malaysian employees' use of politeness strategies through business email interactions in a workplace environment depended more on social distance than power imbalance. They tended to be more polite to distant colleagues than to close ones. That is, the social relationship is the prime factor affecting different use of politeness strategies; positive politeness strategies were found the most among close colleagues regardless of organizational positions, while negative or more formal politeness strategies were used by distant colleagues.

From the previous studies which are particularly focussed on written interactions, both positive and negative politeness strategies were used in different contexts; the strategies were purposively chosen in uncertain or unfixed directions. That is, although different sociological variables, power and distance, are meaningful in selecting specific politeness strategies in communication, the same politeness systems do not always result in the same politeness strategies use depending on which variable is more important perceived by strategy users. In terms of politeness, formality is key

feature determining a clear picture of politeness in the interactions. The following section will specifically illustrate how politeness and formality in email communication are linked in this study.

3.4.3 Politeness and formality in email communication

This study is focused on business email communication in a Thai setting where degrees of formality are believed to significantly indicate in politeness; moreover, people in the society are raised with a belief in showing respect through various levels and complexity of politeness (see Chaidaroon, 2003; Nomnian, 2014). Also, social hierarchy is considerably embedded in the nature of people in Thai culture in their communication. Seniority is one of the most prominent factors affecting language use, especially in the choice of politeness strategies (Wongwarangkul, 2000) resulting in levels of formality. Hongladarom & Hongladarom's (2005) study on politeness strategies in Thai CMC indicate that the Thai CMC users tried to avoid confrontation, and to encourage their interlocutors to feel membership of the community. They also state that "Thai culture is resilient enough to withstand the tide of globalization coming through the use of internet technologies" (ibid.: 158). That is, email communication continues to be influenced in Thai society by Thai politeness. In agreement with Chen (2006), it is not only linguistic ability that has to be considered for L2 email writers, but also cultural norms and values involved.

In relation to Brown and Levinson's (1987) face, formality is constructed due to the sociopragmatic variables in that either participants have a symmetric relation of social distance (D) or an asymmetric relation of power (P). Formality indicates politeness in written business discourse; it is the strategy obviously found in BELF email communication (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). Bjørge (2007) confirms that opening-closing addresses illuminate variation with respect to different levels of formality in email interactions. Openings (or greetings) and closings (or farewells) are the most important elements taken into account in writing emails (Lima, 2014); they are considered 'epistolary conventions' of a basic electronic message schema (Herring, 1996: 96). That is, they are the most salient email components that gain much attention from researchers (e.g. Bunz & Campbell, 2002; Kankaanranta, 2005; Sabater et. Al., 2008). Relating to face, greetings and closings in emails play an important social role as noted by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003: 138) that "greetings and farewells offer formulas to ease the strain created for face by the beginning and ends of interactions". The presence or absence of them indicates behaviour as polite or impolite in different symmetric or asymmetric email interactions (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012).

Consequently, email opening-closing addresses also become the focus of the present study with reference to formality under the topic of politeness in emails. Based on Waldvogel's (2007) operational definitions of greeting or opening and closing, they are described:

“Greeting – the use of a person’s name and or greeting word to initiate the mail” and
“Closing – any name sign-off, farewell formula (e.g. Cheers), or phatic comment (e.g. Have a good day) used to end the email. Thanks is counted as a closing when it comes with or without the writer’s name at the end of a message” (p.460).

Brown & Gilman (1970) reveal that it is possible to avoid using a name or title in any face-to-face interaction, but it is dissimilar to written communication. Forms of address plus recipient’s name (if any) and complimentary close plus sender’s name (if any), or so-called openings and closings respectively in this study, are significant features reflecting the relationship between the interlocutors (Bjorge, 2007). There are suggested factors which need to be considered when levels of formality come into play in deciding which openings and closings are to be used: how well the recipients know each other, their working relationship, the recipient's preference of emails without opening and closing, the recipient's perception of unnecessary opening and closing, and one's own and recipient's style or preferences (ibid.). The relationships here are particularly in relation to the aforementioned socio-pragmatics: social status and power, which are in agreement with Varner and Beamer’s (2005) emphasis of levels of formality associated with social hierarchy.

Pointedly, the categorization of openings and closings in emails specifying levels of formality proposed by Bjørge (2007) is considered to be a reference in this study. It is because she has established it based on the coincidence of openings and closings occurrences presented in other sources (*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, 2003; Chen, 2006; *Collins Cobuild English dictionary for advanced learners*, 2001; Gains, 1999; *Longman dictionary of contemporary English*, 2005 cited in Bjørge, 2007) and from her own study of international students' emails sent to academic staff. She divided levels of formality into two broad categories: formal and informal as shown below (see Table 1: Bjorge’s (2007) Categorization of Opening-Closing Addresses in Emails). Remarkably, she declares that the opening ‘Dear + first name’ is considered neutral in her classification and the primary source the *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (2005: 978-9) also classifies it that way.

Table 1: Bjorge's (2007) Categorization of Opening-Closing Addresses in Emails

Formality	Opening	Closing
Formal	Dear Professor(s)/Sir/Madam/Teacher	Yours respectfully
	Dear Professor/Prof. + (first name) + surname	Yours sincerely/Sincerely (yours)
	Dear Mrs/Mr + (first name) + surname	Regards
	Dear + first name + surname	Best regards
	General greeting	Kind/Warm regards
Informal	*Dear + first name	Best wishes/Greetings
	Hi/Hello + first name	Happy Easter etc.
	Hi/Hello	See you... etc.
	No greeting	Cheers
		Mvh
	cu	
	No close	

In addition, McKeown and Zhang (2015) elucidate their study of British professionals' emails in a workplace environment with the focus of socio-pragmatic factors influencing the variation of formality of opening salutation and closing valediction. The results show that social distance significantly caused greater formality of both opening and closing addresses, whereas a more frequent number of exchanges resulted in a preference for informality. Moreover, the opening and closing forms function as distinctive socio-pragmatic factors in email exchanges, not just optional email elements. Furthermore, as the context of their study is authentic emails in a company, the opening-closing addresses, some of which were not found in Bjørge's (2007) classification, are more likely to be seen in real-life business email interactions, which is at some point similar to the context of this investigation. Hence, all the salutation and closing valediction discovered are of interest in this study, and they are shown in Table 2: McKeown & Zhang's (2015) Opening Salutation and Closing Valediction Formulae.

Table 2: McKeown & Zhang’s (2015) Opening Salutation and Closing Valediction Formulae

Opening salutation	Closing valediction
No opening	Nothing
Name only	Name only
Hi/Hey/Hello	Gratitude statement + name
Hi/Hey/Hello only	Cheers + name
Hi/Hey/Hello + name	Regards
Temporal greeting	Regards only + name
Good morning + name	Kind Regards + name
Good afternoon + name	Best
Dear + name	Best only + name
	Best Regards + name
	Best wishes + name

Adapted from both Bjorge’s (2007) categorization and McKeown & Zhang’s (2015) formulae, the opening and closing addresses, which are divided into formal and informal, are re-classified as displayed in Table 3: Formality, Opening, and Closing Formulae adapted from Bjorge’s (2007) and McKeown & Zhang’s (2015) Categorizations. Due to a slightly different focus of the addresses where a combination of salutation/complimentary close and name are taken into consideration, the levels of formality in this study have been re-determined. A 'formal' address gathers both formal salutation/complimentary close and formal sign off. On the other hand, a combination of informal salutation/complimentary close and informal sign off is called an 'informal' closing address. For the last and re-defined level, a 'semi-formal' address, all the openings and closings in this group are a mixture of one formal element and another one informal element. For example, a formal complimentary close 'Yours sincerely' and an informal sign off 'Jane' are viewed as a semi-formal address. This adapted classification will, hopefully, reveal the actual use of email opening-closing forms in a dynamic context by the participants of this study regarding the force of the significant

social variables: power (P) and distance (D), so as to see the politeness through the aspects of (in)formality in authentic business email exchanges.

Table 3: Formality, Opening, and Closing Formulae adapted from Bjorge's (2007) and McKeown & Zhang's (2015) Categorizations

Formality	Opening	Closing
Formal	<p>Dear/</p> <p>Temporal Greeting</p> <p>+ Professor(s)/Sir/Madam/Teacher</p> <p>+ honorific/title + (first name) + surname</p> <p>+ Mrs/Mr + (first name) + surname</p> <p>+ full name</p>	<p>Your respectfully/</p> <p>Your sincerely/</p> <p>Your faithfully/</p> <p>Sincerely/</p> <p>Best regards/</p> <p>Best wishes</p> <p>+ honorific/title + (first name) + surname</p> <p>+ Mrs/Mr + (first name) + surname</p> <p>+ full name</p>
Semi-formal	<p>Dear/</p> <p>Hi/Hey/Hello</p> <p>+ honorific/title + first name/nickname</p>	<p>Your respectfully/</p> <p>Your sincerely/</p> <p>Your faithfully/</p> <p>Sincerely/</p> <p>Best regards/</p> <p>Best wishes</p> <p>+ honorific/title + first name/nickname</p> <p>+ first name/nickname</p> <p>Gratitude statement/</p>

Formality	Opening	Closing
		Cheers + (first name) + surname
Informal	Dear/Hi/Hey/Hello + first name/nickname Hi/Hey/Hello only Name only No opening	Best/ Gratitude statement/ Cheers/ Take care/ Phonetic spelling + first name/nickname Name only No closing

These two specific sociological variables mentioned above: P and D, construct three different patterns of politeness systems and lead to the different use of politeness in a form of opening-closing addresses generating formality in emails. The tendency of formality in emails is possibly predicted by the different communicators' practices concerning individual perceptions of how well they know each other, working relationships as well as their own and interlocutors' styles or preferences (Bjørge, 2007).

In this study, particular pragmatic strategies and politeness are considered significant to conduct successful email communication. The pragmatic strategies were employed to avoid/solve miscommunication and create solidarity between the interactants. Politeness was used to generally avoid threatening face, and create satisfying communication between the interlocutors. That is, the application of pragmatic strategies together with politeness in terms of opening-closing addresses in email communication co-construct competent written contacts, especially in professional business. The two concerns contribute to comfort and satisfaction along the process of interactions, and also clearly build and maintain rapport in handling their business through BELF email exchanges. Besides, constructing an effective interaction does not mean to concern only the linguistic aspect, but also to

pay attention to how email senders think and sometimes express hidden motives such as their own cultural perceptions as well as their recipients'. This idea is truly supported by Varner and Beamer (2011) in that cultural concerns inevitably affect intercultural business communication. The participants' different cultural backgrounds are one of the predominant influences resulting in the use of language and politeness in interactions. Thus, another focus on how cultural perspectives bring about successful intercultural communication in this study is taken into account - intercultural awareness.

3.5 Intercultural Awareness (ICA)

One of the well-known researchers who proposes the significant characterization of cultural awareness Byram, presents five elements of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) that are needed to be achieved by communicators with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness/political education (Byram, 1997). Critical cultural awareness (CA) is the best-known formulation among the ICC in the field of language teaching (Baker, 2015b), and it is considered as the ability to critically examine practices in one's own and other's cultures (Byram, 1997). Since Byram (1997) particularly put an emphasis on European classroom settings between language learners and native speakers of the language, the term 'intercultural awareness (ICA)' is envisaged to extend the dynamic and emergent concept of intercultural communication with fluidity and complexity in an ELF context (Baker, 2009; 2011; 2012; 2015a; 2015b) as it goes beyond NS norms and against essentialism. Regarding the contextual practices, ICA is very suitable for this study where English is used as a lingua franca, and more importantly, most of the communicators involved in possesses different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Even though this concept is not considered the core framework of this investigation, it is necessarily complementary describing covert perceptions of the participants regarding intercultural issues affecting their international communication. Baker (2015: 163) declares the definition of ICA as follows:

Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context-specific manner in communication. (adapted from Baker 2011: 202)

3.5.1 Levels of intercultural awareness

Baker (2015) enumerates ICA into three levels due to communicator's understanding: Level 1 - basic cultural awareness, Level 2 - advanced cultural awareness, and Level 3 - intercultural awareness, illustrating their different awareness of intercultural communication. Although the ICA model is originally inspired by ICC (see Byram, 1997), it distinctively extended the communicative conceptions into a more fluid, dynamic and emergent nature of communication in ELF. That is, unlike the CA in ICC, ICA does not tie specific cultures to certain countries or nationalities.

Level 1 - basic cultural awareness, is a broad conscious understanding of one's own and others' cultural perspectives. A comparison between different cultures can be done at this stage in an essentialist perspective. In level 2 - advanced cultural awareness, more complex understanding and awareness of cultures can be found. The communicators have knowledge of cultural groupings and can predict misunderstanding and miscommunication influenced by different cultures and stereotypes. Lastly, level 3 - intercultural awareness, refers to emergent cultural practices and constructions. Participants at this stage are able to mediate and negotiate with an awareness of basic frames of references, forms, and practices among the related cultures in intercultural communication through ELF. Additionally, it doesn't remove national or other more fixed cultural references and identities, rather it adds an additional dimension.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that this model is not a linear developing process of becoming a successful intercultural communicator. Level 1 is not necessarily a starting point to reach level 2, and finally approach level 3; language users can position themselves at any level at any time in any circumstances depending upon their experiences, knowledge, and skills in intercultural communicative events. There might not be any totally right or wrong positions for participants in certain communicative situations. As shown in Baker's (2011) study, the Thai university students reveal their understanding and beliefs in English about cultures and cultural practices differently at various levels as well as their negotiation and mediation with fluid cultural references in situations. This is consistent with the findings in Sangiamchit's (2017) study that the Thai international students in the UK display different levels of intercultural awareness in their online intercultural communication through the use of ELF in different situations. The ELF communicators in both studies exhibit their ICA in various situations differently no matter what methods of communication they have gone through – spoken or written.

Different contexts vary the conventions of pragmatic strategies used to manage (potential) communication breakdowns so as to achieve success, and of both the strategies and the politeness

encourage communicative rapport based on communicators' preferences and practices. It can be said that ICA lies behind the use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in intercultural communication. As Baker (2015) asserts, successful communication includes the efficiency of information exchange and managing rapport or relationships. Success is determined by language use where indirectness of politeness is implicitly displayed in this kind of communication, so the interactants know how to employ the strategies including politeness in flexible and adaptive ways in order to achieve successful communication. Prediction of miscommunication is also considered; recipients might not share the same concept of what is polite or appropriate. Therefore, the intercultural interactants are aware of communication breakdown probability and how to deal with it strategically. They bear in mind what to expect and what to adjust in each circumstance ensuring mutual intelligibility and smooth interactions.

3.6 Conclusion

This section attempts to clarify the importance of the pragmatic strategies used to pre-empt and/or remedy communication problems in email interaction between (B)ELF users. Apart from appealing for mutual understanding between all parties involved, the outcome of the use of pragmatic strategies triggers satisfaction and even intimacy leading to building and maintaining good relationships. Similarly, the levels of formality sub-categorized in politeness reflect rapport between interactants. The opening-closing addresses indicating levels of formality indirectly determine how an email sender wants to treat their recipients showing politeness in a variety of friendly and professional ways via the written discourse. Hence, in order to become successful in business email communication, the two factors: pragmatic strategies and politeness, are worth taking into account. As (B)ELF email users are from different linguacultural backgrounds, ICA well defines the communicators' practices due to different levels they perceived at the moment. It is a supplementary factor here encouraging the participants' awareness when contacting other people in an intercultural setting.

Though pragmatic strategies are significantly important in communicative success, its use in written discourse is rarely found (Ren, 2016a) since previous studies are more concentrated on spoken interactions (e.g. Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Deterding, 2013; Mauranen, 2006 etc.). Moreover, politeness in communication is valuable to pay attention to as it can enhance rapport when being properly applied. Specifically, the opening-closing addresses, which are essential elements in emails (Lima, 2014) or basic conventions in electronic messages (Herring, 1996), signifying levels of formality in a sub-category in politeness requiring more detailed recognition regarding compound

segments of the addresses. Consequently, more research on successful (B)ELF written discourse concerning the use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in email is still needed. Furthermore, as ICA is an implicit factor influencing perceptions and/or practices amongst ELF users in intercultural communication, it should be acknowledged to better understand the communicators' expressions in different communicative situations including in email exchanges.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology used to conduct the study. The aim of the study is to have a better understanding of naturally-occurring interactions in business email exchanges in the context of (B)ELF. It begins with the research questions, following by the research design, the research site, the participants and the researcher's role. Afterward, the pilot study and the fieldwork are explained including the research instruments – the corpus of emails, the interviews and the focus groups. Subsequently, the rest of the chapter moves onto the data analysis and the ethical considerations. The last section ends with the trustworthiness and the limitations of the research.

4.1 Research Questions

The aim of the study is to understand how BELF users in a Thai context make use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in email exchanges in business/administrative transactions between English language users who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The pragmatic strategies lead to successful communication – mutual understanding and rapport development, whereas the politeness is differently employed due to sociological factors in relation to relationships between interlocutors. Politeness here, specifically in preference of formality in written communication, is noticed in Thai communicative circumstances because of the national culture influences (see Chaidaroon, 2003; Nomnian, 2014; Wongwarangkul, 2000). In addition, an awareness of intercultural communication is another focal point of this study since the participants contact people with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds and languages and cultures are not completely separable (Brown, 2014; Jiang, 2000). Consequently, to better understand the instances, these following research questions are proposed:

1. How are pragmatic strategies employed in business English as a lingua franca (BELF) email communication by international affairs staff in a Thai university context?
 - 1A. What are the pragmatic strategies used in the email exchanges to deal with miscommunication and enhance intercultural communication, and why?
 - 1B. How is politeness constructed as an aspect of formality through the lens of opening-closing addresses used in the email exchanges, and why?
2. To what extent does language and intercultural awareness influence the participants' email communication through BELF?

2A. In what way do they adjust their email communication to interlocutors from different linguacultural backgrounds?

To answer these research questions, the data were elicited through the research instruments – the corpus of emails, the interviews and the focus groups. The dataset from the email exchanges indicated their authentic use of the particular strategies and politeness in written contexts. Meanwhile the reasons supporting their use as well as their awareness were uncovered by means of the individual interviews and the focus group.

4.2 Methodological Approach

The qualitative inquiry was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach to explain the naturally occurring phenomena in this study. It is defined by Snape and Spencer (2003: 3) that the qualitative approach is a “naturalistic, interpretive approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, value, etc.) within their social worlds”. Similar to Mann and Stewart’s (2000) suggestion, this research paradigm is naturalistic and commonly used to study how people act and respond in different means of computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a social practice. Hence, it is suitable for the present study because it enhances a better understanding of pragmatic strategies and politeness naturally used in daily-life business email interactions. That is, this approach is used to elicit the data revealing why strategies and politeness were differently selected in particular circumstances with specific interlocutors, including the awareness of intercultural communication when contacting with people whose first languages and cultural backgrounds are different from the participants’.

Furthermore, qualitative inquiry is also open and fluid responding in a flexible means based on the emerging themes during the investigation. Thus, the focus could be refined all through the process of the study, not completely fixed at the beginning (Dornyei, 2007). Furthermore, the emergent data collected had an impact on the present study as well in terms of new themes generated in that the data were narrowed down and systematically categorized into different themes and sub-themes, and constantly evolved until all the data were gained from all participants.

4.3 Sampling Frame

4.3.1 Research Site

The study was conducted at a university in North-East Thailand where English use is not as ubiquitous as observed in Bangkok, the capital city of the country, because there are not many foreigners or tourists visiting the area. Commonly found situations of English use in intercultural communication on-site mostly happens in classrooms and through online interactions. Generally in this small region where a few companies or organizations contacting foreign counterparts exist, there are more opportunities for people at the university to encounter authentic international interactions with interlocutors who have different linguacultural backgrounds via face-to-face and online communication than those local people who are not studying at educational institutes or working on international affairs at workplaces.

Although the university is located in the regional part of the country, it aims to strive for its international recognition in order to enhance the wisdom of local people including its students and staff and to develop its holistic internationalization. There are international students from several countries enrolling each year, also international researchers and visiting lecturers come to the university in order to conduct joint research projects; the university has an agreement of academic collaboration with overseas partner institutions. This reveals how the university attempts to be recognized at the international level, and how it makes use of the value of the collaboration in its own environment. Even though there are a number of research studies based at big universities in a big city like Bangkok, internationalization is not limited to the locations. It is worth paying attention to a smaller university in a regional area with a different environment, discovering the phenomena in different contexts. Therefore, this research site is considered interesting to be investigated in this study as it is expected to reveal a wider view and/or more diversified results from the university in a rural area where the context is different from those urban universities in terms of an English environment, authentic use of the language, international people to communicate in English with, and international business conducted between by the international relations affairs staff at the university and other counterparts.

4.3.2 Selection of Participants

Rather than seeking representatives who are able to distribute generalization as seen in quantitative research, the participants of this study were drawn based on purposive sampling under the qualitative research paradigm so as to find rich and insightful data of the phenomenon or

experience. The important idea of using purposive sampling is to focus on particular people with specific characteristics who are able to align with the purposes of the research (Dörnyei, 2007; Etikan et al., 2016).

The interests of this study lie in the international collaboration and activities mentioned above operated by the Division of Public Relations and International Affairs. Particularly, the International Affairs Section (IR) under this division directly provides supports for international students and staff as well as international cooperation leading the university to internationalization and to be recognized among global educational institutions. In addition, in some faculties there are appointed staff who handle the faculty international affairs services mainly relating to international students and staff; these staff at the faculties work closely with those at IR. That is, the participants in this study are administrative staff working at IR or so-called 'IR staff', and people who are in charge of international affairs at the faculties or so-called 'FC staff' at the same university. All 11 IR staff and 18 FC staff at different 18 faculties had been contacted, but not all of them agreed to participate in this study. For the 11 IR staff, there was one staff on maternity leave and other two worked on Thai documents and rarely communicated through email interactions in English. Hence, the rest eight IR staff joined this investigation. Moreover, while all the 18 faculties were contacted, only five FC staff could be counted in the study. To be more specific for the 13 missing out of all 18 FC staff, two of them had joined the pilot study happening prior to the fieldwork, and other three were based on another campus which is far away from the main campus where all the participants work. Also, there were another three FC staff not giving me responses in terms of availability of interviews as well as their email exchanges, and the rest five faculties had no international affairs staff appointed. Therefore, there are 13 participants in total participating the fieldwork of the study; eight IR staff and five FC staff working at the same university.

The staff's main responsibilities are to build opportunities for partnership activities with partner organizations, coordinate memorandum of understanding (MOU) and memorandum of agreement (MOA) among the institutions, promote collaboration and facilitate collaborative projects or activities, provide international students and staff employment documents, distribute and circulate information on scholarships, grants, fellowship programs and academic activities, and offer advice, assistance and support. English is selected to be used as a contact language in their communication. The participants included almost all of the IR staff at IR and some FC staff at the faculties due to various reasons mentioned earlier. Though the number of participants in the study is relatively small, the collected data are detailed and saturated adequately to answer all the research questions. There were 13 people participating in this study: 11 native Thai speakers, one

Cambodian and one Filipino. The participants' background information is displayed in Table 4 below. However, it cannot be completely distinguished the IR staff's roles from each other's since they help each other work on the same issues or projects. For example, in one business interacting with specific interlocutor, the initial email was created or received by one IR staff, but then later once the business was being exchanged, another IR staff handled it with the same interlocutor until the business was successfully ended up. Whereas the FC staff at each faculty also work on the international affairs, they often coordinate with the IR staff asking for their assistance on some issues when interacting with partner organizations though many happened without the IR staff's hands. What can be stated is that the IR staff seem to have more opportunities to expose themselves to the international affairs with a more variety of interlocutors outside the university, their workplace, than the FC staff.

Table 4: Participants' Background Information

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Field of study	Working experience (years)	Job responsibility
1	IR 1	m	English	5	building opportunities for partnership activities and maintain rapport with partner organizations
2	IR 2	f	English	7	building opportunities for partnership activities and maintain rapport with partner organizations
3	IR 3	f	Chemistry	10	building opportunities for partnership activities and maintain rapport with partner organizations
4	IR 4	f	English	1	building opportunities for partnership activities and maintain rapport with partner organizations
5	IR 5	f	Computer Science	1	providing international students documents and supports

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Field of study	Working experience (years)	Job responsibility
6	IR 6	f	English	2	providing international staff documents and supports
7	IR 7	f	English	8	distributing and circulating information on scholarships, grants, fellowship programs and academic activities, and also promoting collaboration
8	IR 8	m	Engineering	1	building opportunities for partnership activities and maintain rapport with partner organizations, and also promoting collaboration and facilitating collaborative projects
9	FC 1	m	English	1	Managing all international business relating to own faculty; coordinating with students, staff and organizations including IR staff
10	FC 2	m	Choreography	3	Managing all international business relating to own faculty; coordinating with students, staff and organizations including IR staff
11	FC 3	m	English	3	Managing all international business relating to own faculty; coordinating with students, staff and organizations including IR staff
12	FC 4	m	Business Management	2	Managing all international business relating to own faculty; coordinating with students, staff and organizations including IR staff
13	FC 5	f	Graphic Design	3	Managing all international business relating to own faculty; coordinating with students, staff and organizations including IR staff

These staff were chosen because I, as a researcher and also work for this university as a teaching staff, I could access this research site and approached the participants easily as we are members of the same workplace knowing and sharing the context. The basis for selecting this site and the subjects is in accordance with Duff (2008) which states that the convenience sampling technique is commonly used in a single case study in applied linguistic research because of the willingness and cooperation of participants to join a research project. The participants felt more comfortable to give their data and opinions to someone whom they were familiar with, so I could gain the rich data from them without hesitation. As I work there at that institution, its contexts and particular social practices are easy for me to understand. Moreover, the reason why these staff became my participants is that they share commonality and experiences of administrative duties in a Thai university context; they handle multilingual and multicultural business communication through face-to-face interactions, telephone, fax, official letters and emails. It could be said that the IR staff have more opportunities to communicate with a variety of interlocutors; that is, the FC staff generally contact people at educational institutions and sometimes further passed the job onto the IR staff whereas the IR staff cooperate with such organizations including business sectors etc. However, the staff stay in contact with foreigners and maintain good relationships with them for variable periods of time. They deal with people holding different social statuses and intimacy via English email exchanges. Since the focus of this study is on written language communication, the data in their email exchanges and their views of the interactions were taken into consideration concerning mutual and successful communication by specifically using appropriate pragmatic strategies and politeness in intercultural communicative encounters in a BELF context.

4.3.3 Researcher's Role

I positioned myself as an observer or outsider (Robson, 2011) when collecting the email exchanges since I did not take part in their email exchanges; I was an unnoticed person of the investigation keeping an eye on what happened and how they created and replied to the emails. Besides that, I also took a role as an insider researcher (Robinson, 2002) while interviewing them so as to gain the participants' data of their authentic English use in daily life as well as their attitudes, perceptions of language awareness, and multicultural concerns. In the same vein, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) propose the concept of an interviewer as a traveler where both parties travel together along with their conversation; the interviewer asks questions and encourages the interactant to tell his/her story and experience. Moreover, they co-construct and negotiate by this interactive engagement, and unexpected or new perceptions may emerge (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, I consider using

the concept of a traveler in my study too because the objective of using the interviews in this study is to build up knowledge or unanticipated ideas occurring in this social activity.

As I am a staff working at the same university and familiar with some of them, the access to the site and also to the participants was easier than in a case if I were an unknown researcher to them. Consequently, the participants trusted me as a reliable researcher and were willing to express their insider perspectives in terms of feelings and attitudes to the relevant topics of the research.

4.4 Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

4.4.1 Pilot Study

The objectives of the pilot study were to try out the research instruments; checking how well the question items worked – if they were ambiguous or difficult to be understood or not, and scanning for related strategies noticed in authentic emails. There were two FC staff from different faculties at the same university where the participants in the main study or fieldwork work. They were purposively selected since they have known me and work at a similar level of responsibility, to ensure credible data even though the type and the number of international business transactions were varied. The pilot study took place in October – November 2017, a little prior to the fieldwork, so as to spare some time for revising the unclear and emergent points to be clarified before generating the main study.

It was found from the results from the pilot study that there were a few points that needed to be revised. The interview question items used in the main study were the revised version in terms of word choices or style of conducting based on the data collected from the pilot study. More importantly, previously I had concerned only the strategies to cope with misunderstanding in written BELF CMC, but I later found that miscommunication rarely occurred via this means of communication. Hence, I extended my focuses based on what was mentioned and suggested by the participants in the pilot study, into more often seen and significantly important pragmatic strategies, and politeness in the form of opening-closing addresses illustrating levels of formality in the email exchanges. Therefore, emergent pragmatic strategies and politeness were counted in this study.

4.4.2 Fieldwork

I spent a three-month period collecting data from the participants in the fieldwork during December 2017 – February 2018. The first individual interview was administered to the participants during

December 2017 depending on their availability in order to find out their backgrounds, use of English in general, people whom they communicated with, including their concerns or perceptions of English and cultural differences between interlocutors. Being interviewed, the participants were asked for their authentic email exchanges with international interlocutors so that I could analyze pragmatic strategies and politeness appearing in the emails before conducting the second interview with them. Nonetheless, I did not receive equal numbers of email exchanges from all participants; they forwarded me the emails considered relevant to my request and their availability. I had asked them for email exchanges contacting foreign interlocutors, on behalf of the faculty or university on international business.

After receiving the emails from the participants, the second interview was administered in January - February 2018 in relation to their exact use of pragmatic strategies and politeness with different recipients influenced by social factors, as well as their perceptions of English and intercultural awareness leading to successful and meaningful communication. This was to compare what they thought and replied to me with what had happened in their email communication. At this stage, some contradictions were discovered; the participants were sometimes confused about what they had thought, diverging from what they really performed through the emails.

The final research instrument - the focus group interviews - was carried out among the participants in the last two weeks of February 2018. The participants responsible for the international affairs were divided into two groups: administrative staff and teaching staff. Conducting this method aimed at generating a discussion among them in the relevant topics so as to supplement and expand their prior data in the individual interviews and to scrutinize the commonalities and differences in each participant as members of the same community of practice. The summary of the data collected in the fieldwork is shown in appendix A.

4.5 Research Instruments

4.5.1 Corpus of Emails

Since the nature of data in a qualitative study is naturally occurring, it is essential to gain raw data from the participants' ordinary events in natural settings (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, the authentic communicative interactions is in the form of text-based communication occurring through the Internet – email. Furthermore, the corpus of emails was deemed to be the main resource of social interactions to get a clearer understanding of how the international relations staff operate

(see Silverman, 2014). Especially in authentic workplace communication, similar to Kankaanranta's (2005) study, email communication reflects the natural features of BELF communication.

The email exchanges were created by the participants dealing with their international interlocutors such as lecturers, students and administrative staff within and outside the university including staff working for companies or non-educational organizations. There are 1,159 emails from 163 email exchanges collected as shown in the appendix A. The numbers of emails from each participant were different depending on their duties, frequency of contacting international counterparts and availability to share the information. Most of the email exchanges are the interactions between one participant and one recipient, but there were a few email exchanges out of 163 in the dataset circulated and/or conversed by three email communicators.

All the email exchanges were selected by the participants in that they felt the emails were qualified based on what they were told that what elements were looked for – pragmatic strategies and politeness managing miscommunication and enhancing intercultural communication – and their will to share the data. Moreover, each email exchange must consist of more than two emails because the pragmatic strategies and the development of opening-closing addresses could be noticed in the interactions. That is, one email exchange contains the back-and-forth emails sent by both the participants and their interlocutors dealing with the same particular topic(s) until the business discussed came up with the mutual agreement or conclusion. The interlocutors whom both the IR and FC staff usually contact are international teaching and administrative staff including students at their university – internal communication – and also with other universities and with non-educational organizations outside the workplace – external communication. Besides, the IR staff communicate with people working for companies, NGOs, embassies etc. more often than their FC peers. The corpus of emails that I was allowed to access were not all the email exchanges occurring in their inboxes; those were the emails I received with the participants' permission and willingness to share. More importantly, all proper names appearing on the email messages were anonymized due to ethical issues.

All messages were scrutinized to clarify pragmatic strategies and politeness in institutional business email exchanges, and later in the second interview, the participants responded to the relevant questions based on what they had written and interpreted in the emails. All the emails shown as examples in the thesis were selected due to the codes coded under the sub-themes and the themes derived from the data analysis process (see 6.2) and the coding and categorizing (see 6.3). Since the frequency of the occurrence of each code – pragmatic strategy and level of formality expressed by opening-closing address – is not more significantly meaningful than those with more occurrence in

this qualitative study, any codes discovered once were revealed as empirical evidence used by the BELF email users. In cases where particular codes were found used more than one participant, the selected emails representing such codes were randomly chosen with the intention to show the data unveiled by different research participants involved in employing the codes. Therefore, under the same sub-themes where different codes of strategies or addresses were discovered in the corpus of emails along with the interviews discussing such email exchanges, the data gained from different participants were exemplified in order to see that the various participants employed strategies or addresses in different situations explaining why they used or selected such strategies or politeness in the email exchanges. That is, I did not intend to present the findings elicited from the emails as well as the second interviews given by just only one or repetitious informant if more than one users were uncovered employing the same codes. This was considered as the crucial means to cross-check (Robson, 2002) what was seen in the email exchanges and what they thought when they orally replied in the second interviews including the focus group interviews. The focuses were regarding their awareness of intercultural communication in instances of contacting various multilingual franca recipients as many studies reveal that there is different use of strategies by people from different cultures (e.g. Hartford & Bradovi-Harlig 1996; Liaw 1996; Chapman 1997; Gonzalez-Bueno, 1998), especially in BELF settings (e.g. Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005; Kankaanranata, 2006). In other words, the purpose of collecting the email corpus here was to investigate how the participants constructed emails by simply employing the pragmatic strategies, why they chose different levels of formality indicating politeness with particular recipients, and also how they concerned distinct practices when communicating with interlocutors holding different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The pragmatic strategies and the politeness found in the corpus of emails are displayed in appendix C.

4.5.2 Interviews

Apart from the email exchanges, the two individual interviews were included in the data collection procedure. Although there are a number of techniques for collecting qualitative data, an interview is the most frequently applied method (Dörnyei, 2007). The interview is variously defined such as a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984: 102), 'professional conversation' (Kvale, 1996: 5), and 'the gold standard of qualitative research' (Silverman, 2000: 51). It allows in-depth information, responses and flexibility to be obtained whereas other procedures are not able to do so (Selinger & Shohamy, 1995). The interview is a cooperation between an interviewer and an interviewee focusing on the interviewee's expressions, not the interviewer's (Richard, 2003). However, both the

interviewee and the interviewer may spontaneously share their experiences or ideas in the interview – this interview becomes a social practice rather than a research instrument (Talmy, 2011).

Interviews are commonly categorized into three types: structured, unstructured or open or ethnographic, and semi-structured interviews (Dörnyei, 2007; Heigham & Croker, 2009). The most often conducted in applied linguistic research is the semi-structured one (Dörnyei, 2007) which contains both predetermined and open questions. Respondents in the interview will feel like they are participating in a ‘conversation with a purpose’, not just simply replying to a set of questions in the interview (ibid.). Though the interviewer has an interview schedule, the interviewee is encouraged to give detailed information on certain topics. Hence, I employed the semi-structured interview in my study since I had a domain of questions, but still needed to gain a broader view about the relevant issues, besides, I did not want to limit in-depth and flexible data from my participants. The other two types of the interview were not chosen because the structured one is a fixed format expected to gain the interviewee’s thought based on the predetermined answers without further questions to get more clarified or interpreted answers, and it is suitable for surveys. While the unstructured interview contains unfixed questions, the interviewer does not expect what to see or hear from the interviewee at the beginning, and the respondent will reply in unpredictable directions that have not been predetermined (Lune & Berg, 2017).

There were two interviews in the study conducted with all participants and the questions are listed in the appendix D1 and E2. The first interview was administered in order to obtain the participants’ data of their everyday-life English use in general, people they normally contacted through emails, concerns of English, and conversational problems or failures in their English interactions, especially in email exchanges. The focus of this interview was on the participants’ backgrounds of exposure to English communication. The interview individually took approximately 15-30 minutes in less formal situations because I did not want them to feel nervous or stressed while giving me information. The second interview was a month later after I had received the emails and roughly analyzed the pragmatic strategies and the politeness used since this interview was to determine the natural use and reasons supporting their selection of specific strategies and politeness in business ELF emails. The questions in the second interview were more specific and based on what had occurred in the particular email exchanges; the participants displayed opinions or beliefs of what they had thought and what they did in emails. The participants had a look at what they had written in their emails, and then retrospectively explained the reasons why they used such linguistic repertoires or if there were some hidden agendas in making particular meanings and/or if they were aware of social factors influencing politeness in the intercultural communication. This interview took approximately 30 - 60

minutes individually; a longer time was spent compared with the first interview because we discussed and shared experiences since the researcher acted as a traveler traveling with the interviewees (see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) so as to clarify the unanticipated and unclear points in the existing practices. All the interviews were voice and/or video recorded with the participants' permission.

4.5.3 Focus Group

A focus group is a phenomenon of collective experience where the participants share and challenge each other on certain topics based on the interview schedule/guide rather than allowing participants freedom to discuss broad topics (Dörnyei, 2007). It is interesting for the researcher as a moderator to observe the situations and see how the interactants responded to the emerging points in the discussion. The more insightful and broad information is articulated in this kind of synergistic environment as stated by Hennink (2007: 5) that the focus group interview is "to shift the attention away from the dominance of an interviewer to focus on generating a discussion between participants on certain issues". It is conducted more dynamically and interpersonally when compared with a one-on-one interview and produces a wide range of data (Hennink, 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The semi-structured guides are frequently employed the most in a focus group interview since it contains both open- and closed-questions proposed by the moderator (Dörnyei, 2007).

The focus group was used in this study in order to gain more in-depth ideas, values and shared understanding of using English in professional email communication by the staff responsible for international affairs in a Thai context, particularly from an intercultural communication perspective through ELF. When the participants sat in a circle discussing the broad topics prepared by me as a researcher and moderator, they felt comfortable to express their opinions freely in that environment. The focus group guide is listed in the appendix D3, to lead the direction for the group discussion. I also worked as a facilitator most of the time rather than being the interviewer in the one-to-one interview; I managed the participants' opportunities to equally share ideas (see Dörnyei, 2007).

The focus group interviews were conducted twice due to the different groups of participants: IR staff and FC staff, as I wanted to create a comfortable atmosphere for all of them so that they would feel freer to share their opinions or feelings on the topics discussed (see Lune & Berg, 2017). In the group of administrators (IR staff), five staff participated in this activity. The interactants know each other well because they work together in the same office, so they comfortably discussed and shared their

opinions and experiences. On the other hand, another focus group of four teaching staff (FC staff) expressed their beliefs and feeling uneasily at the beginning as they work at different faculties and do not know each other, but it gradually became more relaxed and comfortable during the interview process. Each focus group interview lasted approximately less than an hour. They were carried out in February 2018 after all participants had two one-on-one interviews. The activity was established in an informal atmosphere, and it was video recorded with the participants' consent. Therefore, I could find the holistic points of view from the participants' multifaceted ideas as well as some unexpected points emerging during the discussion in relation to ideal and authentic use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in emails along with the concerns of intercultural communication affecting their practices.

4.6 Data Analysis Approach

Content analysis is defined by several scholars emphasizing textual management or categorization. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) consider it as the summary and report process of the core contents of written data; they propose that "content analysis can be undertaken with any written material, from documents to interview transcriptions, from media products to personal interviews." (p.563). Lune and Berg (2017: 192) define content analysis in that it "examines a discourse by looking at patterns of the language used in this communications exchange, as well as the social and cultural contexts in which these communications occur". Krippendorff (2004: 18) explains it with a broad definition that it is "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". In accordance, Weber (1990) states that content analysis is used to contemplate the integration of culture, social structure and social interaction.

The content analysis approach is suitable as an analytical tool in this study as the data are in forms of emails and interview transcripts. It was employed to analyze the collected data: the corpus of authentic email exchanges between the participants and their interlocutors, the individual interviews and the focus group interviews aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of the use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in the form of opening-closing addresses, as well as the participants' awareness of intercultural communication among ELF users. Both inductive or pre-existing and deductive or emergent approaches were taken into consideration to code themes and sub-themes making links between them (Cohen, et. al., 2011).

Transcribing the data collected, I applied the Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) transcription conventions, but ignored irrelevant issues such as tones and back-channeling features

because meaningful data in this study was what they said, not how they expressed it. After that, NVivo 12 was used to house the transcriptions as well as the corpus of email exchanges so that the data were managed and organized systematically and easily since all the data could be recalled and interacted at the same time in the software programme (Mackey & Gass, 2012).

The next step in handling the data was coding. Within the content analysis approach, coding is involved in order to reveal patterns and make interpretations (Mackey & Gass, 2012). Lune and Berg (2017) explain that the raw data collected are converted into data ready for the process of coding. Content coding is the process of identifying and choosing relevant as well as reducing raw data (Schreier, 2012); it is a noteworthy step in the content analysis to organize and index the collected data, and then classify the themes. Having organized into "a group of words with similar meaning or connotations" (Weber, 1990: 37), categories and themes will be conducted at the beginning of the analyzing process (Silverman, 2014). It is used in the analysis of large quantities of written text systematically where categorization is a core feature in reducing the data (Flick, 2009). The text is analytically reduced based on pre-existing and emergent categories (Cohen, et. al., 2011). The data received was firstly conducted with the deductive coding basis found in the related literature review, and the inductive coding of the emergent data was later generated. Finally, all the codes were grouped and categorized into themes based on the belonging to a particular group describing the phenomenon (see appendix E). All the processes were operated through NVivo 12.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval from the Humanities Ethics Committee via Ethics and Research Governance Online (ERGO) is required by the University of Southampton in any research studies in which human participants are involved. Hence, I had to provide the ERGO team necessary documents relating to the research data collection. After receiving ethical approval, the potential research participants were contacted and asked to participate in this study.

The consent from each participant is another crucial issue that needs to be taken into consideration. I contacted the potential participants individually explaining the research project, and gave them the information sheet and the consent form to be considered. The nature and the objectives of the study including the fact that they had the right to withdraw at any stage any time, were also clarified. Confidentiality and privacy are vital in the study, so the participants were assured that their personal data and any proper names would be anonymous when the research was published. Later, the participants who would like to voluntarily join the project signed the consent form and returned it to me. Afterward, we made appointments to start collecting data. Finally, obtaining the data from

the participants in the forms of the interviews and the email exchanges, I was responsible for data storage and security as I was the only one who could access the collected data.

4.8 Trustworthiness and Limitations

Whether research is quantitative or qualitative, researchers have to prove that it is credible so that readers are assured of the quality of the research. However, these two research approaches have different definitions of credibility; in quantitative research, reliability and validity are tested separately, whereas these two points are not distinguished by qualitative researchers, rather they propose other terms such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness instead (Golafshani, 2003). Since validity and reliability create credibility, indicating the quality of the study (Patton, 2002), it is necessary to reinforce the research results by considering the elements of trustworthiness.

In a qualitative paradigm, there are four criteria to be concerned in order to achieve trustworthiness: credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Mackey and Gass (2005) state that credibility ensures credible findings and interpretations of the study to the participants. It is to collect data in prolonged and persistent engagement so as to obtain rigour in the research process. Confirmability refers to the degree in which findings and interpretations are proved by the availability of adequate data. Mackey and Gass (2005) further reveal that all the detailed information based on the participants' claims and interpretation are required. That is, adequacy of the findings in terms of sources of information and processes enhance confirmability by not only the researchers themselves but also the readers. Dependability is established by conducting a consistent and dependable process in the research, so with this characteristic of the practice, it would be possible to replicate the result Concerning what Silverman (2014) calls 'reliability' in qualitative research, he asserts that reliability works when replicability is counted. Nonetheless, it is not crucial to see the exactly the same results from future research, especially those in a qualitative paradigm, as many researchers deny the predictable relevance of reliability in qualitative research (Silverman, 2014). The detailed processes are explicated to uncover research design and insight into the study, and this will guide future researchers of the same kind of study and understanding and possibility of the results. The last criterion is transferability. In a qualitative approach, the number of samples is not big, but they are purposively selected according to salient criteria (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The findings and the interpretations cannot be generalized to the population, but the transferability exists; generalizability can be found in a quantitative approach, but it is not the goal for a qualitative study. Therefore, the transferability

here means detailed descriptions of the context of the study which is elucidated, and the readers are the ones who consider if the findings discovered fit in with their contexts. Those sufficient descriptions relate to participants, background, processes and researcher-participant relationships, for example, which are taken into consideration if they are able to be transferred.

In this study, credibility was achieved by conducting the three-month period of collecting data applying a triangulation method, namely, the individual interviews, the focus group interviews and the corpus of authentic email exchanges. The method of triangulation is a proper and common solution of biased findings as it combines multiple theories and methods to confirm accurate and comprehensive data gained establishing the validity of the findings and conclusion once the data reveal the same or similar results (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Silverman, 2014). The dataset was sufficient to interpret the answers to the research questions of this study. The research instruments could be used to cross-check the findings from various data sources to enhance the confirmability of the study. For dependability, thorough methodological procedures were provided; the readers are given a clear explanation to understand and follow research practices. It is the readers who are responsible for deciding if the findings and the interpretations of the study can be applied into their contexts since rich contextual descriptions were provided in order to promote transferability of the study concerning administrative staff's selection of the pragmatic strategies and the politeness in email communication for future research studies focusing on (B)ELF users in Thailand.

Transliteration was employed into the translation process of data analysis if equivalent words or phrases could not be replaced as I interviewed the participants and conducted the focus group interviews in Thai mainly since they work at a Thai university where the Thai language is primarily used, and they preferred conversing in Thai. Moreover, another native Thai who is my research assistant rechecked all of the transcriptions and comprehensive accuracy.

What may concern the limitations of the study are the location of data collection, the small number of participants, and the effect of my role as an insider. Though this is a single site and the number of participants is quite small, the data gained completely answer all the research questions in this qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, as the second interviews were conducted to recall what had happened in the email exchanges interacting at some points in the past, some participants sometimes expressed their uncertainty of what they thought at that time exchanging the emails. Instead, they revealed their opinions at the time being interviewed and also made a guess of what they would have thought back to the time contacting. Besides, I regularly acted as an insider while collecting the data in three months, so good relationships with the participants were established. Nevertheless, this could lead to some disadvantages in overly spending time on approaching some

participants, especially those teaching staff at the faculties who are responsible for both teaching and administrative tasks. They postponed the appointments due to their other business such as meetings and being ordered to be out of the campus or else; it seemed like rearranging appointments with me was easy to negotiated, and it happened many times with some of them. Therefore, I could not reach some of them in the limited time available.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presents the research methodology of this study. It begins with the objectives of conducting this investigation and the research questions concerning pragmatic strategies and politeness strategies, as well as an awareness of intercultural communication among BELF users in a Thai context via email interactions. This is to explain what strategies were found in the authentic email exchanges by the staff at the university dealing with international affairs, and the reasons why they chose different strategies including politeness in particular situations. The qualitative research approach was selected in order to reveal such circumstances and gain sufficient information from the participants with their willingness to reflect their reality of authentic practices in business transactions through BELF. Methods of interviews, focus groups and a corpus of emails were utilized to gather the data from the participants, and to triangulate the results of the findings and increase the credibility of the findings. The content analysis approach was considered a proper analytical tool for data analysis as the objectives of the study are to uncover the naturally occurring instances in communication where the awareness of intercultural interaction was to be found.

Chapter 5 Findings from the First Interviews

5.1 Introduction

The information in chapters 5-7 is the findings from the three research instruments used in this study: the interviews, the corpus of emails and the focus groups, as mentioned in the previous chapter. It is presented chronologically based on the methods of data collection generated. The findings from the first interviews are firstly uncovered in this chapter since it was the means to get to know the participants in terms of their background information, English use and working experiences relating to career paths of being international relations affairs staff. Then in chapter 6, the major part of the findings from authentic email exchanges is illustrated. The pragmatic strategies and politeness were employed in the participants' email exchanges between themselves as university/faculty representatives and their interlocutors who have different linguacultural backgrounds working at universities, organizations or companies. In addition, the findings from the second interviews are put together in chapter 6; they are the data supporting what the participants concerned about and why they did that in the email interactions in aspects of pragmatic strategies and politeness correlating with language and intercultural awareness. Finally, in chapter 7, the information from the focus groups of administrative staff and faculty members responsible for international affairs at the university/faculty are reported. The data collected in each data source were analyzed and interpreted in terms of pragmatic strategies, politeness specifically in formality in a form of opening-closing addresses, as well as language and intercultural awareness practiced by the participants when communicating with people holding different backgrounds of languages and cultures through English email exchanges.

The objectives of the first interview are to gain the participants' background information such as education, experiences of spending time abroad where English-only communication is necessary, and working experience as international relations affairs staff. This was considered an introductory meeting to get to know the participants so as to build rapport. However, the significance information from the interviews was elicited regarding their thoughts and perceptions of what should be counted when dealing with business emails with different interlocutors in intercultural communication so as to reach mutual and successful transactions.

In order to present the whole process of data analysis, figure 1 explains from the step that all the initial interviews were recorded until the main themes, sub-themes and codes were finally

constructed. These are adapted from Schreier's (2012) and Creswell's (2014) frameworks under the qualitative content analysis approach.

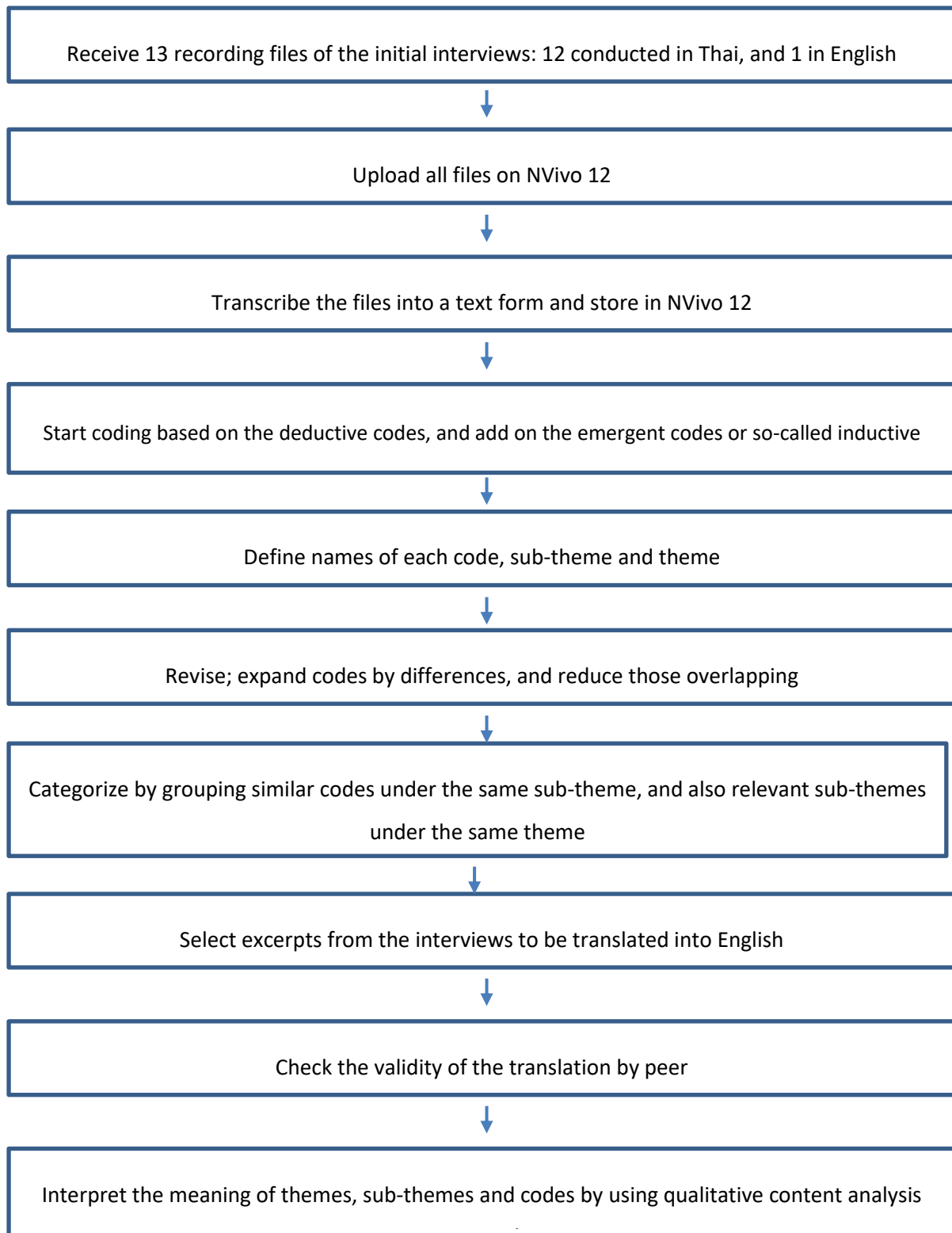


Figure 1 Processes of data Analysis of the Initial Interviews Adapted from Schreier's (2012) and Creswell's (2014) Frameworks

5.2 Data collection

The research population is people handling international relations affairs divided into two groups: 1) Administrative staff (IR staff) working at the International Affairs Section (IR) at the university under the Division of Public Relations – their main responsibilities are to act on behalf of the university contacting people within and outside the institution, and 2) Appointed faculty members (FC staff) who are either administrators working on international affairs and other tasks, or teaching staff required to mainly teach and also deal with the faculty business on international affairs.

For the first group, there were eight IR staff joining the project though the number of all at the section was 11. For the three missing staff, two of them were responsible for quality assurance – they contacted only Thai interactants via email exchanges, and another staff was on maternity leave during the period of research data collection. During the same time, the second group, FC staff, was also being approached to take part as research participants. Even though there are 18 faculties in total at the university, only five FC staff were available. Due to the fact that three faculties are located on a different campus far from the main campus, they were not counted in. The other five faculties do not appoint anyone to be responsible for their own faculties' international affairs; they always ask the IR staff to help them out with IR matter. Moreover, two FC staff from two different faculties had joined the pilot study, so they could not repeat in the main study. There were then eight possible FC staff to be approached. I, as the researcher, had been trying to contact all the eight faculties seeking for the FC staff during the first three weeks of data collection. However, the persons in charge of three faculties were not accessible or responded, so only five FC staff from the rest five faculties finally involved in this study.

All the 13 staff who share a commonality in their job responsibility agreed to participate and they were chosen to be the participants based on purposive sampling as described in the methodology chapter (see 4.3.2). All in all, the data saturation crucially controls the size of participants; it is unnecessary to gain more sample size when this does not signify any differences (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). All the participants participating in this study could provide sufficient detailed information on the relevant topics investigated, so crossing out the 16 inaccessible ones was not problematized.

5.3 Transcribing process

Almost all of the participants were interviewed in Thai, except one Filipino IR staff who is not able to communicate in Thai. Throughout the data collection, the Filipino was interviewed in English. The

interviews were either audio or video recorded with the participants' permissions. This first interview approximately took 15-30 minutes with each participant. All the 12 interviews with the Thais were transcribed into Thai, while the one with the Filipino IR staff was done into English without any revision or editing the utterances. All the interviews consumed approximately 23 hours of transcription. Both the video and the voice files including the written transcripts were housed in NVivo 12 in order to be conveniently and systematically analyzed. The Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) transcription conventions were adapted in this study because the VOICE transcription conventions are one of those widely used in ELF research (Breiteneder, Pitzl, Majewski, & Klimpfing, 2006; VOICE Project, 2007) The conventions were applied regarding intonation, emphasis, repetition, word fragments, uncertain transcription, non-English speech, anonymization and unintelligible speech. The transcription conventions adapted from VOICE can be seen in appendix F.

Even though Thai language was mainly employed in the data collection, the presentation of the data in this thesis is in English translation. Hence, there is also another Thai colleague who is a current PhD student in applied linguistics at the University of Southampton and lecturer in English at a university in Thailand, helping me conducting back translation of the presented transcripts (see Brislin, 1970; Tyupa, 2011) to recheck the meaning accuracy of the transcripts by converting my English translation back into Thai, and then comparing and confirming the meanings of the finalized version of the interviews.

5.4 Coding and categorizing data

Deploying the software program 'NVivo 12', all the transcripts in Thai and English of the 13 participants' interviews were stored systematically for ease of coding and categorization. The deductive or concept-driven codes (Schreier, 2012) drawn upon pre-determined issues relating to the research questions, were primarily used to frame codes, and categorized into sub-themes and themes for the data collected in this research. While coding, however, emergent codes derived through the inductive or data-driven approach (Schreier, 2012) were also found. For the emergent codes showing no similarities to the pre-existing sub-themes or themes, they were expanded into new sub-themes or themes. Also, the pre-determined sub-themes not mentioned by the participants were then deleted from the coding frame.

Relating to the objectives of the study, the main themes in the first interviews were divided into three: 'pragmatic strategies', '(inter)cultural awareness', and 'politeness'. There were four sub-themes put under the pragmatic strategies theme: 'Self-initiated self-repaired strategies dealing

with miscommunication strategies’, ‘Self-initiated interlocutor’s response needed strategies dealing with miscommunication strategies’, ‘accommodating strategies’, and ‘multimodality features’. Within the theme ‘(inter)cultural awareness’, there are two sub-themes classified: ‘nativeness’ and ‘cultural differences’. At the same time, two sub-themes under the theme ‘politeness’: ‘social variables’ focusing on power and distance between email interactants, and ‘opening-closing addresses’ emphasizing how the participants address their recipients in various contexts. All themes, sub-themes and codes discovered in the initial or first interviews are presented in the following table. Nevertheless, this coding scheme presented at this stage is merely based on the data elicited from the first interviews, hence coding frames for other data sources – the corpus of emails and the follow-up interviews, and the focus groups, are illustrated in the next sections.

Table 5: Themes, sub-themes and codes from the first interviews

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies dealing with miscommunication (D)	Self-repetition (D)	5.1
		Consulting dictionary or application (I)	5.2-5.3
		Consulting peer (I)	5.3-5.4, 5.6
		Let it pass (D)	5.5
	Self-initiated interlocutor’s response needed strategies dealing with miscommunication (D)	Asking for clarification (D)	5.6
		Confirmation check (D)	5.7
		Direct comment (I)	5.8
	Accommodation strategy (D)	Code-switching(D)	5.9
	Multimodal feature (D)	Emoticon (D)	5.10
	(Inter)cultural Awareness (D)	Nativeness (D)	Nativized inclination (D)
Egalitarian (I)			5.13-5.14
Cultural differences (D)		Awareness (D)	5.15-5.17
		Unawareness (D)	5.18
Politeness (D)	Social variables (D)	Power (D)	5.19-5.20
		Distance (D)	5.22-5.23
	Opening-closing addressing (I)	Opening (I)	5.24-5.25
		Closing (I)	5.25

*(D) = deductive approach *(I) = inductive approach

5.5 Results and analysis

The data from the first interview can be divided into two parts: background information and participants' perspectives. The first part details the participants' personal information relating to English use and experiences on working as international relations affairs staff. The second part is the core content elucidating pragmatic strategies and politeness in authentic email interactions as well as the perceptions on such topics mentions and intercultural awareness as they normally contact interlocutors with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The analysis is presented together with the data in the section of the participants' perspectives.

5.5.1 Background information

The participants' information reveals their brief personal detail as well as how English communication touched their daily life and experiences. As mentioned earlier, the participants were 11 native Thais, one Filipino, and one Cambodian. Apart from the Filipino, all of them could converse in Thai. In terms of their fields of study, seven of them held a degree in English, two majored in Arts and four in Sciences. All admitted that they had spent some time abroad where English is compulsory; eight participants spent 0-3 years, two staff were there for 4-6 years, and three people stayed there for 7 years or more. Besides, on such duty contacting international interlocutors, eight of them have worked on this field for 0-3 years, three for 4-6 years, and two staff for more than 7 years.

Regarding their job responsibilities, the IR staff are assigned tasks determined by the nature of whom to contact: internal or external communicators, and academic or non-academic staff. Nevertheless, it could not absolutely confirm their distinct duties because they sometimes co-constructed the same business, meaning that they generally contacted various people from different organizations including colleagues at their university. Similarly, the FC staff are persons working at their faculties handling international affairs matters on behalf of the faculties. However, a variety of organizations they contact differs; the IR staff have more chances to communicate with various interlocutors, especially non-academic workers. Moreover, frequently the FC staff pass on the faculty business to the IR staff asking for their coordination and collaborations. Table 6 illustrating the participants' background information is in appendix G.

5.5.2 Participants' perspectives

The coding categorization is explained by themes shown in Table 4. In this part, each of the codes in all sub-themes and themes, is presented with the excerpts from the dataset along with interpretation and analysis.

5.5.2.1 Pragmatic strategies

This theme explains all the strategies expressed by the participants in their authentic use of the email exchanges and the ways in which they thought they normally did or should do to conduct successful communication with a variety of intercultural interlocutors. The strategies under this theme are divided into four sub-themes with a total of nine strategies (see Table 4), and described as follows.

5.5.2.1.1 Self-initiated self-repaired strategies dealing with miscommunication

This sub-theme relates to how the participants adjusted their ways of saying or coped with the communicative problem(s) on their own to avoid misunderstanding, and ensure their own understanding of the other party's messages sent to them where there seemed to be doubtful or so-called miscommunication (see 3.1). The participants revealed four strategies or codes under this sub-theme: self-repetition, consulting dictionary or application, consulting peer, and let it pass.

Example 5.1: Self-repetition

- 1 **IR 3:** ... I will give them some elaboration because sometimes some people they could not
- 2 understand if for only one or two words. so you have to explain it to them until the flow of
- 3 communication with this smooth.

*This is not a translated version (see 5.3).

To begin with the 'self-repetition' strategy in example 5.1, IR 3 insisted that she would sometimes give more details or information when she foresaw the possibility of miscommunication which would happen to her email interactants without their requests for more or clearer clarification. She thought that a few words might cause ambiguity to her readers, so she would repeat or rephrase her messages to pre-empt communication breakdown through their email exchanges until she found the messages with additional fragments sufficiently saturated to let the communication succeed.

Example 5.2: Consulting dictionary or application

- 1 **IR 1:** I mostly keep reading again and again, and interpret the sender's intention of sending the
2 message. I will look up the vocabulary in a dictionary RECHECK its meaning in an online English-Thai
3 dictionary and also its use in an English-English dictionary. if I can find it, the problem will be solved.
4 if not, I will reply the email asking the sender directly.
- 5 **Researcher:** you said that the PRIOR option was using dictionaries, and asking would be the second
6 option if you could not figure it out by yourself. am I right?
- 7 **IR 1:** yes EXACTLY.
- 8 **Researcher:** but why don't you ask your sender? why recheck with the dictionaries?
- 9 **IR 1:** it might be because of my personal characteristics. I am kind of considerate, so I don't want to
10 frequently BOTHER anyone. for me, I will try hard to deal with it, and asking people must be the last
11 option to solve problems it's just MY preference.

Example 5.3: Consulting dictionary or application

- 1 **FC 4:** ... I will ask my colleague to help me interpret the meaning of the message in the emails.
- 2 **Researcher:** is this the first method you normally do when problems occur?
- 3 **FC 4:** no. the first way to solve the unclear message is to check its meaning with the program or
4 application on the internet, just like these. what are they called in English I am not sure. like when
5 you combine more than one word, and they turn into another or other meanings such as hang up
6 and the likes.

When it came to the participants' turns who were confused or had a problem of understanding from the interlocutors' messages, IR 1 in example 5.2 and FC 4 in example 5.3 stated that they would use a dictionary or an application to help them out with unclear issues. Though IR 1 said that he would make use of both a dictionary and ask for the sender's clarification, he affirmed that he preferred to firstly solve the problem himself by using many types of a dictionary to cross-check the meanings and their use. He would translate the English word into Thai, and its use in an English-English dictionary for reference. In case that he could not comprehend the conveyed message from his interlocutors after he consulted dictionaries as mentioned earlier, he would eventually send an email asking for more explanation. This was because he tried not to disturb his interactants, so he

would decide to handle it alone before seeking somebody's help. Similar to FC 4, he also preferred trying an online dictionary program or application first to support himself in problematic situations. Once he proved that he himself could not clarify the doubt, assistance from others was later sought.

Example 5.4: Consulting peer

- 1 **IR 5:** ... but if I write to anyone holding a HIGHER position, I will consult my colleagues or whoever is
- 2 more skilful in English language. it is because I get used to general vocabulary in my own writing but
- 3 it will be different in formal writing. it has to be more careful, proper and correct. introductory
- 4 phrases or paragraphs may be needed before directing to the point and end the message by
- 5 thanking I think.

Colleagues or friends are other supporters in eliminating miscommunication via email interactions. IR 5 in example 5.4 insisted that opinions from her colleagues or someone with better English skills were considered as useful assistance. She perceived herself at some points as an English language user who still needed improvement of proper written language in formal writing. However, she emphasized that this strategy would not always be required; it depended on whom she would be communicating with. If her interlocutor holds more power, this strategy will be taken into account. That is, who her interlocutors are essentially matters.

Example 5.5: Let it pass

- 1 **IR 3:** honestly, sometimes I could not understand their sentences. what I do is I'm making the guess.
- 2 especially if you already know they are American, British or other English native speakers. how they
- 3 speak. you could not really understand that instance the way they pronounce the words. but for me
- 4 what I learn is just getting the MAIN idea, the GIST, the KEYWORDS. and that's how I comprehend
- 5 with them in conversation because in my words. not only writing as well as conversation.

*This is not a translated version (see 5.3).

What has been presented in the examples above are strategies that the participants, as email users, attempted to better understand the conveyed information. Interestingly, there is another strategy called 'Let it pass' (Firth, 1996) intentionally employed. IR 3 in example 5.5 admitted that there were some situations she could not understand some points in the emails from her interlocutors, but what she did was ignoring it. Moreover, she just grabbed the core parts and guessed what the

overall messages were about, it seemed fine if she could still comprehend what her interlocutors overall wanted to express. She suggested that it was common not to understand partial expressions from various international communicators because of their differences. It could be either linguistic or cultural matters making miscommunication occur, but if it was not significantly meaningful to the whole messages, it was nothing; better ignored it and paid more attention to the more important parts.

5.5.2.1.2 Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies dealing with miscommunication

There are three codes under this sub-theme including 'asking for clarification', 'confirmation check', and 'direct comment'. Similar to the sub-theme 'self-initiated self-repaired strategies dealing with miscommunication', the strategies in this sub-theme were initiated by the participants as email senders, but responses from their recipients specifically answering to the comments were required. The following extracts exemplify all the three strategies in this sub-theme.

Example 5.6: Asking for clarification

- 1 **FC 5:** if the interlocutor is the one whom I have known and dealt with, I will immediately send them
- 2 an email back asking for clarification. but from whom I DON'T know or if the email is forwarded by
- 3 someone, I will print it out and bring it with me to ask.
- 4 **Researcher:** who is the person you will ask?
- 5 **FC 5:** the one who sent me that email or the dean. or I will call the international relations affairs staff
- 6 if the forwarded email is from him or her.

FC 5 promptly unveiled the way she handled with unclear messages from her email interactants whom she had known by replying and asking for clarification directly from them. However, she also mentioned another strategy solving this case – asking for help from her colleagues or 'consulting peer'. There is a factor influencing her decision of choosing the strategies – how well or familiar she knows the interlocutor(s). This indicates that 'asking for clarification' is one of the strategies she commonly used to prevent misunderstanding. Besides, she could never make the miscommunication clear-cut unless she received more information from her interlocutors, the source of the issues, explaining the obscure matters.

Example 5.7: Confirmation check

- 1 **IR 6:** I generally try to comprehend the meaning, and ask the sender like “here is my understanding.
2 is it correct? if not, please explain”. there was a case that I didn’t understand some words or
3 sentences. they were vague. but for my comprehension, I solved it this way. if it’s NOT what my
4 interlocutor means, I won’t mind being corrected.
- 5 **Researcher:** are you SAYING that you REPLIED BACK THAT WAY to the sender?
- 6 **IR 6:** YES instantly replied.

In the interview with IR 6 in example 5.7, another strategy called ‘confirmation check’ was employed when she wanted to recheck her correctness of understanding of the conveyed messages. She also added that she replied immediately so that she could smoothly continue communicating via email exchanges with her recipients without misunderstandings.

Example 5.8: Direct comment

- 1 **IR 1:** there seems not to happen often but what I can think about now is that I had misunderstood
2 and presumed things in a totally different way. then, I replied to my interlocutor with my
3 misconception. she then stated that it was incorrect. she meant something else yeah. it must be an
4 important issue otherwise she might not correct me directly like this. I felt so sorry making that
5 mistake. it happened to me this way. maybe once or twice.

Another point to mention here is the strategy called ‘direct comment’. IR 1 in example 5.8 revealed his experience once he received an email from another party directly stating that what he had said was incorrect - he misunderstood - and his interlocutor then told him to correct the information mentioned. This sort of situation was never reported by other participants. It might relate to the concepts of ‘save face’ and ‘lose face’ where negotiations of face in communicative events are being maintained by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is possibly found offensive when receiving direct comments like “you are incorrect” or “you misunderstood” (see Archer, 2017), so this strategy was hardly found in the interactions.

5.5.2.1.3 Accommodation strategy

Apart from the strategies used to handling with miscommunication regarding pre-empting and remedial mentioned above, the sub-theme ‘accommodation strategy’ is detected in the data. Particularly in an ELF perspective, communicators negotiate meanings by sharing repertoires and

accommodating to each other so that they could create solidarity in their community of practice (see Cogo, 2009, 2010), and build rapport in business communication (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013) decreasing distance between the two communicative counterparts. The accommodation strategies fundamentally found in ELF communication studies (e.g. Cogo, 2009, 2010; Cogo & House, 2017; Seidlhofer, 2009), but in this dataset, only one strategy called code-switching' was acknowledged.

Example 5.9: Code-switching

- 1 **FC 2:** ... giving a simple cultural issue, I placed '555' intending to show laughter. definitely my
- 2 European interlocutor asked me why to say 'five five five'. he had no idea what it was. then I
- 3 explained in the following turn. since then he typed '555' whenever he wanted to laugh. and it
- 4 makes me happy seeing it anytime.

The data from example 5.9 indicates how the communicators culturally co-constructed their written conversation in that the participant's interlocutor adopted his L1 practice of laughter even though it did not make any sense to the interlocutor in his L1 and English, the contact language. It is one of the ways when one wants to accommodate another by adjusting his own way of expression satisfying his interactant. The strategy user paid special attention to his interactant's practice. Although it was not a common practice used by people in general, the participant admitted that he was delighted feeling grateful to see it and happy to communicate with the interlocutor.

5.5.2.1.4 Multimodal feature

Multimodality is communicative events in various platforms, and it is more widely used in the digital age communication (see Vinagre, 2008). All forms of communication carry intentions of conveying particular meanings, so they are also important to be interpreted. That is, not only isolated text-based messages can transfer the intended meanings of the messages, but also other methods including semiotic resources which can be construed (Jewitt et al., 2016). Emoticons which are one of the modal resources of multimodality were introduced in the interviews as shown in example 5.10.

Example 5.10: Emoticon

1 **IR 5:** talking about intimacy, I will use the SAME thing in terms of language but there might be
2 ADDITIONAL content sent along with an email. for students whom I don't know well, I will send
3 something making them RELAXED or feel closed to me. I may send a SMILEY icon or a sentence like
4 "ah you can have a talk with me later". I believe this will let the recipients see that I am sincerely
5 pleased to talk to them, not just send textual messages stating our business and then finish the
6 communication. NO. the SMILEY sent to them will bring about a nice feeling telling them that I am
7 OK to be their lovely and kind interlocutor anytime.

8 **Researcher:** are there any situations you can think about now that you use the SMILEY?

9 **IR 5:** for being an IR staff, I don't think I had really used it before. what I usually said is "good luck" or
10 "do not hesitate to contact us" so that the interlocutors knew that I was glad to be reached anytime
11 when they had an inquiry. similar to a face-to-face interaction, saying the phrases in emails is like I
12 smile to them while conversing with. but it is to confess that performing in a written form is more
13 difficult. OH I actually sent smileys to them sometimes. most of them were Cambodian students, it's
14 not a serious conversation.

IR 5 in example 5.10 showed her contradiction of using the emoticon 'smiley'. In the beginning, she insisted that she had never put it in her authentic messages on her job as an IR staff. However, she later realized that she actually used the smileys in emails communicating with Cambodian students. The intended use of the smileys was that she tried to reduce the gap between her interactants to have a cozy atmosphere in written conversations. She wanted to be a useful helper or supporter whom her interlocutors felt safe, happy and confident to ask for any helps. One thing, she initially mentioned that she would attach the smiley in her emails in the case that recipients were distant to her in terms of relationships holding a lower social status. She exactly used the feature with Cambodians whose nationality was the same as hers. She also affirmed that the messages were not in a serious tone; this infers that emoticons can mitigate the seriousness of the contents and build intimacy at the same time.

5.5.2.2 (Inter)cultural awareness

The data categorized under this theme relates to how the participants think or are aware of their interactants' cultures or traditional behaviors when communicating with them. It is quite interesting that some participants strongly agreed in one way, but some absolutely did not. Nonetheless, some were in the middle; they were not consistent with the idea of an agreement at some points in

different circumstances. The two sub-themes 'nativeness' and 'cultural differences' with two codes under each one are more detailed, presented in the following section.

5.5.2.2.1 Nativeness

Two contrastive codes revealed by the participants in terms of their awareness when communicating with international interlocutors: 'nativized inclination' and 'egalitarian', under the sub-theme 'nativeness'. Five participants insisted that they generally considered if their interlocutors were NSs or not; this made their use of the language in email exchanges different between contacting NSs and NNSs. On the other hand, the other seven participants affirmed that they had not paid special attention to this point; either NSs or NNSs would receive the exactly same messages from them on the same topics. Besides, there was one participant reporting his confusing idea; once he agreed to concern about the nativeness of his interlocutors, and he later changed his idea unconsciously into the opposite side in the same interview. The examples below display clearer explanations in each situation mentioned.

Example 5.11: Nativized inclination

- 1 **FC 2:** YES different. for instance, when I ended my email contacting a European I said "should you
- 2 have inquiry...". things like this. it should be very formal basically. on the opposite side while
- 3 conversing with easterners like Chinese or Japanese, I would say "if you have any questions..."
- 4 **Researcher:** why don't you use the same thing?
- 5 **FC 2:** among Asians, I think the level of formality is less, UNLIKE those Europeans or NSs. I USED TO
- 6 make a FORMAL correspondence with Asians, but it appeared that they MISUNDERSTOOD my
- 7 intentions. I believe that we, ASEAN, must have things like cultures in common, so it's better to
- 8 produce an easy-to-understand language use.
- 9 **Researcher:** including email communication?
- 10 **FC 2:** YES.

FC 2 in example 5.11 revealed that he preferred creating his communication with Asian speakers of English less formal than with NSs or Europeans. That was not only because of his belief, but it also derived from his own experience leading him to change his mind. Since then, he started to be less formal with NNSs, especially those from ASEAN countries. It is perceived that less formality is

recommended in case of communication among L2 users, who have things in common, to avoid miscommunication.

Example 5.12: Nativized inclination

1 **FC 1:** for written communication, I think NNSs may face the SAME problems AS WE DO since English
2 is not our mother tongue. they may use it UNNATURALLY, don't you agree? hence, I will try to
3 simplify my messages. make it LESS formal. It is different in the case of NSs. I will also concern other
4 aspects like if they are older than me or if it must be academic or else. I need to consider it.

5 **Researcher:** does this mean you convey your messages DIFFERENTLY with different groups of
6 interlocutors?

7 **FC 1:** DIFFERENTLY.

In the above example, FC 1 has a belief in a sense of commonality among L2 users who have the same or similar cultures, therefore he would differently converse with NNSs from NSs; he would employ simpler messages with NNSs. Comparing with NSs, he said NNSs including him did not use the language naturally as how NSs did. It can be interpreted that complicated structures or fancy word choices and much formality may cause conversational breakdowns or uncomfortable atmosphere to NNSs leading to miscommunication occurrence. More importantly, the participant sensed the differences of English used by NSs and NNSs thinking that their language competency was never equal, affecting how to differently perform when conversing the dichotomy.

Example 5.13: Egalitarian

1 **Researcher:** when you contact a variety of people, do you have to differentiate with whom or what
2 you are going to say?

3 **FC 1:** never because I will do exactly the SAME thing. I have the same PATTERNS and STANDARD as I
4 don't want to make any mistakes or errors.

Examples 5.12 and 5.13 were conducted at the same time with FC 1. He firstly admitted that he was aware of the different nature of the language used by both NSs and NNSs. This affected his way of communication through emails with various recipients. Nevertheless, he later claimed in example 5.13 that he would generally construct completely same messages on the same topics and send to all interlocutors no matter who they were. This uncovered the fact that he had an inconsistent perception of nativeness; sometimes he agreed to be aware of it thinking that it should be carefully

created based on whom his recipient was, on the other hand, he believed that there was no need to care about because all the interactants were equal. Moreover, adjusting the contents of the messages may cause misunderstandings regarding his linguistic competence; it is safer to generate the same thing in the exactly same way. Though he stated that he never cared about whom to contact in the latter example, his reason for not to edit messages was fundamentally relating to his fear of insufficient linguistic competence; it did not confirm that he had never thought about interlocutors' differences in terms of nativeness.

Example 5.14: Egalitarian

- 1 **IR 4:** NO. if they are just foreigners no matter if they are NSs or not, I will DEFINITELY use the SAME
- 2 messages, no differences.

On the contrary, some participants absolutely agreed to use the same style or contents with everyone – both NSs and NNSs. In example 5.14, the participant expressed that it was not necessary to consider whether who her recipients would be. It did not affect her ways of communication; all the communicators were equal so that there was no need to distinguish between NSs and NNSs, and convey different messages to each of them.

5.5.2.2.2 Cultural differences

Under the theme '(inter)cultural awareness', the dataset categorized in the sub-theme 'cultural differences' shows how the participants concerned about their interlocutors' cultural differences which might influence their communication via email exchanges. Similarly to the data from the sub-theme 'nativeness', contradictory ideas were released by the participants. Five participants found cultural differences important, whereas six participants showed the opinions of no significant differences, and the rest two participants asserted that they were aware of cultural differences, but it meant nothing when the communication was conducted in a form of written discourse.

Example 5.15: Awareness

- 1 **FC 1:** since I majored in English, I was taught that learning a language is not only to know the
- 2 language solely. but what we need to consider. include CULTURES. politeness in language use is
- 3 displayed at different levels. in a written discourse, especially in business correspondence, levels of

- 4 formality indicating politeness can be apparently distinguished. how to OPEN and CLOSE a letter
- 5 with specific people in various circumstances, is significantly important.

Example 5.16: Awareness

1 **FC 4:** due to differences in cultures and beliefs, expressions used in our correspondence might be
2 diverse. as far as I'm concerned in communicating with a French once, he said things frankly.
3 DIRECTLY stated what he wanted. whereas communication with Asians, I needed to re-think about
4 what I was going to say. if I said it straightforwardly like I wanted to get an extra payment, for
5 example. I should have thought about it again and again before I said it. I think it may not be
6 different in terms of where the interlocutors were originally from and the output of the
7 communication, but the process of approaching it. we necessarily have to think about how to
8 properly write it to individual recipients. we need to carefully realize who or what kind of person our
9 recipient is

In example 5.15, FC 1 strongly agreed that concerning the others' cultures was essential in intercultural communication. Additionally, levels of formality indicating politeness were important, particularly in email exchanges. He always considered this issue since he was taught to be aware of language-culture indivisibility contributing to successful communication through the languages. Although it was not obvious what kind of culture he was specifically considering while English was being discussed, it can be concluded that he was aware of cultures somehow once communicating in any particular languages.

Similarly, FC 4 in example 5.16 apparently asserted that cultural differences were significantly essential in intercultural communication. With different people, he performed differently thinking about how to appropriately expressed messages to suit individuals. This definitely influenced a variety of ways to communicate with people. He would adjust his ways or styles of sending messages relying on whom his interactant was. Only one main goal by doing so was to accommodate to his recipients adjusting ways of saying and let the interaction run successfully due to the recipient's cultural and traditional preferences.

Example 5.17: Awareness

1 **IR 6:** yes it definitely is. like in case you interact with a westerner where handshaking is a common
2 means of greeting, but for Thais you need to say <L1th>'sawaddee'</L1th>. in addition, in some
3 countries like Brunei, you can't even touch them because I had experienced the situation once I
4 stretched my right hand out, but they said 'NO NO DON'T touch me'. they are so strict, but that
5 never happened to westerners. you can usually have a handshake.

6 **Researcher:** how about in email communication? will there be any differences?

7 **IR 6:** through textual discourse? there are differences among people from different cultures, but
8 what I focus more on is how close we are. the written interactions will basically be in the same styles
9 with understandable contents sent to all interlocutors.

10 **Researcher:** you mean that cultures, traditions or beliefs of your interlocutors are not necessary to
11 be considered when communicating through emails?

12 **IR 6:** NO. not necessary.

Although IR 6 in example 5.17 revealed her intense awareness of cultural differences among different interactants at the beginning of the interview, she later affirmed a different idea when it turned into written communication, emails in this case. She would not generate different messages based on her recipient's cultural differences through email interactions which was totally different from her perception of the face-to-face situations where she cared much about her interactant's cultural practices or preferences. This might be because no body language was included in the written interactions, so she needed not to be aware of such cultural issues in email exchanges.

Example 5.18: Unawareness

1 **FC 3:** NO. it doesn't affect or change my messages sent to them

2 **Researcher:** you didn't care whom your interlocutors were in terms of their different cultures or
3 traditions when you emailed them?

4 **FC 3:** NEVER thought about it. what I did care is whether it should be formal or I could make it less
5 formal. just like if I contacted a university president, it would be in one way, but then
6 communicating with whom I know well, it would definitely be in another way. it's not relating to the
7 recipients' cultures I bet.

FC 3 in example 5.18 had never considered the cultural backgrounds of his interactants when contacting anyone through email interactions. He insisted to send the same messages to people once conveying the same issues to the recipients. However, more crucial factors: social power and social relationships between them, were significant variables to be considered in his email exchanges, not cultural backgrounds at all. It means that individual cultures never affected his intercultural email practices, whereas the social factors truly did.

5.5.2.3 Politeness

The participants in this study raised an essential issue whether email interactions were considered polite when communicating through emails. The predominant element of the epistolary email, opening-closing addresses (see 3.4.3), was explicitly mentioned to differently create politeness in email discourse. Moreover, they specified two considerably important variants: power and distance, influencing their use of language and style with particular recipients. The sub-themes 'social variables' and 'opening-closing addresses' as well as the codes under these sub-themes are illustrated in the following parts.

5.5.2.3.1 Social variables

The codes 'power' and 'distance' are categorized under the sub-theme 'social variables'. For power, it is obvious that all 13 participants were concerned about this issue before they sent emails out to their recipients; it was admitted to be a crucial indicator indicating their pattern or style of email interactions. Examples 5.19 – 5.20 are the extracts from the initial interviews identifying how social power or status means to them and their ways of communication through emails differently. Then, examples 5.21 – 5.23 display the opinions on social distance or relationship. Unlike the social power where all participants agreed that it was the key factor to be aware of in email communication, seven participants took social distance into their consideration, whereas the other six argued that it was not the point to contemplate in their email interactions.

Example 5.19: Social power

- 1 **FC 1:** let me give you a simple idea here. I am so much careful about spelling words when contacting
- 2 people with a higher position than me, while I don't feel the same levels of stress when interacting
- 3 with those younger. dealing with those higher positions or executives, even I have close relationships
- 4 with them, I still create messages showing humbleness. on the other hand, I am more relaxed with
- 5 those younger people as if I were talking to my siblings.

FC 1 in example 5.19 acknowledged that he was much more stressful when communicating with people holding more power. He tried to show his interlocutors that he always realized he was in a lower social position and paid respect to them all through the interactions. He, for example, attentively checked his word spelling to avoid making mistakes or errors before sending the emails to the superiors, whereas he communicated with lower power interactants in a more relaxed way without stress.

Example 5.20: Social power

- 1 **FC 4:** CERTAINLY different including vocabularies, sentence structures and grammar. I mean being
- 2 able to comprehend is absolutely fine. I think it is enough for communicating with lower power
- 3 recipients, while more complicated email versions should be used with those holding higher
- 4 positions.

In the same vein, FC 4 in example 5.20 expected his emails sent to superiors to be more elaborately created than those sent to lower power recipients. He put much effort into selecting words, and advanced or complicated grammar with those holding higher power. In the meantime, he did not agree to construct complicated-language emails sending to subordinates. For those lower power, an understanding was the priority and that was sufficient; no need to make the messages conveyed complicated, flowery, and difficult to interpret the meanings.

In addition to social variables, the following examples elucidate how the participants paid attention to social relationships or closeness between they themselves and their interlocutors in business email discourse.

Example 5.21: Social distance

- 1 **FC 4:** although the persons have higher power with a close relationship with me, they will still be
- 2 allocated in a group of inferiors like younger people or students for me where I prefer to use simple
- 3 words making them understand my messages easily. no need to worry about levels of vocabulary,
- 4 difficulty or complexity. but I will construct a very formal email with whom I don't know or have
- 5 never dealt with before.

FC 4 in example 5.21 compared the predominant factors between social power and distance; he came up with the conclusion that closeness was more important to him in emailing. What to be considered was word choice or vocabulary; he generally constructed a more formal email with anyone holding a higher degree of social distance. That is, between power and distance, the variant of distance or relationships was considered a more powerful indicator for him in deciding how formal the emails would be created; the lower degree of distance, the less formal.

Example 5.22: Social distance

- 1 **IR 2:** differently
- 2 **Researcher:** why
- 3 **IR 2:** because we have different levels of social relationships. YES. especially for openings and
- 4 closings in email communication. contents might be similar, but of course NOT for the opening-
- 5 closing addresses.

Though IR 2 in Example 5.22 said that her email contents might possibly be the same when communicating with people holding different levels of social relationships, but it would definitely not affect the ways she addressed her recipients at the beginning and also at the end of the emails. She believed that social distance was an indicator determining how to address individual recipients non-verbally expressing different levels of intimacy or a frame of reference regarding face systems (see 3.4) they both have.

Example 5.23: Social distance

- 1 **IR 6:** NO, I use the SAME pattern with everyone. I DON'T CARE whether I have a close relationship
- 2 with them or just started to get to know them. I think I have to respect them equally, so I need to
- 3 use the SAME messages with all of the interactants.

Although the participants in the previous two examples revealed that they considered some linguistic and sociolinguistic differences in emails contacting particular interactants holding different degrees of distance, IR 6 in example 5.23 claimed to use the same email messages on the same topics with different interlocutors. She did not classify her recipients in groups based on degrees of social relationships. She reported that she equally paid respect to all of her interlocutors, so she just kept performing the same thing in the same way in her email communication with every single interactant. Different degrees of social distance were nothing to her in email interactions as she was not aware of or did not find them meaningful in successful email communication.

5.5.2.3.2 Opening-closing addresses

While formality was raised by the participants as seen in the previous examples presented, it was considered a factor signifying politeness in business correspondence (see Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). The various ways email writers greet or address recipients and end email messages,

demonstrate how polite at different levels of formality they prefer in emails to show recipients. The sub-theme 'opening-closing addresses' under the theme 'politeness' plays an important role in creating emails (see Herring, 1996), and it was mentioned by the participants when they were asked what initially came up into their mind when thinking about politeness in email communication. The detailed information is illustrated below.

Example 5.24: Opening - closing

- 1 **IR 2:** ...YES especially for openings and closings in email communication. contents might be similar,
- 2 but of course NOT for opening-closing addresses.

IR 2 in example 5.24 confirmed that although she might not change anything – contents in particular – in her email messages delivered to different recipients with the aim of conveying the same meanings, she focused more on how she would appropriately address her receivers regarding both openings and closings. She pinpointed the significance of the opening-closing addresses; she acknowledged that more attention to selecting suitable address for each interactant was required. This confirms that the addresses are crucial elements in email communication; it is recommended to match appropriate levels of formality of the addresses with each email user. As can be seen from the data, the same contents of the messages may be sent to several recipients without editing or adjusting, except for the opening-closing addresses.

Example 5.25: Closing

- 1 **FC 5:** well, with a higher power interactant like the professor, he tries to show me that we are in
- 2 equal status and also familiar with each other. he always ends his emails with 'All the best' or the
- 3 like, while I always keep using 'Best wish' or 'Regards' which are considered more formal. I think I
- 4 still need to pay much respect to him by closing emails with formal complimentary closes though we
- 5 now have become colleagues.

Likewise, in example 5.25, FC 5 explained how she found her interlocutors and herself make use of the closing addresses. Though the participants' interlocutor always expressed less formality or informality in his email closings, the participant was likely to keep closing her emails with more formal. It is because the interlocutor is a lecturer at another university who held a higher academic position than her. Now they have turned to be colleagues having equal social power and also closer relationships due to a number of emails exchanging for a certain time. She, however, insisted to pay

more respect to him as if he were still in a higher position. She conceived the more formal address illustrated much respect implying politeness in email exchanges. No matter how friendly her interlocutor's closing address was, she continued doing the same thing that she had been doing for a long time indicating her politeness at a different level from her interlocutor's. Besides, it can infer that the social variables play a significant role influencing the use of opening-closing addresses.

Additionally, a clearer picture of how the opening-closing addresses affect the participants' use in their email exchanges, are presented in the next section of the findings from the corpus of emails as well as more evident examples supported from the follow-up interviews.

5.6 Conclusion

The results from the initial interviews are described in this chapter with the purposes of exploring the participants' personal information as well as how they perceived the strategies used in their email communication. Moreover, individual (inter)cultural awareness and politeness are included through the lens of social variables and formality in a form of opening-closing addresses with interactants possessing different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In terms of pragmatic strategies in email exchanges, there reveal four sub-strategies utilized by the participants. Two of them are the 'self-initiated self-repaired strategies' solely used by email senders to solve communication problems, and the 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies' where reactions from the interactants co-construct mutual understandings. Both functions to preempt and remedy miscommunications occurring. Besides that, the other two strategies which are not directly related to communication problems in email exchanges, were mentioned. They are the 'accommodation strategy' and the 'multimodal feature' helping to construct more meaningful interactions or relaxed atmosphere in their email collaboration. The (B)ELF users sometimes transferred their own and interlocutors' cultures into their linguistic use in email exchanges with the expectation of the recipient's satisfaction and willingness to communicate successfully and meaningfully. This also brings into the topic of another theme '(inter)cultural awareness'.

There seems to be some contradiction within the participants' ideas when discussing their perceptions of cultural differences and nativeness under the theme (inter)cultural awareness. Some participants uncovered that they were concerned about their interlocutors' cultures and carefully conversed with them differently depending on who their recipients at that time were. Nevertheless, they sometimes ignored it and insisted that they performed similarly with all recipients; the point was to merely convey the meanings and avoid miscommunication through the interactions. This is

interesting because it is likely to say that they were aware of both cultural and intercultural levels at some points some times. Similar to the nativeness issue, not all of them agreed to conform to NSs norms all the time. Some even stated that everyone was equal for them, so they needed not to adjust their use of language in emails interacting with different interlocutors.

Concerning politeness, no matter the participants put the interlocutors' cultures into consideration or not, they all argued that politeness was always necessary for email communication. The indicators could be seen from how they perceived themselves and other parties at levels of social power or position as well as relationships between them. The social power was not the most meaningful factor in all situations, neither was the social distance. However, the two variants took important roles in determining different levels of formality concerning politeness in emails relying on the email users' preferences. Furthermore, the appropriate selection of openings and closings in email messages was also marked levels of formality signifying politeness. However, it is remarkable that (inter)cultural awareness correlates with politeness; the participants revealed an overlap of these two concepts in their perception of the two issues.

To summarize, the participants reported the data from both their experiences and perceptions of what would be done in particular email situations. They had different ways of making email exchanges successfully understandable by utilizing a variety of pragmatic strategies, and indicating politeness through different levels of formality with different interactants in particular situations. Even though they sometimes asserted contradictory ideas at some points specifically on intercultural awareness, they eventually found their ways out to get the business through email interactions done, and also well manage rapport with the interlocutors.

Chapter 6 Findings from the Corpus of Emails and the Second Interviews

6.1 Introduction

The data presented in this chapter are from the authentic emails exchanged between the participants and their interlocutors as well as their explanations of the thoughts behind the performances in the emails gained from the second or follow-up interviews. The structure of the chapter consists of five parts: introduction, data collection displaying the way data in the two research instruments were given, coding and categorizing data revealing how the data were organized through the qualitative content analysis approach, followed by results and analysis of the findings, and finally the conclusion. The information is elucidated based on the coding categorization of the corpus of emails supported by the data from the second interviews displaying the participants' explanations and interpretations. The analysis of the chapter is conducted concerning authentic pragmatic strategies including politeness, specifically in relation to formality, naturally occurring in the participants' professional emails in the context of intercultural communication.

6.2 Data collection

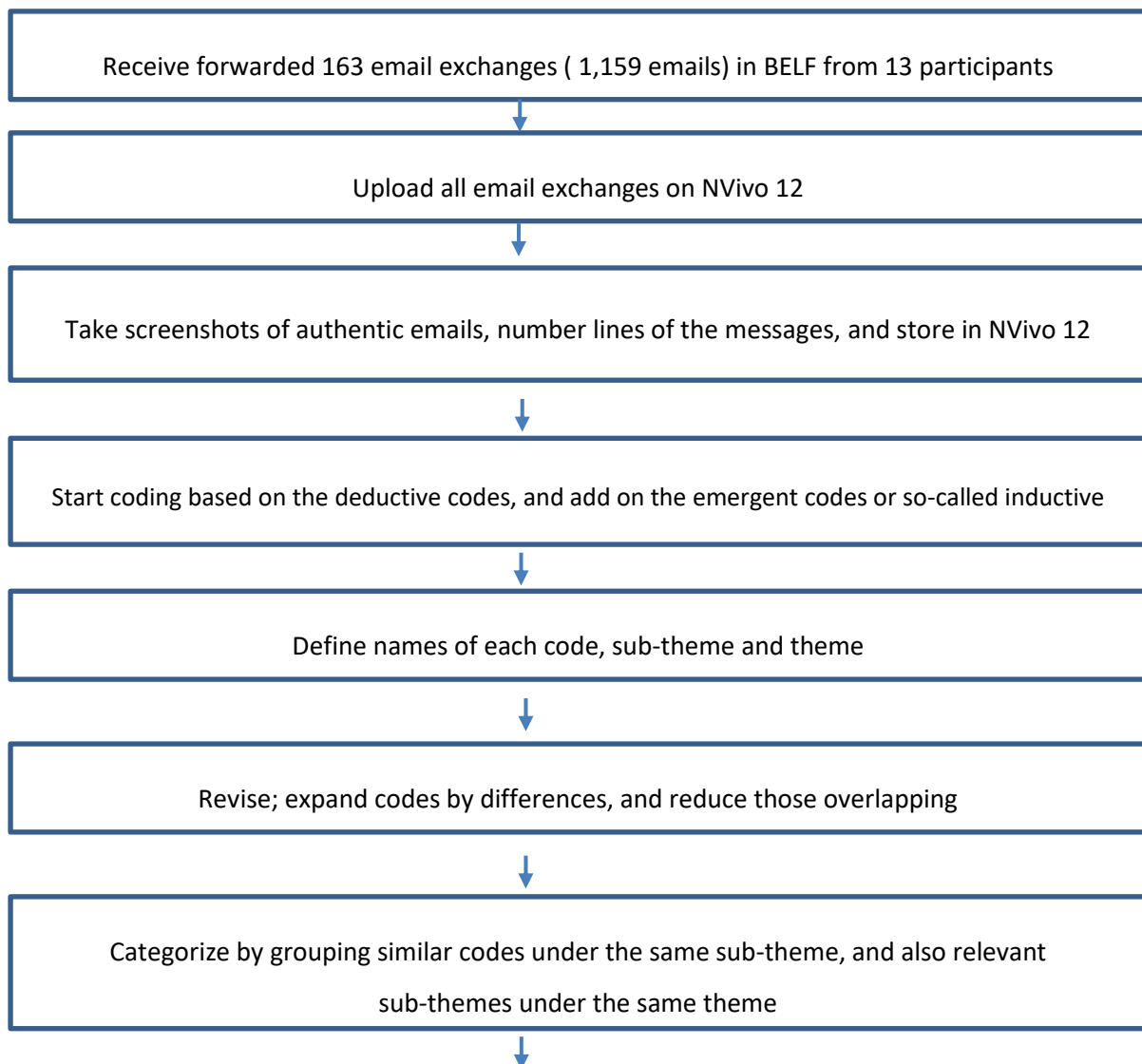
In order to explore the authentic use of pragmatic strategies and politeness: (in)formality, in English business email communication conducted by the international affairs staff and their interlocutors with different backgrounds of mother tongues and cultures, the participants' email exchanges were investigated in this study. Additionally, to gain an insight into their way of communication, second interviews were generated after the email exchanges were received so as to further investigate what occurred in the emails by asking specific questions relevant to the focuses of the study.

6.2.1 The corpus of emails

The email exchanges were collected after the first interviews. With the participants' permission, most of them forwarded the email exchanges which they believed relevant to the study based on the criteria given (see 4.5.1). There is one case where the participant took photos of his email exchanges, and sent them to me through a Facebook application. Therefore, the data of a corpus of emails are in two forms: forwarded emails and photos of email screenshots. There are 1,159 emails

in total from 163 email exchanges in this corpus of emails from all 13 participants ranging from 2 to 34 email exchanges depending on each participant's availability and convenience. It took approximately three weeks to gather all the email data from the participants which were not necessarily to be exchanged during the 3-month period of the data collection.

Since this kind of data is written interactions, all emails presented here are in the form of screenshots. Names and personal information are concealed due to confidentiality. The VOICE transcription conventions (VOICE Project, 2007) were also adapted so as to show some necessary parts in the email communication making the data comprehensible for readers. Apart from covering their personal information, line numbers were added in front of each line in each message for ease of reference. Furthermore, the contents of the emails were not edited; they are presented in the exact format of the original versions. The whole processes of email collection and analysis is explained in Figure 2.



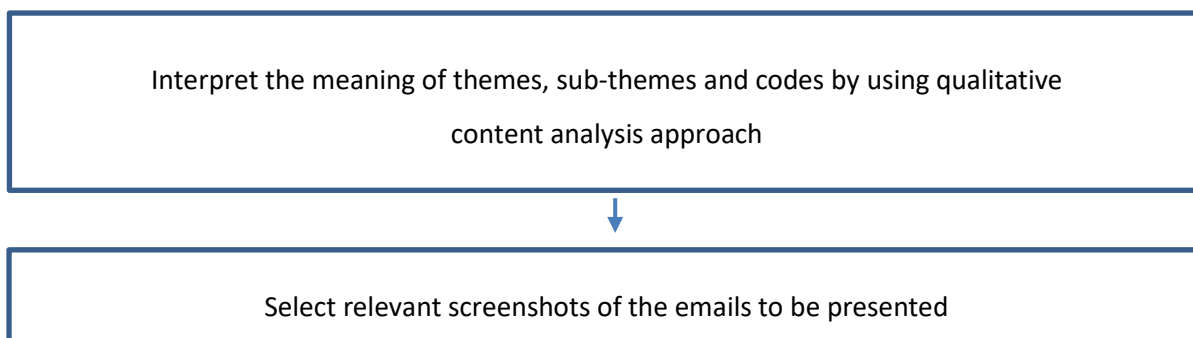


Figure 2: Processes of Data Analysis of the Corpus of Emails adapted from Schreier's (2012) and Creswell's (2014) Frameworks

6.2.2 The second interviews

In addition to the findings from the corpus of authentic emails, clarification and/or interpretation from the participants' perspectives in the second round of interviews supplemented a clearer understanding of the pragmatic strategies and the politeness used in the written discourse of email exchanges. The objective of the second interviews is to specifically discuss what had happened in the email exchanges such as who their interlocutors or recipients were, why they wrote the message that way with reasons supporting the use of English or how they interpreted their interlocutors' messages, including how they found each interlocutor similar or different in their intercultural communication through email interactions. That is to say, specifically in the second interviews, the contents related to what occurred in the email exchanges between the participants and their interlocutors, whereas the objectives of the first interviews were to reveal the participants' backgrounds and the ideas or potential pragmatic strategies and politeness they considered or might employ in their authentic use of emails.

In the second-interview phase, the participants are exactly the same group as in the first or initial interviews, who passed on the authentic emails to me (see 5.2). They were interviewed about the actual email messages relating to the focuses of the present study: pragmatic strategies and politeness. Having received the email exchanges with the participants' permission, it took a month (the second month of the research data collection period) to classify and select significant relevant issues in the emails to discuss with the individuals. The interviews were conducted in Thai mainly, except with the Filipino participant, so the transcribing process was done similarly to the process in the first interviews (see 5.3). The second or follow-up interviews took seven hours in total; 30 - 60 minutes with each participant. All the interviews consumed approximately 41.20 hours of transcription. All recorded video and/or voice files as well as the written transcripts were stored in NVivo 12 so as to be coded and categorized methodically. Consistently, all the transcriptions in this

study were based on the VOICE transcription conventions and content analysis was the focal approach to analyse the data.

6.3 Coding and categorizing data

As with the first interviews (see 5.4), the data in the corpus of emails were coded and grouped into themes, sub-themes through both deductive and inductive approaches in relation to the focuses of the study. In addition, the findings from the second interviews were also coded and categorized by the same methods as the previous research instrument. Moreover, the second interviews were conducted with individual participants based on the emails, so the classification of the categorized data was parallel to those of the corpus of emails. That is, their responses revealed their ideas and interpretation of their own language use and the way they comprehended the messages from their interlocutors through email interactions. The dataset from the follow-up interviews clarified the codes found in the email dataset in more detail. Meanwhile, more codes in the category of ‘accommodation strategies’ were detected compared to what was found in the same category in the first interviews (see Table 5). Interestingly, emergent items under the sub-themes ‘intimacy reinforcement strategies’ and ‘meaning-making punctuation’ were discovered. There are two key themes along with seven sub-themes divided into 28 codes. The categorization of themes, sub-themes, and codes from the corpus of emails and the second interviews is illustrated in Table 5.

Table 6: Themes, Sub-themes and Codes from the Corpus of Emails and the Second Interviews

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies (D)	Self-repetition (D)	6.1
		Providing local knowledge and building common ground (D)	6.2
		Let it pass (D)	6.3-6.4
	Self-initiated interlocutor’s response needed strategies (D)	Asking for clarification (D)	6.5
		Confirmation check (D)	6.6
		Direct comment (I)	6.7
	Accommodation strategies (D)	Code switching (I)	6.8
		Make it normal (D)	6.9

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
		Greeting with location (I)	6.10
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies (I)	Creating solidarity (I)	6.11
		Making an apology (I)	6.12-6.13
		Multimodal feature (I)	6.14
		Abbreviation (I)	6.15
		Non-standard language (I)	6.16
		Contraction without apostrophe (I)	6.17
	Meaning-making punctuation (I)	Content emphasis (I)	6.18-6.23
		Unfixed interpretation (I)	6.24-6.26
	Politeness: (in)formality (D)	Opening address (I)	Formal (D)
Semi-formal (I)			6.28
Formality decreasing (I)			6.29
Informal (D)			6.30
Formality unsteady (I)			6.31
Closing address (I)		Formal (D)	6.32
		Semi-formal (I)	6.33
		Formality decreasing (I)	6.34
		Informal (D)	6.35
		Formality unsteady (I)	6.36

*(D) deductive approach *(I) inductive approach

6.4 Results and analysis

The data from the corpus of emails were selected in order to present all codes discovered concerning the focuses of the study in the authentic use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in BELF intercultural communication via email exchanges. Supported by the participants' clarification in the follow-up interviews, their explanations of specific issues happening in the emails were added into the selected examples clarifying why they constructed emails in particular ways with recipients as well as of how they interpreted their interlocutors' intention through the written discourse. The following examples present codes based on the information shown in Table 5, and the email messages illustrated were kept unchanged in order to maintain the originality of each email (see 6.2.1)

6.4.1 Pragmatic strategies

According to the coding categories in Table , the theme 'Pragmatic strategies' comprises five sub-themes: 'self-initiated self-repaired strategies', 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies', 'accommodation strategies', 'intimacy reinforcement strategies', and 'meaning-making punctuation'. All codes or strategies under this key theme were clarified by the following examples along with some explanations and/or interpretations of the participants as they were either senders or receivers of the emails.

6.4.1.1 Self-initiated self-repaired strategies

In this sub-theme, all the codes employed by the participants were utilized when they either noticed any possibility of miscommunication with their email interactants in comprehending their messages, or they found themselves confused about the emails delivered to them. In these cases, they tried to solve the problems by themselves. They decided either to add more information before sending out the messages so that the interlocutors would have a clearer concept of what they were trying to say or to ignore it in case they were the ones who became confused about the other parties' messages, expecting the flow of interaction eventually to become smoother. The codes discovered under this sub-theme are 'self-repetition', 'providing local knowledge and building common ground', and 'let it pass'

6.4.1.1.1 Self-repetition

Example 6.1

1 Dear Dr. [S2/last]

2 Thank you very much for sending me the draft of the MOU. The process that I have to do here is to bring it to the
3 faculty meeting for approval. We might add something into it or make some slight adjustment. However, overall,
4 this draft looks perfect; I don't think we will have any problems with it. I keep in touch with you!

5 All the best,

6 [S1/nickname]

7 **Researcher:** why did you need to explain more in the last line here

8 **FC 3:** I wanted to make it clearer. my recipient would see that there might be adjustment in the
9 MOU, but I did not want him to worry about it. though I already said 'perfect', I thought that
10 explicitly explanation would be better

In example 6.1, it is an email written by a participant replying to an IR staff of a partner university in Cambodia (lines 1-6), while lines 7-10 are the transcript of the follow-up interview. The participant described why he needed to rephrase his own sentence "this draft looks perfect" in line 4 with the sentence "I don't think we will have any problems with it." (line 4). Since he suggested there might be some more additional parts to put into the MOU draft (line 3), he was afraid if his recipient would worry about the changes in the document (line 9). Though there would be a slight change, it was on his side, while his interlocutor was not required to do anything. He believed it would be useful for his recipient and made him feel relieved if he explicitly restated that the document would be fine eventually (line 10).

6.4.1.1.2 Providing local knowledge and building common ground

Example 6.2

```
1 On 10 April 2015 at 19:09, [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com> wrote:
2 Dear Prof. Dr. [S2/last]
3 We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for the invitation extended to President [first name1]
4 [last name1] to be a Panellist at the 7th [name2] University Presidents Forum 2015. After discussing with our
5 President, I am awfully sorry to inform you that he cannot attend this forum due to some other important
6 meetings at [org1] , and we wish this president forum event a complete success!
7 As the Thal New Year is around the corner, I wish you a happy and prosperous Thal New Year!
```

- 8 **Researcher:** does your recipient understand Thai?
- 9 **IR 2:** no. but he came to Thailand quite often
- 10 **Researcher:** alright, well here you mentioned Thai New Year, didn't you?
- 11 **IR 2:** YES
- 12 **Researcher:** when you sent the message to the recipient, were you sure that he might get it
- 13 immediately or need more explanation
- 14 **IR 2:** I was not sure, but what I know is that he came here OFTEN. didn't really know if he knew this
- 15 cultural event. I just took this opportunity to positively let him know about Thai culture and
- 16 impressed him

As seen in example 6.2, a Thai participant responded to her Malaysian interlocutor with a wish on an occasion of the Thai New Year period (line 7). With the supplementary information from the second interview (lines 8-15), the participant revealed that the recipient did not understand the Thai language (line 9), but she was unsure if he knew the Thai festive season or not (lines 14-15). However, she intended to let him perceive her positiveness by expressing appreciation of this special occasion as well as providing an opportunity to learn about Thai culture in the at the same time (lines 15-16). No matter if he knew this Thai cultural background or not, she prevented a potential miscommunication by giving little information before blessing the interlocutor.

6.4.1.1.3 Let it pass

Example 6.3

¹ From: [S2][S2/last] i <[S2][S2/last]@qq.com>
² Sent: Wednesday, May 3, 2017 7:45 AM
³ To: [S1][S1/last]
⁴ Cc : luckynounous
⁵ Subject: Cooperation Proposal by [org2] ([org1])
⁶ Dear Dr. [S1][S1/last]
⁷ I am honored to meet you. After alst meeting, we
⁸ contact me.
 >>>
 >>>
⁹ >>> Best regards,
 >>>
¹⁰ >>> [S2]

11 **FC 2:** there sometimes I couldn't get some parts in the emails. like this one. but what I could spot
 12 were key words 'to meet' meaning we would meet and 'after meeting' meaning we had a meeting
 13 before. and yeah gonna meet again discussing our project. to be honest, I don't know what 'aslt'
 14 means. so not sure if I interpreted the meaning of the sentence correctly. so, what does it really
 15 mean

Example 6.4

```
1 [S2][S2/last] | <| .edu.bn>
2 ถึง: [S1][S1/last] <| .ac.th>
3 คำนำ:
4 Dear Mr. [S1/nick]
5 No worries, I will look forward this coming July for students from [name1] University which we are always
6 excited and happy to have them here with us again. Have a great day ahead!
7 Thank You and Best Regards,
8 [S2][S2/last]
```

9 **FC 4:** what I might have seen is 'have a great day', but NEVER 'have a great day AHEAD'

10 **Researcher:** so, how did you interpret the meaning then

11 **FC 4:** '...ahead' maybe be 'the whole day', like 'hope it's a nice day all day long' I guess. however, I
12 don't think it's important. I wouldn't miss anything if I couldn't understand it I think

There are commonalities found in examples 6.4-6.5 in which the receivers of the emails did not understand some parts of the messages received. They decided to ignore those incomprehensible contents. They just let the written discourse communication flow as if no misunderstandings had occurred. More than that, the communication was still successful in the end though some parts were left unattended.

As can be seen in example 6.3, although it is quite short; only a two-sentence message, the participant as a recipient did not clearly understand some parts of the content. He discussed in the interview that what he could comprehend was that they would meet again after the previous meeting to discuss a project proposal, MOU and the like (lines 11-13). He also asked the researcher during the interview what the word 'alst' (line 7) was. Therefore, it confirms that he had partial miscommunication from the message, but he insisted that he paid more attention to the keywords which were 'to meet' and 'after meeting' (line 12).

In the same way, in example 6.4, the participant experienced miscommunication in the email received from a Bruneian programme coordinator (lines 1-8). The participant was unsure of the meaning of the last sentence in line 6. He said that what he had seen in other emails was 'have a great day', but never 'have a great day ahead' (line 9), so he assumed that his interlocutor would

mean in the same direction as ‘the whole day’ or ‘all day’ (line 11). He also argued that this was not problematic because it was not the main point of the message (lines 11-12).

This could imply that if the email communicators find unimportant or insignificant parts of messages which will not affect the overall understanding of the contents, they will ignore those parts as though they were not there in the emails as long as they could comprehend the rest of contents and communicate successfully without missing any crucial points.

6.4.1.2 Self-initiated interlocutor’s response needed strategies

The sub-theme ‘self-initiated interlocutor’s response needed strategies’ was discovered both in the first interviews (see 5.5.2.1.2) and in the corpus of classified into three codes: ‘asking for clarification’, ‘confirmation check’, and ‘direct comment’, and definitely in the second interview data as well. Each code is illustrated in the following examples.

6.4.1.2.1 Asking for clarification

Example 6.5

1 On Fri, Jun 23, 2017 at 10:30 AM, [S1][S1/last] | <[S1][S1/last]@[S1][S1/last].ac.th> wrote:
2 Dear Mr. [S2][S2/last]
3 My secretary has just informed me that the dates which you want to visit our university (as stated in the email
4 you sent to the Office of International Affairs) are August 27-28, 2017 not June 27-28, as I proposed to you.
5 Right now we are quite confusing about this, so could you please verify the exact dates which you want to
6 come. We have to prepare a lot of things to receive the delegates from [name2] University and need a
7 confirmation from you.
8 This is very urgent. Could you please reply to me as soon as possible?
9 Best regards,
10 [S1][S1/last]

11 **Researcher:** there is a phrase stating that you were confusing about the dates mentioned whether if
12 it was in August or June

13 **FC 3:** YES. he typed the wrong dates in the email; he replied me confirming the correct information
14 later. I needed to ask for the exact date here in this email because I did not know if he intended to
15 change the dates which I had proposed

The email message in example 6.5 was written by one of the FC staff participants (lines 1-10). There seemed to be a confusing point in line 5. The participant revealed in the second interviews (lines 11-

15) that the dates mismatched from the previous information he had, making him confused (lines 14-15). Therefore, he replied by asking for more clarification saying that "so could you please verify the exact dates which you want to come." (lines 5-6) expecting a confirmation from his interlocutor if the dates would be changed or were incorrectly mentioned (lines 14-15). Besides, he also emphasized the importance of the interlocutor's response to this question with the phrase "need a confirmation from you." (lines 6-7) which indicates that the clarification is necessarily required.

6.4.1.2.2 Confirmation check

Example 6.6

1 From: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
2 Date: Tue, Aug 8, 2017 at 4:40 PM
3 Subject: Re: - Letter of Employment and Resignation
4 To: "Dr. [S2][S2/last]" <[S2][S2/last].ac.th>

5 Dear Aj. [S2]

6 The HR Officer tells me that he has just received the resignation letter from [org 2] The letter from HR Office might
7 be published tomorrow or thursdays. You may come to the HR Office on the third floor of President Building
8 (Above my Office) to fill up the application form on Friday. Then you may get the Letter of Employment from HR on
9 Monday. Is it okay?

10 IR 1: you can see that I was telling her the steps we needed to work her document out. she had
11 asked me about it, so I just told her what it would gonna be. as there were many steps to do and I
12 was not sure if she could understand all the processes explained or not, I just asked "Is it okay?"

13 Researcher: you just wanted to make sure if she would understand them as you thought or asked if
14 she would accept and follow the steps?

15 IR 1: to make sure that what I thought that she would understand was RIGHT

The email contents are shown in lines 1-9, and the follow-up interview data are in lines 10-15. The participant in example 7.6 asked his recipient "Is it okay?" in line 9 to confirm that everything was completely understood by her (line 15). The recipient is his Australian colleague at the same workplace, so he had thought that she might know how the document would be processed, and then he made sure if he was right thinking that she would understand it by asking the question expecting a reply from her.

6.4.1.2.3 Direct comment

Example 6.7

1 จาก: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>

2 ส่ง: 9 สิงหาคม 2560 8:24

3 ถึง: [S1][S1/last]

4 ชื่อเรื่อง: Re: Please send the details and information of these topics below.

5 Dear Ms. [S1]

6 I believed there was a misunderstanding. The above mentioned programs were all finished
7 and was just used as examples for any FUTURE program [org1] would like to have in [org2] ,
8 all the while remembering consider Golden Key as an ideal partner.

9 Still, I would gladly sent information about the past program.

10 Thank you.

11 **Researcher:** and this, you were told that there was a misunderstanding

12 **IR 7:** right. I felt that it must be what I needed to reconsider; it couldn't be the way I had understood.

13 I thought that the sender intended to point it out and I had to handle it seriously, and reply back

14 showing that I realized it and correct the misunderstanding. honestly, I was a bit offended, but it's

15 fine.

In the email in lines 1-10, the sender pointed out that her recipient, the participant, misunderstood what she had sent through the previous email, so in this email she stated: "I believed there was a misunderstanding." [misunderstanding] at the beginning of the email message (line 6). She then explained what the correct information was, and offered to send more details about it to the participant for a clearer understanding. However, the participant gave her interpretation of how she felt after receiving the email in the second interview. She revealed that hearing the direct comment like that in line 6 seemed like it was a serious issue that she needed to revise and respond though it made her feel a little offended (lines 13-14).

6.4.1.3 Accommodation strategies

In the authentic use of accommodation strategies in email exchanges, more codes under the sub-theme 'accommodation strategies' were constructed than in the findings from the first interviews. They are 'cultural convergence' which is the same thing found in the first interviews, and two more strategies in the emails: 'code-switching' and 'greeting with location'. All were employed because

the email interactants intended to adjust their ways of written communicative interaction to make their interlocutors more comfortable and eventually achieve successful communication. The participants' second interview presented along with the email extracts below manifest the application of the strategies as well as their perceptions when noticing these strategies in their interlocutors' emails.

6.4.1.3.1 Code-switching

Example 6.8

1 Anyway, do you remember the justjects you took? and when did you arrive in [place1]
2 and start your class?

3 Thank you.

4 P' [S1/nick]

5 From: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>
6 Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2017 10:19 PM
7 To: [S1/nick]@hotmail.com
8 Subject: Fwd: RE: Academic Transcript from [org1]

9 Dear Phi [S1/nick]

10 I need my Transcript from the last January till April 2016 semester for my credit transfer here,
11 for my university.

12 Hence, could you send me my transcript with grades and modules that I took through email?

13 **Researcher:** does he understand Thai?

14 **FC 1:** no, not at all

15 **Researcher:** he addressed you with 'Phi' which is a Thai word. in face-to-face interaction, did he
16 normally call you like this – 'pii + [S1/nickname]'?

17 **FC 1:** yes because most of international students learnt how to call me from their Thai peers, or I
18 sometimes explained them what 'pii' means. but yeah I think they basically imitated from their

19 friends. just like when they say 'I- you' in Thai in a friendly, but impolite way among friends; they
20 don't even know that it's rude, but they mimicked it from the home students.

21 **Researcher:** when having conversation, they called you 'pii + [S1/nickname]?

22 **FC 1:** YES, same here. rather to say 'I', I called myself this way too

23 **Researcher:** but the conversations with them were normally conducted in English?

24 **FC 1:** that's right, so I believe it might influence how he called me in written discourse as well

In example 6.8, there are two emails in the same exchange between an IR staff participant and a former exchange student from Brunei. The above excerpt (line 1-4) is the reply written by the participant to the email below from the student (lines 5-12). The linguistically cultural issue can be seen in lines 4 and 9. It is the salutation "Dear Phi" followed by the participant's nickname written by the student, while the participant used "P" followed by his own nickname (line 4) when replying. The words "Phi" and "P" are exactly the same thing pronounced "pii" in the Thai language meaning an older brother or sister. The participant revealed in the second interview that the student could not communicate in Thai at all (line 14), but the student called him that way because he might follow what he had heard from his Thai classmates when they called the participant (lines 17-19). The word "pii" is generally used by a younger person to call anyone older showing their respect to the seniors. It is unacceptable for Thais not to say "pii" when calling older person(s) – it is considered an inappropriate or uncourteous cultural practice. The participant further stated that although the face-to-face interactions with the student were constructed in English, the ways he called himself and the student called him were exactly the same thing – 'pii + nickname' – at all times (line 22). Also, this certainly politeness in their email communication in terms of the opening address concerning hierarchical power (line 24).

6.4.1.3.2 Make it normal

Example 6.9

1 [S2][S2/last] | < @gmail.com>
 2 [S1][S1/last] < .ac.th>
 3 yes , im one of student from [name2] university sir, i need little bit a revision on my LOA regarding
 4 misspelled on my name

5 [S1][S1/last] < .ac.th>
 6 [S2][S2/last] | < @gmail.com>
 7 Can i have a look an incorrect letter? I would know which division issued it to you and I can go to talk to the right
 8 person.

9 **Researcher:** it is seen that there is the use of 'i' many times here. did you feel like it should not be
 10 used this way or something

11 **FC 4:** well, it's not that bad, but yes I NOTICED it – many 'i's were chosen in his emails rather to be
 12 'i's. however, it was not that important to ask why he used it that way

13 **Researcher:** did it affect your reply or what he was asking for?

14 **FC 4:** NO. moreover, he is still a student who may not be cautious about how to write correctly.
 15 actually I didn't feel offended by his way of using the small 'i' or even his incorrect forms of
 16 contraction. they were just normal and acceptable for me. rather, I sometimes intentionally used the
 17 small 'i' as same as he did because I hoped it might lead to his comfortable feeling willing to
 18 communicate with me. honestly like what he expressed was commonplace, and I also used it the
 19 same way. I hope it was meaningful and he would be happy communicating with me without
 20 grammatically linguistic worry

In example 6.9, there are two out of seven emails in the same email exchange interacting between a Thai participant and a former exchange student showing here because other emails in the exchange contain the same linguistic errors made by both parties. The first email is written by the Indonesian student (lines 1-4), and the second one is by the Thai participant (lines 5-8). There appeared a lot of typographical errors the word 'i' used by both interactants (lines 3 and 7). The student firstly used this incorrect form of 'i' (line 3), and the participant mixed up his use of 'i' and 'l' (line 7) in his response. The participant explained in the follow-up interview that he noticed the student's misuse of 'i' at the beginning while reading the email (lines 11-13). However, he then realized that as his interlocutor was a student and might not pay much or enough attention to appropriateness or correctness in email communication (lines 15-16), he did not feel dissatisfied or annoyed by the message received (lines 16-17). On the other hand, he believed this kind of error was normal; he also

sometimes used 'i' with the interlocutor as if it was commonly used in order to make the student comfortable to communicate with him through the email exchange (lines 17-19).

6.4.1.3.3 Greeting with location

Example 6.10

1 2018-02-01 17:11 GMT+07:00 [S2] | <[S2]@[org2].ac.kr>
2 Dear Mr. [S1][S1/last] [S2] and Ms. [first name1][last name1] [S2];
3 Greetings from [name2] University of Foreign Studies in Korea.
4 Dean of International Affairs Dr. [first name2][last name2] and I were very pleased to meet you during the
5 International Conference at [org3] University of Foreign Studies last week.
6 We hope you returned home safely.
7 [org2] is very proud of the good relationship with your esteemed university.
8 Thank you always for your kind cooperation.
9 Best regards,
10 [S2]

11 From: [S1][S1/last] [S2] <[S2]@[org2].ac.th>
12 Date: 2018-02-05 9:37 GMT+07:00
13 Subject: Re: [name2] University of Foreign Studies
14 To: [S2] [S2] <[S2]@[org2].ac.kr>
15 Dear Dr. [first name1][last name1] [S2] and Ms. [S2][S2/last] [S2];
16 Greeting from [name1] [S2] University, Thailand.
17 We arrived here safely with warm weather. It would be highly appreciated receiving the email from your esteemed
18 University.
19 By the way, we begin to discuss about how to encourage some activities with the lecturers from the Department of
20 Korean Language, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.
21 In this connection, I wish to strengthen the collaboration by having student, staff and cultural exchange program
22 between our university. I will contact you more on this topic.
23 thank you so much
24 Best Regards,
25 [S1][S1/last] [S2]

26 **IR 1:** at that time, I would firstly see how a sender performed in an email; what pattern or style,
27 especially in greetings, he used with me and that would be my model to respond the sender.
28 secondly, I was about to start working on this duty. emailing people. so [first name 1] is my model; I
29 tried to follow her style or pattern in emailing. and yes this kind of introductory was often used. I
30 just followed hers thinking that it was a NECESSARY element in email interactions

31 **Researcher:** alright, until now you have been working on emailing for a certain time, do you still
32 greet or open your email with this style?

33 **IR 1:** depending on contexts and whom my interactants are. In case of a very formal email, I won't
34 begin with 'Greeting ...', but it will be, like, 'Good Afternoon from [name 1] University' or something
35 similar

There are two emails in the same exchange shown in example 6.10. The first one is an email sent by a Korean staff to a participant (lines 1-10). The Korean sender began her email with the phrase "Greetings from [name2] University of Foreign Studies in Korea." (line 3), and continued the contents of the email afterward. Once the participant received this email, he decided to respond with the same pattern by using "Greeting from [name1] University, Thailand." (line 16). He clarified the use of this opening in the second interview that he normally noticed what was sent by his email interactant, and he then followed the same style of opening addresses (lines 26-27). Besides that, during the time the emails were being exchanged, he just started handling with people outside the university by email exchanges, so he kept looking at his colleague's email practices and tried to follow her style of writing (lines 28-30). His colleague always opened her emails by greeting with location, so he assumed that it was such an essential element to start an email conversation (lines 29-30). Nowadays he personally decides how to begin email messages depending on context; not every email will be opened by greeting with location, especially those of more formal email exchanges where he may consider another style of greeting (lines 33-35). However, although he suggested his second alternative, it seemed to be similar convention where another greeting like 'Good Afternoon + location' was applied as an opening address.

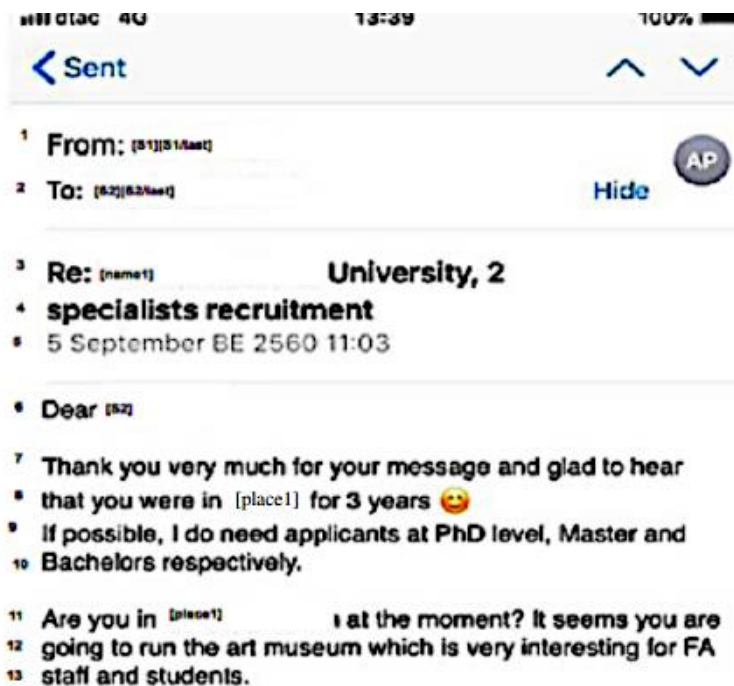
6.4.1.4 Intimacy reinforcement strategies

This emergent sub-theme was discovered in the corpus of emails with six codes grouped together: 'creating solidarity', 'making an apology', 'multimodal feature', 'abbreviation', 'non-standard language', and 'contraction without apostrophe'. The participants indicate the email writers' implicit intentions of decreasing power and/or distance between the email users, hidden behind the

messages conveyed. In other words, they try to build closer relationships managing rapport throughout their business email interactions. Most of the strategies under this sub-theme are mainly text-based, except emoticons and emojis – ‘multimodal features’ in the form of facial expressions. All codes were utilized with the participants’ idea of creating familiarity or a relaxed atmosphere in the written discourse so that the discussed business would run smoothly to achieve success via the communication.

6.4.1.4.1 Creating solidarity

Example 6.11



14 **FC 2:** in the previous email, he told me that he’s British who had been living in [place 1] for 3 years.
 15 he knows that I graduated from there, so he tried to let me know that he was also there at some
 16 point. I then showed my familiarity by the smiley here as we had been living in the same area.

17 **Researcher:** you are happy knowing that he is from there?

18 **FC 2:** YES I personally felt like talking to my neighbour; this also brought about positive bias when
 19 considering his application, but finally we didn't hire him with some reasons though

The email in example 6.11 is between a participant and an English applicant who wanted to apply for a job at the participant’s faculty (lines 1-13). Here, the participant as a sender of the email replied: "glad to hear that you were in [place 1] for 3 years 😊" (lines 7-8). He gave information about this in

the second interview (lines 14-19) saying that this interlocutor knew that he had graduated from a university in [place 1] (line 15). When the applicant sent him the previous email in the same email exchange, he mentioned that he himself also had been living in [place 1] as well, thus creating solidarity between them (line 14). Surprisingly, it worked since the participant then replied to him with the feeling of in-group membership and intimacy though they had never met. He was happy when knowing that they both used to be in the same area (line 18). He additionally acknowledged that this information made him more comfortable when communicating with the interlocutor, and this may have led to a slight bias in terms of the job application being discussed through the email exchange (lines 18-19).

6.4.1.4.2 Making apology

Example 6.12

1 Dear [s2]

2 I'm truly sorry for my late reply. I was so busy with my family matter during a few month ago.

3 so I hardly find the time to follow up your certification and grading report.

4 Frankly, there was some problem since you attended the class after the registration
5 period and we also got a new dean- so many steps to go.

6 However, it's finally done and I hope that it's still on time for your graduation. The attachment
7 is your certification with grading report on the 4 subjects you took.

8 On behalf of the faculty, it's our pleasure to have you as an exchange student and really
9 appreciate that you choose use as one of your choices.

10 Again, we are truly sorry for the delay and thank you so much for your patience.

11 **Researcher:** here as you said that you didn't respond to your interlocutor for a long time, and you
12 started your email message with this sentence, do you frequently use things like this with others
13 too?

14 **FC 1:** YES. it seemed like I disappeared for a while in this case. and actually it doesn't much matter if
15 you give your recipient a reason or not, but you'd better to say sorry. I do say sorry often even in
16 chat messages via Facebook or the likes when conversing with international students

17 **Researcher:** including whom you are familiar with?

18 **FC 1:** Yes. I think it shows my consideration; not just disappearing carelessly, but I may have other
19 business to handle with at the same time, so responses are possibly delayed

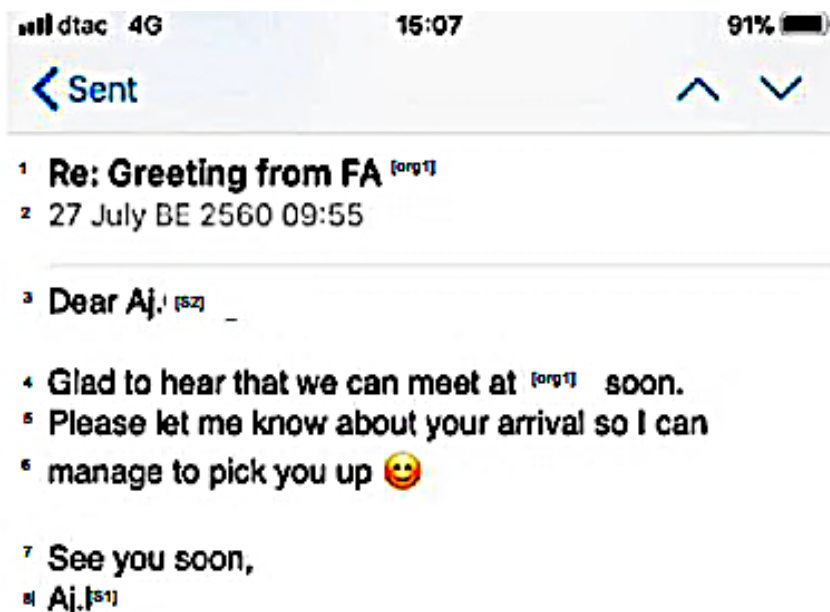
Example 6.13

1 On Tue, Jul 29, 2014 at 4:41 PM, [S2][S2/last] <[S2]@gmail.com> wrote:
2 Dear [S1]
3 I feel so sorry for late response to your email due to some personal matters.
4 We offer the 2+2 program in which students study 2 years in Thailand, for example, and another 2 years in
5 Vietnam. Vietnamese would be introduced and employed during the whole course. They can major in Vietnamese,
6 tourism, and economics.
7 Since 2006, [org2] has implemented the 2+2 mode with some partners and achieved a lot of success. We also offer
8 some post-graduate programs in language and economics. At the moment we have some Laos students
9 participating in these programs. Then we do hope that this matter could be of your concern.

In examples 6.12 and 6.13, there are apologies notified at the beginning of each email. The apology in line 2 in example 6.12 includes a reason why the sender, a research participant, could not respond immediately, while in example 6.13 the apology created by a Vietnamese interlocutor sent to another participant in a different exchange (line 3), does not disclose a very clear reason for replying late. These are to confirm that this is a typical practice noticed in business emails. No matter whether the reasons were given or not, the participant, the sender in example 6.12, argued that making an apology was compulsory in email communication when prompt replies could not be made (line 15). Even in less formal situations like messaging via Facebook, he also made an apology to his interlocutors in order to show his considerate feeling of the others who had been waiting for his responses (lines 16-19). Hence, making an apology is a common practice for delayed responses by email communicators showing their awareness of replying late.

6.4.1.4.3 Multimodal feature

Example 6.14



9 **Researcher:** why did you include this symbol into your email

10 **FC 2:** I intended to show my intimacy, eliminating distance between us. I was so glad to pick him up,
11 so I smiled with this

12 **Researcher:** to emphasize your feeling?

13 **FC 2:** YES YES. I felt close to him knowing that he has a background of teaching English to Thais in our
14 province, so I thought this emoticon was nice to be used thinking that he might understand it

In example 6.14, not only text-based contents are used, but also the smiley emoji (line 6). The participant, the writer of the email, explained that he employed this feature because he wanted to reduce the distance with the recipient who is an Australian applicant applying for a job at his faculty (line 10). He intended to show that he was glad to have been contacted by this applicant; that is why he used the emoji to emphasize his joyful feeling (lines 10-11). Since he knew that the recipient had had experience of teaching in this region, and worked with Thai people many years, he was quite sure that the recipient would understand the meaning of the facial symbol used (lines 13-14).

6.4.1.4.4 Abbreviation

Example 6.15

1 Btw, please let us know number of your team
2 members.

3 Looking forward to see you soon!

4 Warm regards and best wishes,

5 [S2]

6 **FC 2:** it might be because of his laziness of typing 'by the way'. honestly, I didn't know what it was at
7 first, thinking that if it was 'between us or something'. Then I finally came up with the idea of 'by the
8 way'. It's an abbreviation used, just like we were having a semi-formal interaction, not much formal

9 **Researcher:** are you OK with any abbreviations used in emails?

10 **FC 2:** YES yes yes, but you know if it was an interaction with European interlocutors, I would feel
11 awkward. why to abbreviate? it's different due to people from various regions I think

12 **Researcher:** Do you mean that as he is a Burmese. you have told me. you put more effort to
13 understand the message gained including the use of abbreviations in communication?

14 **FC 2:** YES

15 **Researcher:** it didn't cause any miscommunication or communicative problems?

16 **FC 2:** NO. however if I receive an email from a European using the abbreviation like this, it will reflect
17 his unprofessional writing, I think

18 **Researcher:** how about the emails written by you, did you use any abbreviations?

19 **FC 2:** NO Never

20 **Researcher:** Why not?

21 **FC 2:** it might be the way I was familiar with. I never used abbreviations or even 'by the way'; my
22 emails were commonly short and rarely included the linking words or phrases like this

What can be seen in example 6.15 is the use of the abbreviation 'Btw' in line 1. Here, the sender is the Burmese staff at a university in Myanmar. From the participant's perspective on the use of abbreviations, he did not think that abbreviations were common in email messages. He did not even

know at first what 'Btw' in his interlocutor's message stood for (lines 6-7). He assumed that the sender might not want to write the whole phrase, then 'Btw' was used as it is easier and shorter (line 6). Also, he considered their email exchange was not very formal, so it was acceptable to include the abbreviation in the email (lines 8-11). He insisted that the abbreviation used did not lead to a serious problem of email comprehension (line 16), nonetheless, he never made use of them because he was familiar with and preferred a complete orthography (lines 20-23).

6.4.1.4.5 Non-standard language

Example 6.16

1 From: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@hotmail.com>
2 Sent: Thursday, January 19, 2017 8:05 PM
3 To: [S2][S2/last]
4 Subject: Re: RE: Academic Transcript from

5 Hi, [S2/nick]

6 How're you doing?

7 About your transcript, it's an urgent? If not, please give sometime to talk with the staff at the
8 Division of Registration first and I'll let you know by next week since this Friday I'm kinda busy
9 preparing the rooms for the new-comming students interviewing.

10 Anyway, do you remember the justjects you took? and when did you arrive in [place1]
11 and start your class?

12 **Researcher:** do you normally use this kind of words or phrases with foreign interlocutors via English
13 email interactions?

14 **FC 1:** not very often. I prefer to use them with teenagers or whomever I know well, like this student.
15 if it's a case interacting with people in higher positions, I will usually be more careful in selecting
16 word choice and spelling, but still closeness is also another factor to be considered – if we have a
17 close relationship, our email exchange will not be so serious or formal. Therefore, the written
18 interaction between he and I seemed like an oral conversation with less formality

The email in example 6.16 (lines 1-11) is written by a participant to an exchange student from Brunei who was studying at his faculty for a semester. He claimed that he knew the student quite well at

the time the student was there at his faculty; they had communication in English all the time, and of course, the student is a teenager, younger than he is (line 14). Hence, non-standard language 'kinda' (line 8) was used in this email message encouraging our in-group membership. In addition, he added that a close relationship was also a factor. He preferred using the non-standard language displaying a lower degree of formality in email interactions with less-distant interlocutors, feeling like they were conversing face-to-face (lines 16-18).

6.4.1.4.6 Contraction without apostrophe

Example 6.17

```

1 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
2 To: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]i@gmail.com>
3 Dear [S2] I,
4 Greetings from [org1]!
5 Im so glad to receive this email of yours. So excited to welcoming you all here.
6 Will forward this to our Assistant to the President for Public Relations and International Affairs and
7 No need to send by post the letter. This one would be okay.
8 Best Regards

```

9 **Researcher:** how about this - contraction without apostrophe?

10 **IR 3:** as he is a student whom I know well, I think it was just fine of using contraction this way. It
 11 didn't mean that I intended not to be polite, but he also used it. I just followed his. and I was sure it
 12 related to friendliness; we tried to reduce formality so as to have a relaxed and easy written
 13 conversation

The participant in example 6.17 created her warm and friendly interaction by using a contraction without an apostrophe. In line 5, she wrote "Im so glad to receive this email of yours." rather than saying "I'm so glad..." to a Malaysian student who had come to join the activity she had organized. She reported in the second interviews that she believed this ungrammatical form of contractions did not signify impoliteness (lines 10-11). She generally employed this form of contractions with some of her email interactants who had firstly offered her closeness or intimacy like this, and this example was her turn to reply to him, so she constructed the contraction based on friendliness and familiarity hidden in return (lines 11-13).

6.4.1.5 Meaning-making punctuation

Punctuation is observed in the emails in different forms demonstrating diversified implicit meaning. Two codes are discovered: 'content emphasis' and 'unfixed interpretation'. Within a clear dimension of emphasizing meanings of messages under the code 'content emphasis', the use of uppercase, boldfaced phrase, underlined phrase, coloured phrase, exclamation mark and asterisk are found. In another dimension of punctuation use, the punctuation under the code 'unfixed interpretation' revealed inconsistent and uncertain intentions of employing punctuation, and they are excessive use of dots, and excessive use of question marks.

6.4.1.5.1 Content emphasis

Example 6.18

1 2) From my latest experience regarding to accommodation for oversea students, Dormitory is not suitable for you
2 because it is very old and not clean, comparing to [092] dormitory (I used to be there 2 years ago) It is totally
3 different. I would suggest you to stay outside University but it is so close to Uni. and there is public transportation
4 from your place to Uni. The cost will be approximately 5500 Baht (VIP, 2 Beds and fully furnished) / per month or
5 about 1250 Brunei Dollar per semester (1 BND = 25 BAHT) two people can stay in one room. Standard room is
6 4500 Baht so the expenses will be reduced but there is only one bed.

7 Why I tell you to make a decision, I need to reserve the room for you otherwise they will be full (based on my
8 experience last semester). If you ok with the expense I can

9 arrange accommodation for you before you come to Mahasarakham. It is up to your decision. PLEASE LET ME
10 KNOW ASAP !!!!

11 See you soon

12 **Researcher:** as you employed lower-case letters in the whole email, but why were the upper-case
13 ones here

14 **FC 4:** I wanted to emphasize my message sent. in this situation this student was about to make a
15 decision to study at my faculty or the faculty of Tourism, so I was trying to explain him some
16 important information. the ending sentence conveyed the meaning that he needed to tell me as
17 soon as possible what the final decision was. I made an ATTEMPT to grab his attention with all I had
18 written. If I used lower-case letters, they would be just like everything mentioned earlier – he
19 wouldn't see my STRONG WILL of asking for his QUICKEST final decision, so that's why I used the
20 upper-case letters

The participant sent the email in example 6.18 to a Brunei student who was about to decide if he would come to study at the participant's faculty or another one at the same university. The

outstanding part of this email is the sentence in lines 9-10 “ PLEASE LET ME KNOW ASAP !!!!” since he regularly employed lower-case characters for the whole message, except this sentence which were all written in capital letters. He explained that he intended to use it that way since he needed to highlight the importance of the sentence (line 14). As the student was in the middle of making a decision to choose one faculty, he gave the student the information, and was trying to tie a knot by encouraging the student to choose his faculty as soon as possible (lines 14-18). He pointed out that if he used the same style of lower-case characters as seen in the rest of the message, his recipient would not notice what he was looking forward to. That is, he made the emphasized phrases by capitalizing them with a specific purpose of grabbing the reader's attention. (lines 18-20).

Example 6.19

```
1 2016-06-21 18:01 GMT+09:00 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>:
2 Dear [s2]
3 My name is [S1/nick]. I am [nickname1]'s colleague who take care of GCC 2016. (Change from GLC
4 to GCC)
5 For this year, the GCC 2016 will be during August 31 - 13 September. Now we are on the
6 process of finalize the program. And about the Kyoto Summer English Program, I
7 am working on this and hope to finish booking a flight in this week. I will try to finish
8 everything within next week and send it to you as soon as possible.
9 Very sorry for a late reply and thank you once again
10 Sincerely,
11 Mr. [S1][S1/last]
```

Example 6.20

1 Therefore, from [org2] side, the date for the program may start from a) 30 Mar - 7Apr.
2 or b) 1-8 Apr 2018

3 so please consider the date and possibility from [org1] as the host. Once [org1]
4 confirms the date then all of us will proceed with the rest of the mission.

5 Also looking forward to [org1] site selection for this year program, pls let us know
6 what you have in mind for our workshop site.

7 <20170405_131844(0).jpg><20170405_142305.jpg>

8) Kob Khun Krub

Example 6.21

1 Good afternoon from [org2] , HU. Firstly, Thank you for your kind helping and apologise for
2 my late responded, I am deeply impressed by your quick reaction so far. Moreover, I have a
3 few questions to query as bellow:

4 - Do I have to send a form of the interview questions to you first? ***I am joyful to sent them to**
5 **you if its' necessary.**

6 - Have I need to write an official letter to your department before the event summited.? ***I**
7 **have heard from Thai friends said that I have to write a ceremonious letter and send it to you**
8 **first, and I would like to make it in officially it would be worth for both of us.**

9 - Do you need my document profile as a CV/Resume to attach as evidence corroborate?

10 Secondly, unfortunately, that at the moment I am not resident in Thailand, and I will depart
11 from [org2] on 25 June 2017, and here is my contact number **+3620269** or you could
12 reach me on Line application as well: **301188.**

13 Thirdly, don't take offence on me if I were asked some silly questions...lol....

Other ways of emphasizing the crucial statements are introduced in examples 6.19-6.21. They are 'GCC 2016' (lines 3 and 5) and 'Kyoto Summer English Program' (line 6) in example 6.19, 'a) 30 Mar – 7Apr, or b) 1-8 Apr 2018' (lines 1-2) in example 6.20, and '*I am joyful to sent them to you if it's necessary.' (lines 4-5) and '*I have heard from Thai friends said that I have to write a ceremonious letter and send it to you first, and I would like to make it in officially it would be worth for both of us.' (lines 6-8) in example 6.21. In these examples, boldfaced, underlined and coloured phrases or sentences are presented respectively with the same purpose of strengthening the importance of the mentioned expressions.

Example 6.22

1 **From:** [S2] . < @gmail.com>
2 **Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2016 2:40 PM
3 **To:** [S1]
4 **Cc:**
5 **Subject:** Re: Letter of Invitation

6 Dear Dr. [S1]

7 Thanks a lot for your email and information!

8 I am pleased to send attached herewith draft program for signing
9 ceremony and please let me know if you have anything to add
10 more.

11 With warm regards,

12 [S2]

13 **FC 2:** for 'information!', it seemed like the interlocutor tried to highlight it. it might not be polite to
14 put the exclamation point here I think, but at the moment I firstly read the email, I didn't feel
15 anything. but now, yeah, why? I just noticed it, to be honest. it's interesting. he might wanna
16 explicitly showed that the information I had given him crucial; it's really useful, and he was happy
17 with it then he placed the exclamation mark after it

18 **Researcher:** from your perspective, do a period and an exclamation points signify different
19 intentional meanings?

20 **FC 2:** DIFFERENT. for a period, it means the 'information' was normal, but with an exclamation mark
21 it pointed out the significant importance. receiving the 'information' here with the mark – it might
22 be very beneficial or him, I think

Example 6.23

¹ It is a great news to hear that both of you will be our students in next semester. You are so welcome ! and I can
² say that you will experience a truly friendship, happiness, and challenge during you are with [org2]

³ Finally, there are two issues that I need to notice you before you come to [org2] , as follow

⁴ 1) Principle of accounting is not available for enrollment this semester. However, accounting for management is
⁵ another option if you prefer but I do not recommend because as my best known, it requires some fundamental
⁶ knowledge/skills in accounting. You are suggested to select some of these subjects

⁷ Human Resource Management

⁸ International Commerce in ASEAN

⁹ Cross cultural Management

¹⁰ Global Marketing

¹¹ Business Alliance Management

^{12***} For principle of Marketing, it is available for you

^{13***} Other two subjects you selected; Tourist behaviors and Bakery, are not in our curriculum. Please find other
¹⁴ subjects as mentioned above instead.

15 **Researcher:** why did you put '!' at the end of the sentence "You are welcome!"

16 **FC 4:** because I wanted my recipients who were new coming students to see that I was really glad to
17 have them here - to show my feeling which I couldn't express orally through the email interaction

18 **Researcher:** OK, and this? 'three asterisks' at a time, why to use?

19 **FC 4:** well, they were to indicate importance of the information given. I made it triple as it was
20 MUCH MORE IMPORTANT than those with only one '*'.

Exclamation marks were employed in both examples 6.22 and 6.23 in order to stress the writers' feelings. Having a look at example 6.22, it is an email responding to the previous email sent by a participant. As a recipient, the participant confessed that at the moment he received the email, he did not pay attention to the use of the exclamation mark '!' (lines 14-15). He seemed to notice it while being interviewed when I specifically focused on the mark. He was in doubt why the sender put the mark after the sentence. Later, he guessed that the writer might like to point out that the information he had given in the previous email was necessarily essential and useful, so the sender made use of the exclamation mark (lines 15-17). He further described that the mark might highlight the sender's feeling of delight. If the sender used a period instead of the exclamation mark, it meant

that the given information was ordinary, while here with the mark it indicated the importance of the information – the sender was pleased and gained many benefits from knowing it (lines 21-22). In the same vein, in example 6.24, the sentence “You are so welcome!” (line 1) shows the writer’s gladness to welcome new students to his faculty (lines 16-17). This email was created by another participant different from the one in example 6.22. The participant in example 6.23, as a writer, paid much attention to the sentence with the mark expecting his recipient would be able to recognize his emphasized feeling (lines 10-20).

Moreover, he also revealed that he used asterisks ‘*’ (lines 12-13) meaning that the information with the marks was very important (lines 19-20). People may generally use one asterisk at a time, but he applied three at a time in each piece of information illustrating that much more attention was required (lines 19-20). It seems that different numbers of asterisks signify different levels of importance of the information discussed as well.

6.4.1.5.2 Unfixed interpretation

Example 6.24

```

1 2014-07-29 18:43 GMT+07:00 [S1][S1/last] <[redacted]@gmail.com>:
2 Dear Dear Ms. [S2/last]
3 I will note about this and can I get back to you and discuss more about our possible collaborative program sometime
4 later....may be after August, is it still acceptable?
5 Thank you!
6 Best Regards,
```

7 **Researcher:** what do you mean by using 4 dots here

8 **IR 2:** it’s just an unsure matter if it would be fine for my recipient’s side. I thought we could have

9 further discussion which I didn’t know if it was possible for them. though I had suggested available

10 time from our side, in the meantime I didn’t intend to force them. It’s like I wanna say we would be

11 OK if the interlocutor agreed to discuss later as suggested or another date they could propose

Example 6.25

1 On Aug 4, 2017 6:29 PM, "Urban_Environment _" <[redacted]@gmail.com>
2 wrote:
3 Dear Ajarn ...,
4 This is warm greeting from Vientiane. How are you doing? Hope every thing is going well with
5 you.
6 As suggested by the dean of Faculty of Architecture, Urbanism, and Creative Arts,
7 [name1] University, I am writing to you in order to keep you informed that Faculty of
8 Architecture, National University [name2] is willing to dispatch two students and one teaching
9 staff to perform professional practice at MSU. We did prepare some related documents and
10 sending you now. Below is list of the documents:
11 - Acceptance letters
12 - Work plan of the training program
13 - Passport information of the intern students and teaching staff

14 **FC 5:** he couldn't remember my name, I think

15 **Researcher:** have you contacted him before?

16 **FC 5:** maybe through Facebook

17 **Researcher:** but in the later emails he addressed you with your correct nickname

18 **FC 5:** right, but that might be because he noticed it in the reply email that I signed my name off at
19 the bottom of the email

A series of dots are found in the corpus of emails as shown in examples 6.24 and 6.25. Example 6.24 is an email written by a participant to her Vietnamese recipient. She clarified the phrase "sometime later..." by the phrase "may be after August" (lines 3-4). She expressed in her follow-up interview that a series of dots illustrated her uncertainty if her interlocutor would agree to another discussion later (lines 8-9). Also, she had got a rough period in her mind before she said "sometime", so she added her suggested idea after the series of dots (line 10). She feared to send a too strong or direct message fixing the date; her recipient might feel it as a command rather than a request. Then, she used the dots to help her reduce the level of seriousness of the message signalling an informal atmosphere of communication that she was waiting for her recipient to decide if the offered period was satisfactorily practical for the recipient (lines 10-12).

In addition, there is another way of using a series of dots that is not found in any other email data source, except example 6.25. "Dear Ajarn...," (line 3) was employed by a Laotian teaching staff in a

Lao university addressing the participant of the study who was not the same person in example 6.24 presented. The participant in example 6.25 made a guess about the reason why the dots were placed this way. It might be because her interlocutor could not remember her name at the moment he created the email (line 14) because all the later emails from him in this email exchange comprised her name; he addressed her correct name after he received the reply from her with her printed name and signature at the end of her response (lines 18-19). Therefore, she thinks that the objective of using a series of dots here might be to replace any unrecognized information.

That is, the use of dots at a time presented in examples 6.24-6.25 can be interpreted in different objectives: introducing the idea without force and uncertainty replacement. They seem to be asymmetrical due to the users' intentions, so they are claimed to be flexible in their use depending on the contexts.

Example 6.26

1 **From:** [S2] <[S2]@gmail.com>
2 **Sent:** Sunday, December 11, 2016 5:50 PM
3 **To:** [S1]
4 **Subject:** Re: Letter of Invitation

5 Dear Dr. [S1]

6 We have well noted your schedule and information.

7 Pro-rector (Teaching) will be signing MoU from our
8 side too.

9 Regarding airport pick-up, you already have
10 arranged it so we don't have to provide the bus???

11 Anyway, Mr. [first name1][last name1] will be waiting for you
12 at the airport on your arrival.

13 **Researcher:** how about these '???'

14 **FC 2:** I think that he needed an urgent reply as it was an important issue about picking up at the
15 airport. he offered us a coach taking us from the airport to the university, and he then wanted a
16 confirmation from me as soon as possible. since it was a question, the sender wanted to stress its

17 importance by using many question marks at a time with the hidden intention of asking for quick
18 confirmation. If it was just one question mark, it would be fine, but here THREE – I needed to reply
19 immediately

The last punctuation disclosed in the corpus of emails is a series of question marks as seen in example 6.26. The email was written by a participant's interlocutor who is a Burmese international relations affairs staff in Myanmar. From the participant's point of view, as a recipient, revealed in the second interview (lines 14-19), he decoded his interlocutor's use of excessive question marks in that his interlocutor might need an immediate reply from him. He believed the sentence "Regarding airport pick-up, you already have arranged it so we don't have to provide the bus???" (lines 9-10) was considered a question since it consisted of question marks at the end of the sentence (lines 17-19). In this situation, this was an important issue that needed instantaneous confirmation from the participant, as the recipient, whether the writer had to prepare transportation from the airport for the participant's team or not (lines 15-16). He further added that the use of three question marks at a time was not only to highlight a form of a question, but the writer might also force him to respond as soon as possible (lines 19-20). Hence, it can be concluded that the number of question marks used emphasizes either interrogation or the seriousness of a topic discussed; the more question marks are applied, the more attention is required.

6.4.2 Politeness: (in)formality

Referring to politeness in email communication raised by the participants in the first interviews (see 5.5.2.3), the opening-closing addresses – the key indicator signalling relationships between the email interactants and signifying levels of formality – are specifically discussed in this part. This is to examine how the participants applied and perceived the importance of the addresses leading to communicative success via emails; the participant's interlocutor's use of opening-closing addresses are beyond the scope of the study. Following Table 5 (see 6.3), there are two sub-themes categorized under the theme 'politeness: (in)formality' observed in the findings from the second interviews: 'opening address' and 'closing address'. The following examples illustrate how the email interactants addressed their recipients in the beginning as well as the ways they ended the emails in various styles. The email openings and closings are divided into five similar codes underlying each sub-theme, so 10 codes in total are classified. The same five categories under both sub-themes of the openings and closings are 'formal', 'semi-formal', 'formality decreasing', 'informal' and 'formality unsteady' categories, adapted from the categorization of formality by Bjorge (2007) and McKeown & Zhang (2015) (see also Table 3). The opening-closing addresses shown here are excerpted from both

the participants' and their interlocutors' use. These exemplifying emails were chronologically selected with the aim of showing the development of separate greetings and endings employed by both email interactants.

Since the focus of the study is the opening-closing addresses only, some irrelevant parts such as contents or business messages in the emails are somewhat eliminated. The focal points in each example are additionally underlined on purpose; the openings are indicated by purple underlines, while the closings are emphasized by green underlines. Moreover, the supplementary information disclosed by the participants' interpretations of the politeness used in email communication from the second interviews accompanies all the examples. Line numbers were also added in front of each line of both sources of data – the emails and the interview scripts – continuously in each example for ease of reference.

6.4.2.1 Opening address

The examples below are 10 selected email exchanges exhibiting email salutations used by both parties of the email interactants: the participants and their interlocutors. A series of hyphens below the emails indicate the end of each email. As the aim is to show the opening addresses occurring in the emails, the number of emails chosen to be presented in each email exchange differs in individual examples due to the numbers of authentic emails in the exchanges and saturated information to be clarified. The crucial parts of openings are intentionally underlined with the purple lines so that the focuses are easily noticed. Table 5 displays a summary of the findings found in the corpus of emails, whereas Table 3 presents the prior focus on the levels of formality in email indicating the opening addresses. Therefore, the analysis in this part is based on the levels of formality as displayed in Table 3.

6.4.2.1.1 Formal

Example 6.27

1 [S1][S1/last] (IP&Science)" < .ac.th>
To: [S2][S2/last] .com>

Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 2:19 PM

3 Dear Ms. [S2/last]

We would like to ask you as follows:

- 5 - If we sent the information to you, it surely to appear in you ranking?
- Kindly give me the timeline to submit the data for [name4]
- 7 - Refer to last year ago, we send the data to you but cannot appear in your ranking.
We would like to know about weakness if you can suggest us.
- 9 I sincerely look forward to hearing the answer from you.

Thank you so much.

11 [S2][S2/last] (IP&Science) * .ac.th>
To: [S1][S1/last] .com>

Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 2:39

13 Dear Ms. [S1/last]

15 Thank you for your email. This is the first year [name1] University participated in the [name5]
The data you've submitted in 2017 will be used by [name4] in their publications of the following
rankings in 2018:

- 17 -[name4] [World University Ranking](#) (Overall Ranking) – April;
- [name4] [Reputation Ranking](#) – August;
- 19 [name4] [Subject Rankings](#) – October;

21 [S1][S1/last] .th>
To: [S2][S2/last] (IP&Science)" < .com>

Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 3:16

Dear Ms. [S2/last]

- 23 Thank you so much for your details.
Best Regards,

25 [S2][S2/last] (IP&Science) < .com>
To: [S1][S1/last] .ac.th>

Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 3:17

27 You are most welcome Ms. [S1/last]!

28 **Researcher:** here you will see your interlocutor normally used the same openings, but there was no
29 opening in the last email. what did you think?

30 **IR 4:** it was because it was a prompt reply. you see this? I sent out mine at 3.16 pm and her response
31 came in 3.17 pm.

32 **Researcher:** you didn't feel SURPRISED that there was no opening?

33 **IR 4:** no. but you see? I always kept mine formal as we have never contacted and I was unsure if the
34 interlocutor has a higher position or not, so it was better to make it formal preventing any
35 inconvenience

The pattern of the greeting 'Dear + title + surname' in example 6.27 was consistently employed by the participant in lines 3 and 22, while her interlocutor used it in line 13 and no opening address in another email in lines 25-27. The participant explained in the second interview that this email exchange was co-constructed with a staff at another organization, and they had never been in contact before. The topic being discussed was a serious one about world university ranking, and this resulted in their formal salutations or opening addresses. There are four emails in the exchange: three of them contain the same stably formal pattern of openings, while the last one written by the interlocutor (lines 25-27) dated 'Thu, Nov30, 2017 at 3:17 PM' contains no opening. The participant as a recipient of the last email assumed that it was an immediate reply to the previous one in lines 20-24; her interlocutor responded to it only one minute later. Thus, the opening in that email might be overlooked as it was an instant interaction (lines 30-31), and she neither felt uncomfortable with it, rather she focused that they did not know each other. Moreover, she claimed that it was a good idea to apply the formal opening address to whom she did not know the degree or level of social position. Therefore, the significant factors influencing her opening address are both social distance and power.

6.4.2.1.2 Semi-formal

Example 6.28

1 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
To: [S2][S2/last]@yahoo.com
3 Cc: [S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 31, 2017 at 4:05 PM

Dear Khun [S2]

- 5 As I promised, herewith as attached the minutes of our last meeting. From this minutes, we hope that you could figure out our meeting in your university.
- 7 Moreover, as one of our objective is to broaden the Thailand Chapter, I may suggest you to invite your neighboring university as well. And for sure, We could give them a great information about P2A and be able to
- 9 encourage them to be a member. What do you think?

[S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>
11 To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 1:08 PM

Hi J! just curious of any progress. Many thanks, [S2]

13 [Quoted text hidden]

[S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
15 To: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 16, 2017 at 1:11 PM

Dear Mr. J

17 Hello.... So sorry, they keep so silent despite of the follow up prior to our initial discussion on the issue. No wonder seems they are so busy with their International Activities since last week till now.

19 So I plan to approach Mr. ^[first name 1] for the last time if they could host or not. If cannot, would it be okay to approach CMRU?

21 [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>
To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 17, 2017 at 7:16 AM

23 Absolutely! And thanks J. We also just started talk with thamassat to join P2A. Will keep you posted. [S2]
[Quoted text hidden]

24 Researcher: is he Thai?

25 IR 3: yeah. I met him already in the meeting in [place 2] when we did the chapter meeting, Thailand
26 chapter meeting. I met from [name 3] University, I met from [place 3] and then that's it. the four of
27 us, so that's why I put it here 'Dear Khun [S2]'. because I'm not sure about his position, besides we

28 had conversation before. so, it doesn't mean that I lower my respect, but we could now
29 communicate in a friendly manner, so that's why, maybe you want to say why I used 'Khun'. as he is
30 a Thai and this is the only the Thai word that I know which is appropriate because I forgot his title.
31 besides, this doesn't need very much formality here. so I used 'khun [S2]'. actually he is the director
32 of the international of [name2] University

33 **Researcher:** this one you put 'dear Mr.J' here, but he didn't do anything over here; did you feel any
34 differences?

35 **IR 3:** no. that's fine. we have close relationship working together, so it is nothing for me if he missed
36 the greeting.

*This is not a translated version (see 5.3).

Example 6.28 displays greetings between interactants who have a close relationship and have been contacting each other for a long time. They have met each other having face-to-face communication many times before conducting this email exchange. Even though there are only four emails in the exchange, apparent changes opening addresses can be found from both sides of the email communicators. The participant's opening addresses are considered semi-formal. The participant who is not Thai started the first email dated on Oct 31, 2017 by greeting her Thai interlocutor with 'Dear + Khun + first name' (line 4), and he responded to her with "Hi J!" (line 12) which 'J' is the participant's initial. In her following response, she greeted him with "Dear Mr. J" (line 16) where J is also his initial, and the last email dated on the following day (lines 21-24), her interlocutor decided not to put any opening address, but suddenly got to the point by replying to her question from the previous email.

In line 4, the participant used the word 'Khun' preceding her interlocutor's name. This is very common among Thai people to call or address someone by 'Khun + their names' because 'Khun' indicates courtesy, respect and politeness in Thai culture when calling people. Here, though the participant is not Thai, she was aware of this cultural practice and made use of it when starting the first email with the Thai recipient as she mentioned in the interview (lines 33-35). It is also interesting that the last email in the exchange written by the interlocutor has no greeting even though it is not a prompt reply on the same date as has been found in the last email mentioned in example 6.27. The participant was not offended at all by not being addressed in the email (lines 36-39). This infers that since they had very close friendliness, she overlooked the necessity of her interlocutor's opening address to her. She believed the interaction could be less formal because of

their relationship, so she intended to address him by the title and his first name, considered semi-formal. However, she replaced the title by the Thai word 'Khun' as she was aware of her interlocutor's cultural norm when addressing people politely and also she was not sure what his honorific title was (line 33). Here, she was concerned about a higher degree of social power before applying the opening addresses with the interlocutor, and at the same time, she wanted to create friendly and less formal written conversation as they had a close relationship.

6.4.2.1.3 Formality decreasing

Example 6.29

1 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com> Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 1:27 PM
To: office@[S2][S2/last]
3 Cc: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@[S2][S2/last].ac.th>
Dear Ms. [S2][S2/last]
5 Greetings from [name 1] University!
I am Ms. [S1][S1/last], Foreign Specialist of the [org 1]-Office of International Affairs and on behalf
7 of [org 1], we would like to thank you for inviting us to participate in a New Erasmus Academic Project that you
have sent to us dated November 4, 2017.

9 [name 2] University of Management <office@[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com> Wed, Nov 8, 2017 at 10:06 PM
To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
11 Dear Ms. [S1][S1/last]
Thank you for the prompt reply!
13 We'll be happy to work together in this Project. We believe this will be a successful and fruitful partnership, and a
chance for our institutions to establish long-term relations.
15 For more details about the Project, please kindly read our FRIENDS Project Partner Search.pdf document which was
attached to our email message of invitation.

17 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
To: [name 2] University of Management <office@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>

Tue, Nov 14, 2017 at 3:25 PM

19 Dear Ms. [S2]

Greetings once again from the Office of International Affairs of [name 1] University, Thailand.

21 As a starting point to be part of this project, is there any documents we should prepare such as Official Letter to express our interest towards this project?

23 As I started the same approach the last time from Erasmus+ but in different field and processed our PIC, for sure I could use that once again for participating on this project, right? Then the rest documents will be

25 provided by your side.

[name 2] University of Management <office@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>
27 To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>

Wed, Nov 15, 2017 at 7:15 PM

Dear [S1][S1/last]

29 It was nice to hear from you again. We are honoured to have found partners such as your institution, and we are enthusiastic about this project as well. Just let me point out that this is a capacity building project, rather than a
31 students mobility one.

Regarding the PIC - yes, since you already have obtained a PIC code, you proceed with it, no need for a new one.
33 The same would be with regard to the Legal Entity Form - you already have it uploaded on the Participants Portal, right?

35 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com>
To: [name 2] University of Management <office@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>

Fri, Nov 24, 2017 at 7:42 PM

37 Dear Ms. [S2]

Greetings!

39 Thank you for the update.
Herewith the [name 1] University PIC # 915215662

41 Looking forward to receiving the Mandate Template.

[name 2] University of Management <office@...>
43 To: [S1][S1/last] <...@gmail.com>

Tue, Nov 28, 2017 at 10:47 PM

Dear Ms. [S1]

45 Further to my earlier message of today, I'm pleased to let you know that the Mandate template is now available - please find it attached herewith.

47 Please fill it in, print out, have it signed and stamped, scan and send over to us by email.

Please find also attached FRIENDS Initial Partner Information form - please also fill it in, scan and send over to us by 49 e-mail.

[S1][S1/last] <...@gmail.com>
51 To: [name 2] University of Management <office@...>

Wed, Nov 29, 2017 at 3:37 PM

Dear [S2]

53 Thank you for this email.

Before I complete these forms, I would like to raise the following questions to avoid some disputes:

55 1. On the Mandate Template, would it be our President who gonna sign it or would it be okay that the Assistant to the President for Intentional Affairs?

57 2. On the quality of the Project Team and the Cooperation Arrangements Form, since we, here at [org 1]-OIA work as a TEAM, would it be okay that the staff member for this project will come from our office.

59 [name 2] University of Management <office@...>
To: [S1][S1/last] <...@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 30, 2017 at 5:23 PM

61 Cc: <...@gmail.com>

Dear [S1]

63 We considered your message with concerns very carefully.

Please note, I wrote you that *ideally* the submission of the signed Mandate should be by 22nd December, 2017.

65 However, we understand the situation you're in, and could extend the deadline for you - until 12th January 2018 - if you could confirm that you will be able to submit the Mandate and the Initial Partner Information form by then.

67 What do you think?

68 **Researcher:** OK. I have looked at your opening addresses from the beginning through the end of the
69 exchange, and I found that they were changed from both your side and your interlocutor's

70 **IR 3:** yes because I started the communication formally because we don't know each other so I need
71 to appropriately show her politeness. but later on, when we had more conversations via emails, I
72 wanted to create a more relaxed atmosphere in communication. I tried to downgrade the formality

73 by addressing her this way. it helps a lot because in the email. but it little by little this barrier could
74 be removed. When the relationship gets better, the communication is easier

*This is not a translated version (see5.3).

Eight selected emails from 28 emails in the exchange are introduced in example 6.29 due to all different styles of openings found in the interactions. Both email communicators tended to change their own styles of opening address when they sent and received more emails; the more emails in their correspondence, the less formality of opening address becoming. Three patterns of greetings used by the participant can be seen in all of her emails in this exchange, meanwhile her interlocutor's emails deployed four styles of openings. It is obvious that both of them were changing their greetings. The participant began her first email with the formal opening address 'Dear + title + first name + surname' (line 4), then changed into the semi-formal opening 'Dear + title + first name' (lines 19 and 37), and the informal address 'Dear + first name' in the last turn (line 52). In the same vein, the interlocutor greeted her in emails by using the formal addresses 'Dear + title + first name + surname' (line 11) and 'Dear + first name + surname' (line28), then the semi-formal address 'Dear + title + first name' (line 44), and the informal address 'Dear + first name' (line 62) respectively.

The openings in all the 28 emails in the exchange gradually changed from formal to informal; addressing by 'Dear' + full name with the title until the last one consisting of only the name with 'Dear'. In the whole email exchange, there are three emails consisting of the same style of opening as shown in line 4, eight emails with the same pattern as in lines 19, and two emails with the same opening as in line 52 created by the participant. From the interlocutor side, two emails comprise the same greeting as in line 11, one email as mentioned in line 28, five emails with the same opening as in line 44, and seven emails with the same salutation as seen in line 62.

The participant said that the ways she addressed her recipient indicated formality and politeness in communication in the beginning because this is the first email exchange between them, meaning that they had never known each other before conducting the exchange. However, she was progressively changing the salutations since she wanted to offer her interactant cordiality (lines 71-73). She further added in the interview that the atmosphere in communication is meaningful; a closer relationship makes it easier for her to do business via email interaction. That is why she preferred to develop her greetings this way (lines 73-74); decreasing levels of formality all through the emails exchanged.

6.4.2.1.4 Informal

Example 6.30

1 On 25 May 2559 BE, at 10:15, [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>

Dear Aj. [S1/nickname]

3 Hope all is well.

Ms. [first name 1] came to me asking about your inquiries on
5 Scholarship in Korea. May I know the specif information
of this so that I can check for you?

7 Thanks

On May 26, 2559 BE, at 12:15 AM, [S1/nickname][S1] <[S1/nickname]@hotmail.com> wrote:

9 Dear [S2]

11 Yep! My student sent me follow this link [https://
th/th/index.php/announcements/23-international-
architecture](https://th/th/index.php/announcements/23-international-architecture)

13 Thank you so much
Aj. [S1/nickname] :)

15 On 26 May 2559 BE, at 07:51, [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr [S1/nickname]

17 Good Morning

19 Sad to say that the program required the participants to pay 2550 USD. No
scholarship at all.

Cheers

21 **From:** [S1/nickname][S1] < @hotmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, May 26, 2016 4.32 AM

23 **To:** [S2][S2/last]

Subject: Re: Korea Scholarship

25 Thank you for your email [S2] :)

Sent from my iPhone

27 **Researcher:** have you coordinated with her before?

28 **FC 5:** yes, since I was appointed to work on international relations affairs at the faculty

29 **Researcher:** does she know that you are also a lecturer?

30 **FC 5:** yes

31 **Researcher:** because?

32 **FC 5:** she called me 'Khun'?

33 **Researcher:** ALRIGHT, so I'm a bit confused

34 **FC 5:** she called me 'Khun' and 'Ajarn' interchangeably

35 **Researcher:** do you mean when you two have verbal conversations?

36 **FC 5:** yes yes yes

37 **Researcher:** doesn't she have a stable way of calling you?

38 **FC 5:** NO, but I didn't pay any attention to it, honestly. what I do care is only if it was sent to me
39 correctly, not with the intention to send to somebody else. and if you see that I didn't even greet her
40 in my last email as it was a prompt reply showing acknowledgement of thanking for the information
41 given

In terms of relationships between the two parties in example 6.30, they have close familiarity. The participant and the interlocutor are colleagues at the university, but at different departments. For

the participant's use of openings, she firstly replied with the informal opening address 'Dear + first name' (line 9). Moreover, in her following turn (lines 21-26) she did not even use an opening address to her interlocutor, but went directly to the matter at hand. (line 25).

The participant explained in the second interview that they know each other and have been working together for a certain time (lines 27-28), so she could confirm that they have a close relationship in terms of business coordination. Whenever they had a face-to-face conversation, the interlocutor called her 'Ajarn' or 'Dr' inconsistently (line 34). 'Aj' stands for 'Ajarn' meaning 'teacher' in the Thai language. This is a common practice among people in the Thai context; they always call anyone in a teaching profession with 'Ajarn' followed by names. For calling someone 'Dr + name', sometimes people in Thailand call each other that way to indicate their awareness of the professional background of their interlocutor(s). Interestingly, she insisted that she did not care much about the opening addresses so long as the emails were intentionally sent to her. In her last email in lines 21-26 where no opening was employed, she explained that it was just a short and quick reply thanking the sender whom she knew quite well (lines 39-41). That is, the closeness between them let her opening addresses be much less formal – informal addresses were preferred in this situation.

6.4.2.1.5 Unsteady

Example 6.31

1 Dear Mr. [S1/nickname]

Greetings and hope all is well.

3 First of all I would like to say thank you and congratulate your students for completing the Global Discovery programme. I am pleased to attached a soft copy of your students GDP Academic Transcript for your kind

5 reference and perusal (if any). We will also be sending the original copies to your office soon, in this regards may I request the following:

7 **1. Address with Post Code**

2. Contact No.

9 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>
 ถึง: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@[S2][S2/last].edu.bn>

9 ตุลาคม 2560 14:54

11 Dear Mr. [S2]

Everything is going very well here and I do hope there as well.

13 Address: Dr. [S1][S1/last]

Dear Mr. [S1/nickname]

15 Greetings and hope all is well.

Just a gentle reminder that our deadline for next years GDP: Discover Brunei Course (19 Feb - 18 March 2018) is
17 this 19 December 2017. Hope for students from [name 1] University to join us on the first of our flagship
summer school programme the GDP.

19 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>
ถึง: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@[S2][S2/last].edu.bn>

25 พฤศจิกายน 2560 13:08

21 Dear sir [S2]

Thank you for your invitation to join GDP 2018. However, we are not available during that time period because second
23 semester will start on January. Most possibly, the same time as previous years will be the best time for my students.

Best regards,

25 [S1/nickname]

26 **Researcher:** who is your email interactant?

27 **FC 4:** coordinator at a university in Brunei, he works in international relation affairs

28 **Researcher:** have you met or known him?

29 **FC 4:** YES. we met, and hung out together. his wife is also Thai, too

30 **Researcher:** and using 'sir' here. did u use it on purpose?

31 **FC 4:** well, I didn't really know; I just changed his title because of my mood at that moment without
32 any serious intention. it can be anything I want to; I have no standards for this recipient. but it
33 happened only with whom I have very close relationships

In example 6.31, there are a total of seven emails in the exchange, but four were selected as the rest have the same style of opening as of the interlocutor's, to illustrate their use of openings; two from each email interactant. The participant's interlocutor employed exactly the same opening addresses 'Dear Mr. + participant's nickname' in all five emails where only two are presented. The participant himself greeted his interlocutor with the semi-formal address 'Dear Mr. + recipient's name' in line 11 and 'Dear sir + recipient's name' in line 21. Though all the openings employed by both interactants are considered semi-formal, the interesting information was found in the interview with the participant (lines 26-32). The participant knew the interlocutor quite well socializing with him

sometimes (line 29), but his use of opening addresses looked confusing. I asked him about using ‘sir’ thinking that there might be something hidden as ‘sir’ is very formal much more than any other honorific titles (line 30). Unexpectedly, he insisted that the styles of opening address depended on his preference at the moment of creating the emails – it could be anything anytime as he had no preferences of opening addresses (lines 31-32). That is, the inconsistent tendency of opening addresses can possibly be employed by the participant whenever he contacts someone with whom he has less distance with (lines 31-33). Moreover, opening addresses probably signify nothing for the participant in case that he communicates with close associates in business email transactions; the social distance is much more powerful than social status for him in constructing BELF emails.

6.4.2.2 Closing

Apart from the opening address at the beginning of emails, the closing address is another focus of this study as they both are essential elements in emails, which could signify the writers’ intention and politeness in each email (Bjørge, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). The following seven examples of closings are representatives from the information in the corpus of emails. They will be described in different aspects based on the five categories coded in the same way as in the openings in section 6.4.2.1 (see Table 5). Similar to the information presented in the opening section, some emails in one exchange are purposively selected and displayed chronologically divided by a series of hyphens.

6.4.2.2.1 Formal

Example 6.32

1 In this regards, we would like to inquire from your good office some information regarding the requirements needed, application processing and some offerings from your side.

3 We are looking forward to hearing your positive words on the aforementioned matters above.

Thank you so much.

5 Best Regards

Ms. [S1][S1/last]

7 Foreign Specialist
International Relations Office

9 [name 1] University

Dear Ms. [S1][S1/last]

11 Greetings from [org2]International Affairs.

Thank you for your information about nominating 2 students from your university for internship program 2018.

13 I have been trying to contact the coordinator professor (Prof. [last name 1]) at KIT to consult him about the possibility of accepting the 2 students.

15 So, please allow us some more time.

Thank you for your understanding.

17 [S2][S2/last]

[S2][S2/last] (Ms.)

19 Student Exchange, International Affairs

[name 2] of Technology

21 Tel:075- Fax:075-

E-mail:ses@ .ac.jp

23 Dear Ms. [S2]

Greetings!

25 Thank you so much for the attention given to my inquiries.
Looking forward to hearing positive results from you.

27 Best Regards

Ms. [S1][S1/last]

29 Foreign Specialist

International Relations Office

31 [name 1] University

Dear Ms. [S1][S1/last]

33 Greetings from [name 2] International Affairs.

I contacted the coordinator professor (Prof. [last name 1] a[org 2])

35 To decide [org 2] professors who can take care of the 2 students, he would like them to select their interested study fields from the webpage for Electrical Engineering: [https://www.\[org 2\]/research/electronics/](https://www.[org 2]/research/electronics/)

37 Thank you in advance,

[S2][S2/last]

39 [S2][S2/last] (Ms.)
Student Exchange, International Affairs

41 [name 2] Institute of Technology
Tel: +81- [S2][S2/last] Fax: +81-75- [S2][S2/last]

43 Dear Ms. [S1][S1/last]

Thank you for your prompt reply.

45 Actually, we are now in the process of revising the required documents' formats for internship program 2018.

But for your reference, you can check those of internship 2017 on this webpage: [https://www.\[org 2\]/en/prospective_student/visiting-students/](https://www.[org 2]/en/prospective_student/visiting-students/)

If we decide to accept your students officially, we will give them IDs and passwords for online application.

49 Thank you for all your help,

[S2][S2/last]

51 [S2][S2/last] (Ms.)
Student Exchange, International Affairs

53 [name 2] Institute of Technology
Tel: +81-75- [S2][S2/last] Fax: +81-75- [S2][S2/last]

55 E-mail: [ses@\[S2\]\[S2/last\].ac.jp](mailto:ses@[S2][S2/last].ac.jp)

56 **Researcher:** why do you always use 'Best Regards' along with your electronic signature

57 **IR 3:** I want to make it formal because this is the first email exchange between our organizations and

58 I don't know the recipient

59 **Researcher:** what do think about your interlocutor's closings. she made use of thanking in different

60 ways here

61 **IR 3:** well, I think she also wanted to make it formal, too. and you know? one thing relating to
62 Japanese culture, people always say 'Thank you' and bow their head often in a conversation as far as
63 I experience when I visited another university in Japan. it's just like their common manner to do so in
64 order to show their respect and politeness. you will frequently see it like when Thai people normally
65 bow their head with two hands together in front of them saying 'hello', 'thank you' or 'sorry' in Thai.
66 that's why she tried to say 'thank you' in all her emails I think

*This is not a translated version (see5.3).

The email interaction in example 6.32 is between a participant and a Japanese staff at a university in Japan. This is the first time they have contacted each other, so their closing addresses are in a formal category of the email valediction (see Table 3). Two out of six emails written by the participant in this exchange were selected to be presented here because all of her emails contain exactly the same closing "Best Regards" followed by her full name including title, position and address which is considered an absolute formal ending of email interaction, as can be seen in lines 5-9 and 27-31 respectively.

The participant pointed out that she wanted to create formal communication because this was their first-time contact (lines 57-58). For her interlocutor's closings, she assumed the interlocutor might also intend to end up with formal complimentary closes as what she had written down could be typically seen in Japanese culture when they finish their conversations (lines 61-66). From her experience interacting with Japanese people face-to-face, they always thanked their interlocutors because they tried to show respect and politeness - it is crucial to explicitly display the politeness by repeating 'thank you' many times in a conversation (lines 65-66). Hence, she suggested that this might affect her interlocutor's written discourse this way as well as formally indicating politeness regarding her own cultural practice.

6.4.2.2.2 Semi-formal

Example 6.33

1 On 9 September 2017 at 14:11, [S1][S1/last] < > .ac.th> wrote:

Dear Teacher

3 I would like to inform you that the Immigration will be service
at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

5 First Floor at The American Corner Room

On September 14, 2017 at 11.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m.

7 They will be Service for Staff and Student for extend Visa and 90 days report

I will be there in the morning until 12.00 p.m.

9 Please prepare the document if you want to go there

Sincerely

11 [S1]

On 9 September 2017 at 18:37, [S2][S2/last] < > .ac.th> wrote:

13 **ขอบคุณครับ :-)**

Can I come at 11am? .. I need to finish before 12:30 .. I have 1pm class!

15 [S2][S2/last]

2017-10-02 11:20 GMT+07:00 [S2][S2/last] < > .ac.th>:

17 **สวัสดีครับ :-)**

Bee sent me a message that my WP will be available tomorrow.

19 **Should I just go to Borabu to collect it?**

Morning or afternoon?

21 Thanks

[S2]

23 On 2 October 2017 at 14:52, [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@[S1][S1/last].ac.th> wrote:

Dear Teacher

25 You can get your work permit at the labor office tomorrow by yourself

Or you want to go with me if you want to go with me please come to my office at 09.00 in the morning

27 So we can go get it together

Sincerely

29 [S1]

From: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@[S2][S2/last].ac.th>
31 Date: 2017-10-03 10:43 GMT+07:00
Subject: Labour office ... Google translation joke
33 To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@[S1][S1/last].ac.th>

Hmm .. just as well you offered to take us ..

35 if use the Labour Office's English page to find the office ..

we get this translation ...

37 Let's go to lunch there next time .. must be better than in [name 3] 5555
See you at 1pm

39 [S2]

40 **Researcher:** as an IR staff, most of the people you deal with are internal staff at the university, is it
41 right?

42 **IR 6:** YES

43 **Researcher:** who is this email interactant

44 **IR 6:** a teaching staff

- 45 **Researcher:** why did you end with ‘sincerely’ in all emails
- 46 **IR 6:** it’s not only formal, but also polite in my opinion. no matter how well I know him, I need to be
47 polite and courtesy, so I think I have to use this word
- 48 **Researcher:** how about other lecturers who are very nice and friendly communicating with you
- 49 **IR 6:** still, I treat them all the same since they are teaching staff
- 50 **Researcher:** with whoever has higher power than you?
- 51 **IR 6:** YES

The email exchange in example 6.33 is between a Thai participant and a foreign teaching staff at the same university. They have been coordinating for many years, so they know each other quite well in this case. The participant kept using the semi-formal closing address ‘Sincerely’ followed by her first name (lines 10-11 and 28-29), whereas her colleague closed his emails diversely in his three emails with ‘only his full name’ (line 15), saying ‘Thanks’ and his name below (lines 21-22) and ‘only his first name’ (line 39). She claimed in the interview (lines 40-51) that though they have a close relationship, she usually used a formal format of closing address since her recipient has a higher degree of power, and also she wanted to indicate her politeness in the emails (lines 46-47). She insisted that she always used ‘Sincerely’ with her name signed off with all teaching staff or whoever had more relative power (lines 48-51). From the participant’s perspective, the use of ‘sincerely’ solely could signify a high degree of formality, bringing politeness into her message content. Therefore, she considered her interactants’ power as an indicator determining how formal her emails should be. Nevertheless, this idea is slightly different from the formality categorization in this study. This kind of closing address is categorized in a semi-formal group because ‘sincerely’ can be seen in both levels: formal and semi-formal, but the key point here is her name; full name or surname displays formality, whereas first name or nickname means informality. Hence, the combination of formal complimentary close ‘sincerely’ and informal sign off ‘first name’ illustrates a semi-formal level of formality.

6.4.2.2.3 Formality decreasing

Example 6.34

1 Hope all is well.

Ms. [first_name 1] came to me asking about your inquiries on
3 Scholarship in Korea. May I know the specif information
of this so that I can check for you?

5 Thanks

Ms. [S1][S1/last]
7 Foreign Specialist
International Relations Office
9 [name 1] University

Dear [S1]

11 Yep! My student sent me follow this link [https://](https://th/th/index.php/announcements/23-international-summer-programme-in-architecture)
13 th/th/index.php/announcements/23-international-summer-programme-in-architecture

Thank you so much

15 Aj. (:)
[S2/nickname]

Dear Dr [S2/nickname]

17 Good Morning

Sad to say that the program required the participants to pay 2550 USD. No
19 scholarship at all.

Cheers

21 Sent from my iPhone

From: [S2/nickname][S2] <@hotmail.com>
23 **Sent:** Thursday, May 26, 2016 4:32 AM
To: [S2][S2/last]
25 **Subject:** Re: Korea Scholarship

Thank you for your email [S2] :)

27 Sent from my iPhone

28 **Researcher:** this exchange, do you know the recipient well

29 **IR 3:** yes, she works for the faculty of Architecture.

30 **Researcher:** well, why did you end the emails DIFFERENTLY here

31 **IR 3:** because the first one I used a PC and the automatic signature coming along with the email.

32 another one I used my phone to create the message and it was still on the same date, so I think my

33 recipient don't mind it as we have a very close relationship working together for a long time. you

34 see? she didn't sign off too in her response, and I am fine with that. I think she would feel the same;

35 don't care much about this point as we contact informally

*This is not a translated version (see 5.3).

Example 6.34 is an email exchange displaying decreasing formality in the email closing address. The formality of the participant's closings decreased from semi-formal to informal. Her closing addresses are "Thanks" followed by 'title + her full name' (lines 5-6), and "Cheers" (line 20) without her name afterward. The participant argued in the interview (lines 28-35) that in her first email, she purposely closed the email with 'Thank' and the full name and the career position automatically came along (line 31). Later in her next turn (lines 16-21), she missed the name after the complimentary close 'Cheers' (line 20) because the email was created via a smartphone, not a PC. Moreover, it was an instant reply on the same date, and she created the email via her smartphone. However, she believed it was acceptable to use such informal address; her intimate interlocutor might understand and did not mind receiving the email with the informal closing (lines 32-33). She did not feel uncomfortable once she saw her interlocutor's response without closing in the last email (lines 22-27), so she was confident that her interlocutor might feel the same (lines 34-35). It can be concluded that the social variable of distance is a determiner affecting the participant's awareness of the

closing address. She did not take the closing issue into serious consideration when she communicated with a close associate. However, she did not realize that her closing addresses in the two email exchanges mentioned were in the dimension of formality decreasing. Rather, she believed her less formal closing addresses were suitable to be used with the non-distant interlocutor in this case.

6.4.2.2.4 Informal

Example 6.35

1 [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 18:27
 ถึง: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com> i.ac.th

3 Hello mr. I think I have a little bit problem on my letter of acceptance from [org 1]. My name should be "[S2][S2/last] [S2/last] but the letter typed " [first name 1][last name 1] "

5 Based on the info that i ask to the embassy today. The application my have possibility to be rejected if there are misspelled name on my application. I hope you can change my Letter of acceptance from " [first name 1]

7 [last name 1] to " [S2][S2/last] ,"

It would be great if you can make it as soon as possible because embassy in indonesia didnt open on saturday.

9 So tomorrow is the day. And the submission is on 07 - 10am sir. I hope uou understand this urgent condition by sending me the correct letter of acceptance. Thank you

--

11 Yours Sincerely,

[S2][S2/last]

13 Lead and Nurturing Manager of Program Marketing

[org 2] in Universitas [name 2] 2016/2017

15 [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 21:23

ถึง: [S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com>

17 Hi, I got your email from my staff and he told me it is student's from indonesia. If you do not mind, can I ask you that are you student? Or I understand something wrong. I will ensure my understanding tomorrow with

19 International affairs division of [org 1]

Thank you

21 [S1]

[S2][S2/last] <[S2][S2/last]@gmail.com> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 21:33

23 ถึง: [S1][S1/last] <[S1][S1/last]@gmail.com> i.ac.th

25 yes , im one of student from jenderal soedirman university sir, i need little bit a revision on my LOA regarding misspelled on my name

[S1][S1/last] | < .ac.th> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 21:39
27 ถึง: [S2][S2/last] < @gmail.com>

Can I have a look at an incorrect letter? I would know which division issued it to you and I can go to talk to the right person.

[S2][S2/last] | < @gmail.com> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 21:59
31 ถึง: [S1][S1/last] < .ac.th>

so here's the letter, my name should be [S2][S2/last], not [first name 1][last name 1] sir. I need the correct data for visa's requirement

[S1][S1/last] | < .ac.th> 20 กรกฎาคม 2560 23:20
35 ถึง: [S2][S2/last] < @gmail.com>

I noticed to International affairs division where your letter was issued. In my opinion, its correction will be ok but I am just afraid of your time frame to get it. You should discuss with Visa department with this regard as well in case of late submission to you.

However, I will try my best

Take care

41 [S1]

[S2][S2/last] < @gmail.com> 21 กรกฎาคม 2560 05:44
43 ถึง: [S1][S1/last] < .ac.th>

yeah mr. actually I know that correction may take 3 weeks to get it because mr.pras already told me before, and I said maybe visa department may tolerate this problem, but the security said no yesterday, but I don't know the

visa department may receive it or not. wish me luck sir.

47 I even have thought to editing my own loa. because it only misspelled on 'i' and 'h'

48 **FC 4:** a student from Brunei

49 **Researcher:** how do you feel that there is a closing address in the beginning of the exchange, but

50 none was found anymore when more emails were exchanged

51 **FC 4:** it's like we just started the written conversation, so we included the closing addresses. later, if
52 you can see them, they are quick replies. LOOK almost all of them happened on the same day, and
53 also the messages are short and concise in each email

54 **Researcher:** but you finally made use of the closing address in your last email

55 **FC 4:** YES, it's because I think I sorted out the problem and knew how to deal with it. it's like a signal
56 implying that it's not necessary to exchange more emails

57 **Researcher:** were you fine receiving the emails from the student without closing addresses?

58 **FC 4:** at first glance, I was a bit surprised. but well as I said they were just the quick responses as if
59 they were face-to-face interactions where opening-closing addresses were not crucial. more than
60 that, he is a student; I don't care much about these email elements from him

Turning to the email exchange where closings are rarely found, the emails in example 6.35 are sent and received by the participant and a former exchange Indonesian student. Almost all of the seven emails were sent on the same date, except the last one which was sent on the following day – it was clear that all were considered immediate responses. The first email was created by the student requesting a new document issued by the participant's faculty. The student closed his message with "Yours Sincerely," followed by his full name and position (lines 11-14) which represents a formal email valediction. Nonetheless, the remaining three emails written by him appeared to have no closings at all (lines 22-25, 30-33 and 42-47). For the emails written by the participant, in the first reply he applied the informal closing address "Thank you" followed by his first name (lines 20-21), but he did not employ any closings in his second turn which was an immediate response – he replied six minutes later after receiving the email from the interlocutor (lines 26-29). Then, in his last email where he claimed that he had finally sorted out the problem and suggested a resolution of the topic discussed, he closed the email with "Take care", followed by his first name which was also considered informal (lines 40-41).

The participant reflected in the interview (lines 48-60) that he primarily felt a little strange when he received the emails without closing addresses (lines 57-58), but later on when he realized that his interlocutor was a student at a lower position, he did not mind any mistakes or errors made by the student (lines 59-60). Besides that, the emails in the exchange were continuously and spontaneously sent and received on the same day (lines 52-53); it seemed like they were having a verbal interaction where opening-closing addresses were not necessary. Though the closing address was found in his

last email in the exchange (lines 34-41), he just wanted to finish the messages exchanged by that and thought everything might be clear and complete once the recipient received that email from him (lines 55-56). It can be said that a closing address seemed to be a fundamental email element from the participant's perspective in the first place. Nonetheless, once the email interaction appeared like an instantaneous written conversation, the closing addresses were ignored or not noticed by the participant; if his interlocutor and he did not include the addresses in emails, it was still fine. Furthermore, the lower-power interactant was not expected to professionally construct emails with such a component. Consequently, the informal closing addresses are likely to be used in emails where users are very familiar with each other or are sent from superiors to inferiors.

6.4.2.2.5 Unsteady

Example 6.36

1 Dear [S1/nickname]
3 Here are the names of the two other students from China who have not responded to my email. Kindly
5 let me know if you are able to get in touch with them. They have to arrive here at [org 1] before August 11,
7 which is the first day of classes for graduate students.
9 Ms. [first name 1] [last name 2]
Mr. [last name 2][last name 2]
11 These two have the same email addresses : @qq.com
13 Thank you very much.
15 A. [S2]

Dear Aj. [S2]
11 I will ask the OIA staff to follow up about this. Then, I will inform you asap.
13 Cheers,
15 Mr. [S1][S1/last]
Acting Head,
17 Office of International Affairs,
Division of Public Relations and International Affairs,
[name 1] University,

2017-07-26 17:56 GMT+07:00 [s2]

. <

@gmail.com>:

19 Thanks, [S2/nickname]

Dear Aj. [s2]

21 I checked with my colleague already, but there is no updated information about them. We still don't know when will they come to [org 1]

23 So now I ask the responsible person to them email already. When we receive the updated information, I will inform you asap.

25 Regards,

Mr. [S1][S1/last]

27 Dear [s1/nickname]

Thank you very much.

29 Regards,

A. [s2]

31 **Researcher:** who is this person in the emails

32 **IR 1:** [S2/first], a lecturer

33 **Researcher:** does he understand Thai?

34 **IR 1:** some

35 **Researcher:** do you have a close relationship with him?

36 **IR 1:** YES, we have been working together and he is a lecturer at our university

37 **Researcher:** do you generally call him 'ajarn'?

38 **IR 1:** YES all lecturers are called by that

- 39 **Researcher:** you chose 'cheers' and 'regards' followed by your full name. I want to know how they
40 are different?
- 41 **IR 1:** I think they both are not much formal closings like 'sincerely yours'. although we have very nice
42 familiarity, but I still need to pay respect to them by signing off with my full name all the time; I
43 believe it is polite
- 44 **Researcher:** how do you perceive different styles of your interlocutor's closing addresses
- 45 **IR 1:** I don't feel offended because he is a lecturer and he replied with a quite short message. he
46 might not want to put lots of things in the email
- 47 **Researcher:** do you think you would follow his style this way
- 48 **IR 1:** NO. it's because he has more power than me. though we are close, I have to be honourable
49 showing my respect and politeness to him formally or maybe semi-formally. I don't focus on how he
50 wrote to me, but it's how I should write to him

In the last example, there are five emails in the email exchange between a Thai participant and a foreign teaching staff at the same university. Two of the emails created by the participant comprise closings 'Cheers,' (line 12) and 'Regards,' (line 25) where both were followed by his title and full name. Even though 'Cheers' and 'Regards' signify a different level of formality – the former is informal but the latter is formal, the participant signed off by a very formal full name making the former closing semi-formal and the latter formal.

In the participant's second interview (lines 31-50), he did not mind receiving emails with a less formal closing address as he is in a position with lower power (lines 45 and 48). Though they both have closeness in terms of social distance, he obviously wanted to express his politeness through the emails as he was in an inferior position (lines 48-49). However, it seems to be contradictory in his way of closing the emails – he did not systematically decrease levels of formality nor did he made use of consistent formal, semi-formal, or informal. Rather, he initially closed the message with the semi-formal address 'Cheers + title + full name', and the formal closing 'Regards + title + full name' in the latter email. That is, the closing addresses are in an increasing formality which did not happen with other participants. However, it might be the mismatched concept of his and the one in this study as he mentioned that both closing addresses were less formal than 'sincerely yours' (line 41) meaning that he might claim these two were at the same level of formality; he did not intend to exploit the closings that systematically increased formality in the same email exchange. The closing addresses in the category 'formality unsteady' is the mismatched pattern, and no other participants

revealed their use of the address in this category. That is, the development of closing addresses under the dimension of the 'formality unsteady' is not evidently observed in this study.

6.5 Conclusion

Both the main themes of pragmatic strategies and politeness: (in)formality discovered in the corpus of email exchanges, are illustrated in this chapter with the complementary data from the second interviews. For the pragmatic strategies, the participants' explanation of the strategies used in their own messages including their interpretations of the interlocutors' messages strengthen a clearer understanding of what and why the strategies are naturally used in the BELF emails. Referring to the findings from the first interviews (see chapter 5), there are similar data found in the corpus of emails as well as in the second interviews. They are the sub-themes 'self-initiated self-repaired strategies', 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies', and 'accommodation strategies'.

Additionally, two more emergent sub-themes are exhibited here: 'intimacy reinforcement strategies' and 'meaning-making punctuation'. All the codes are used with different aims – to handle miscommunication, to create in-group solidarity, to encourage relaxed and comfortable atmosphere of communicative transactions, and saliently point particular information out – leading to business success through BELF communication.

In addition, the theme 'politeness: (in)formality' is discovered and detailed in this chapter. The two sub-themes categorized: 'opening address' and 'closing address', are presented in the same dimension. That is, five same codes are formulated under the two sub-themes with different levels of formality in opening-closing addresses. The data concerning politeness are described in the use of the addresses through the participants' lens detailing a variety of styles of addresses employed in particular emails with various intercultural email interactants. There are two dimensions of formality indicating politeness in these BELF emails: stable levels and inconsistent levels all through the email exchanges. However, the inconsistent ones seem unclear of their existence; the participants were not aware of such tendency making use of them unintentionally, or their perceptions of different levels are ambiguous and mismatched with the criteria proposed in this study, making the development of the opening-closing addresses confusing, not being used in the one certain way. Moreover, there is not a fixed or rigid structure of development employed by the email users based on the data from the corpus of emails in the study. However, what is found as potential factors influencing the email communicators' awareness of the terms of addresses in BELF emails are the prior social variables and inherent cultural practices.

It is undeniable that in the authentic email interactions, pragmatic strategies and politeness are significant factors impacting successful communication between senders and receivers. The BELF email users are concerned with what and how to clearly convey messages as well as how to manage miscommunication and how to build and/or maintain rapport between the communicators. The findings presented in this chapter exemplify all the pragmatic strategies observed in the authentic source of BELF email exchanges including all levels of formality displaying politeness. They not only confirm what has been explored in the previous studies, but also introduce meaningful emergent information about the language used in email interactions. Therefore, the proposed categorization based on the derived data can be a useful reference for (B)ELF email users to construct successful intercultural communication.

Chapter 7 Findings from the Focus Groups

7.1 Introduction

The data gained by means of the focus groups are additional data confirming what had been revealed by the participants in the two previous rounds of interviews. In conducting the focus groups, the participants expressed their opinions and reacted to their peers' opinions on the issues being discussed ; they sometimes agreed or disagreed with other(s) on particular points, but interestingly, they occasionally changed their mind after hearing their peers' ideas on some topics in the on-going process of discussion (Hennink, 2007). Additionally, there is also an issue that has not been mentioned in the individual interviews, occurring only in the focus group discussions which is revealed in this chapter.

The two focus groups consist of one group of teaching staff and another of administrative staff, who were some of the same participants in the individual interviews. The two groups were created with the aim of enabling the participants to freely share their points of views (Lune & Berg, 2017). The chapter displays the data gained from the focus groups. It starts with the data collection and transcribing process, followed by coding and categorizing data including the results exemplifying and analyzing the participants' ideas about the relevant topics. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter sums up what was gained through the focus group interviews.

7.2 Data collection and transcribing process

The participants in the focus groups are the same group of people who participated in the individual interviews (see 5.2 and 6.2.2); however, the number of informants participating in the focus groups is fewer than in the two interviews. There are nine staff in total involved which can be divided into two groups: four teaching staff working at different faculties, and five administrative staff working together at the university IR office. It is remarked that in the group of teaching staff, three out of four participants started discussing before the slightly later arrival of one further member. Thus, at some points in the examples presented here there are opinions shared between the three members, while the discussion among the administrative staff began and finished with all five staff being present through the process of the focus group interviews. Due to the participants' availability, these collaboration and voluntary group discussions were conducted in the last month of the research data collection after the second interviews were carried out.

The data were managed and transcribed with the same method as those in the individual interviews (see 5.1). The focus group of the teaching staff and the administrative staff took 21 minutes and 24 minutes respectively for their discussions, and the transcribing process consumed approximately five hours. All the transcripts and video recording files were systematically stored in NVivo 12 for safety and later use in the same way as other data collected. Similar transcription conventions and the content analysis approach (see 5.3) were applied to this dataset for data analysis as the main focus is on the contents of their discussions.

7.3 Coding and categorizing data

In the same vein as the coding process of the data from the two interviews mentioned earlier (see 5.4 and 6.3), the data from the focus groups were firstly grouped following the pre-determined themes, sub-themes and codes, whereas inductive ones were also discovered and later classified in the coding and categorizing process. The three themes: 'Pragmatic strategies', 'Linguistic and cultural awareness', and 'Politeness' were found. In this categorization, some information is slightly different from those found in the interviews and the corpus of emails. The coding and categorization of the data from the focus groups as well as examples illustrating the specific details in each code are shown in Table 6.

Table 7: Themes, Sub-themes and Codes from the Focus Groups

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies (D)	Consulting peer (D)	7.1
	Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies (D)	Asking for Clarification (D)	7.1
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies (I)	Emoticon (I)	7.2
	Meaning-making punctuation (I)	Content emphasis (I)	7.2
Language and (inter)cultural awareness (D)	Nativeness	Nativized inclination	7.3
		Egalitarian	7.4
	Cultural differences	Individual cultural awareness	7.5-7.6

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
		Intercultural awareness	7.5-7.6
Politeness (D)	Polite email element (I)	Opening (D)	7.7-7.8
		Closing (D)	7.7-7.8
		Proper wording (I)	7.7-7.8
	Impolite email element (I)	Emoticon (I)	7.7
		No opening (I)	7.8
		Improper wording (I)	7.8

*(D) deductive approach *(I) inductive approach

7.4 Results and analysis

The data from the focus groups are used to confirm and/or to support the data previously collected through the two individual interviews and the corpus of emails. Although there are two groups conducted separately, the information partially selected and presented in this section is gathered from both groups according to the topics discussed. There are three key themes detected from this research instrument as seen in Table 6. All the themes, the sub-themes and the codes were determined by both inductive and deductive approaches. Also, Table 6 indicates which excerpts exemplify relevant codes under the three sub-themes (see 7.3).

7.4.1 Pragmatic strategies

In this theme, the participants explained their performance in the email exchanges interacting with other people on behalf of the persons working on international relations affairs. There are three aspects mentioned: handling miscommunication, creating feeling expression through symbols, and emphasizing the contents. All strategies mentioned in the focus groups are similar to those uncovered in the corpus of emails. Encountering miscommunication, the participants firstly referred to the strategies 'consulting peer' under the sub-theme 'self-initiated self-repaired strategies', and 'asking for clarification' under the sub-theme 'self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies'. While in the latter aspects enhancing meaningful messages, they discussed the matter of 'emoticon' under the sub-theme 'intimacy reinforcement strategies', and 'content emphasis' under the sub-theme 'meaning-making punctuation'. The following examples illustrate relevant data from the focus groups concerning all the pragmatic strategies found via the focus group interviews.

Example 7.1

- 1 **FC 3:** CERTAINLY if I was not clear, I would ASK the interlocutor
- 2 **FC 2:** I wouldn't ask them back immediately, but would print the email out and ask my colleagues if
3 they have the same understanding as mine
- 4 **Researcher:** colleagues who were Thai or foreigners?
- 5 **FC 2:** BOTH because I wanted to check my understanding comparing to Thai's and non-Thai's making
6 sure the interpretations were the same thing
- 7 **Researcher:** so you preferred this resolution, didn't you?
- 8 **FC 2:** YES yes it seemed like it reflected our self-esteem; better to solve it without asking for the
9 interlocutor's assistance
- 10 **FC 4:** well, my method is like [FC 3/nickname]'s; I would directly ask the email sender. However, in
11 cases I didn't understand its meaning because of my language competence, I did exactly the same as
12 [FC 2/nickname] has stated – I brought the printed email to my native English speaking colleague,
13 and asked him to help me translate it into a simpler version. I mean I use both techniques
- 14 **FC 2:** yes yes I do use both

In example 7.1, there are two strategies mentioned: 'asking for clarification' and 'consulting peer'. In line 1, FC 3 had a strong idea of asking his interlocutors back if there was something about which he was unsure. Supported by FC 4 in line 10, he said that he did the same thing – asking the sender of the email, but it depended on what kind of communicative problems there were as he also mentioned that if the problems occurred due to his limited language ability, he would ask his colleague who is a native speaker of English to help him out (line 11-14). Similar to FC 3 on the one hand that consulting peer was a resolution, FC 2 revealed his idea of asking colleagues because he wanted to make sure if he himself interpreted the messages and had the same idea as the others (lines 2-3), not only foreign but also Thai colleagues (lines 4-6). He later explained another reason with a perspective hidden behind in lines 8-9 that he did not want his interlocutors to realize that he could not understand them; he did not want to be in an inferior position in the situation but wanted outsiders to see him confident and competent which explains why he chose his colleagues as the first resource of assistance. FC 2 and FC 4 agreed that these two strategies mentioned were

commonly used, whereas FC 3 strongly and solely agreed with the idea of 'asking for clarification' in any cases of miscommunication occurring via email interaction. This idea sounds normal when anyone has something unclear in his mind and decides to ask his interlocutor considered the origin of the miscommunication, so as to co-construct meanings and be sure to reach mutual understandings. Contrary to normal expectations, some participants chose not to ask their co-communicators for clarification. They preferred not to ask for help, thinking that they might be insulted by the other persons once asking for help from them, especially from their interlocutors who knew all the contexts of the conversation or communication. This refers to the concept of face (Goffman, 1967) that the message sender wanted to save or maintain his face or image in the communicative situation (Archer, 2017) pretending they had understood, and avoiding asking for support from other people who were the direct communicative counterpart. Instead, they chose to consult their colleagues.

Example 7.2

- 1 **Researcher:** have you SEEN or USED any multimodal or non-linguistic features in email interactions?
- 2 **FC 3:** normally I don't use any emoticons. NEVER. I have seen it in 'WeChat' programme, but never in
- 3 emails and I insist that it should NOT be USED at all
- 4 **FC 5:** OH for me I usually use it
- 5 **FC 2:** YEAH me TOO
- 6 **FC 3:** we work on PROFESSIONAL or business issues; there should NOT consist of ANYTHING like that,
- 7 and if you want to EMPHASIZE, you'd better UNDERLINE or HIGHLIGHT it
- 8 **FC 2:** you are making me UNPROFESSIONAL. like one case happened to me last year, the interlocutor
- 9 stated that they would visit my faculty on a certain date, then I gladly replied him with a SMILEY
- 10 emoji stressing how much I was pleased to welcome them
- 11 **Researcher:** to emphasize your feeling?
- 12 **FC 2:** YES

- 13 **FC 5:** I agree, and also use it. once I received emails containing such emoticons, I felt WARM and
14 FRIENDLY. the more emoticons were employed, the much MORE positively cozy feeling I could touch
- 15 **Researcher:** are you saying that the different numbers of emoticons or such features used
16 differently matter to your feelings?
- 17 **FC 5:** YES and it means much more than a textual message alone
- 18 **FC 4:** yeah I personally use them a lot, and frequently use the exclamation points
- 19 **FC 2:** YEAH YES
- 20 **FC 4:** [FC 3/nickname] generally underlines, but not for me – I put the exclamation mark
- 21 **FC 5:** MANY of the exclamation marks
- 22 **FC 4:** I feel both emoticons and marks do reduce the formality. I do concern whom my interlocutor is
23 as well because if the message needs to be formal, I won't use those symbols. I will use them with
24 familiar interlocutors

The participants further discussed when they wanted to explicitly show their feelings or place emphasis on their own written messages by using emoticons and punctuation. FC 3 started mentioning the use of emoticons in emails. He insisted that emoticons were unacceptable for him; he never made use of them (lines 2-3). The other three participants in the focus group reported a contrasting view in that they generally included emoticons, especially smileys in their emails. Once FC 3 stated that the email interaction should be in a professional style implying emoticons should not be used (lines 6-7), FC 2 immediately reacted against him saying that FC 3 was making him look unprofessional by the use of the emoticons (line 8). FC 2 further picked one of his cases as an example of the facial expression use with a reason hidden behind; he claimed that the smiley emphasized his delight in welcoming his guests (lines 8-10). FC 5 supported this idea with her experience telling that she preferred to send and receive emails with emoticons because they helped her to express and generate nice and friendly feelings to/from her interlocutors, and the number of emoticons directly signified a level of favourable impression (lines 13-14). FC 4 agreed with FC 2 and FC 5, and more than that he introduced the idea of using an exclamation mark indicating emphasis in emails (line 18) which was used by FC 2 and FC 5 as well (lines 19 and 21). On the contrary, FC 3 was the only one in the discussion who argued that in order to emphasize the meanings of specific messages, underline and highlight should be used (line 7). FC 4 additionally

expressed that both multimodality and punctuation mitigate formality; she did not always use them with every interlocutor, but only with those whom she had close relationships implying that formality was not much necessary in the cases (lines 22-24).

7.4.2 Language and (inter)cultural awareness

The data gained in relation to this theme are classified into two sub-themes: 'nativeness' and 'language and cultural differences'. Contradictory opinions were raised by the participants while discussing this topic. There are two codes under the sub-theme 'nativeness': one side agreed with 'nativized inclination' whereas another party placed more importance on 'egalitarian'. In addition, it is found that some participants revealed different ideas in the focus groups from what they had said in their individual interviews; they agreed with their peers in the on-going process of the discussion, but that was not what they had initially reported in the interviews. For cultural differences, many participants acknowledged that individual cultures did matter in communication, while one participant expressed a strong preference to comply with the concept of intercultural awareness.

Example 7.3

- 1 **Researcher:** how do you feel about English used in your business emails?
- 2 **FC 3:** as our duty is to act as a university representative, it's necessary to use a grammatically correct
- 3 English – proper English like native speakers', and to have a distinction of the language use.
- 4 messages sent out of the university could indicate in which level our university is placed, so I think
- 5 whoever works on this duty needs linguistic competence – we need to BE TRUSTED in on behalf of
- 6 the university
- 7 **FC 4:** this is what I have been thinking about – to use English as if we were native speakers is very
- 8 important. even when we send a message to our friends, we still need to consider language
- 9 accuracy, but maybe just decrease levels of formality
- 10 **FC 2:** same here. I had to contact people in neighboring countries, like Myanmar and so on, I
- 11 selected simpler wording to be easy to comprehend
- 12 **FC 4:** YES YES YES

13 **FC 2:** I had an experience of using a British English format – very formal with the interlocutor who
14 held one of the ASEAN countries nationality, the recipient didn't understand what I was asking for; I
15 needed to repeat the message several times

FC 3 was the first person answering the question concerning what he thought about use of their English on duty. He supported the idea of NSs conformity coded here as 'nativized inclination'; he stated that staff working in this position should have linguistic competence to converse with international people as they worked as a representative of the university, their workplace (lines 4-6). The interesting phrase is "proper English like native speakers" by which he meant a grammatically correct English referring to his previous sentence in lines 2-3. For FC 3, he expects anyone working on international relations affairs to be able to use English correctly based on the NSs norm because their use of the language could reflect on the quality of the university (lines 4-6). This clearly displays his opinion of how important a native-like English means to him and his colleagues with the same responsibility. FC 4 was of the same opinion saying that "to use English as if we were native speakers is very important" (lines 7-8). He suggested that language accuracy was crucial, but levels of formality might vary due to the closeness between email interactants (lines 7-9). Additionally, FC 2 showed his agreement with the other two teaching staff by saying "same here" (line 10). When he mentioned his own experience, interestingly, it seemed that he revealed a misconception of a native-like English. He believed that a formal style of email writing required British English (line 13). He explained that there was a communication breakdown happening when he sent an email to an NNS living in a country near Thailand. His recipient could not comprehend what he discussed in the email, so he adjusted his level of formality from formal to less formal with simpler or easier word choices (lines 10-11 and 13-14). Furthermore, FC 4 and FC 2 agreed on certain levels of formality with various interactants (lines 9-10). So, it is uncertain if both FC 2 and FC 4 had an accurate idea of native-like English because they equated native-like English with levels of formality, or even FC 3 who mentioned that NS English was considered to be grammatically correct. Nonetheless, it is unsurprising to find that the participants' ideas tended to conflate linguistic standard English with native speaker English given the prevalent ideology in Thailand of NSs' global ownership of English and its use (Jenkins & Leung, 2019).

Another interesting finding was that although FC 4 had revealed in his individual interview that he did not focus on grammatically correct forms of English use or accuracy as long as he could interpret interlocutor's meanings through the email contents (see example 6.9). He even imitated the ungrammatical point written by his interlocutor sometimes aiming at accommodating his communication with the particular interactant. His opinion changed in the focus group interview in

that the NS model of English was required. This exemplifies a change happening during the on-going discussion; that is, peers' idea could possibly change someone's previous perceptions when different ideas or experiences were exchanged (see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Hennink, 2007).

Example 7.4

- 1 **Researcher:** is a grammatically correct English necessary?
- 2 **IR 1, IR 2, IR 5, IR 6 and IR 7:** NO. not necessary
- 3 **IR 2:** at the present time, I think it's not necessary. we just
- 4 **IR 6:** comprehensible
- 5 **IR 2:** want to communicate successfully. that's all. as we don't converse with only native English
- 6 speakers. just keep using it in our own ways.
- 7 **IR 1, IR 6 and IR 7:** YES YES
- 8 **IR 7:** if it needs to be very formal, like to send emails to embassies, there is
- 9 **IR 2:** fixed templates
- 10 **IR 1:** YES. there are forms
- 11 **IR 2:** with fixed wording to be used
- 12 **IR 1:** there are patterns
- 13 **IR 5:** we have standard forms of documents to be employed or adapted in our international relations
- 14 business
- 15 **Researcher:** whenever you receive an English email from any senders with ungrammatical points, do
- 16 you feel anything?
- 17 **IR 6:** for me, NO
- 18 **IR 5:** no

- 19 **IR 7:** NO because even I myself can't make it 100% correct either
- 20 **IR 2:** I can feel something, but just ignore it
- 21 **IR 6:** RIGHT. Just overlook at any mistakes or errors; as long as we are able to comprehend the whole
- 22 contents, it's just fine
- 23 **IR 2:** just grab the overview

Unlike the participants in example 7.3, all the administrative staff participating in the focus group in example 7.4 unanimously agreed that a perfectly grammatically correct English was not necessary for them at all (line 2), and they primarily considered whether the overall contents of the messages could be understood. IR 2 introduced the idea that they did not mind if the English language used was native-like or not, but achieving the communicative goal did certainly matter. Moreover, their interlocutors were not limited to only NSs (lines 3 and 5-6), and the rest of the participants agreed with IR 2 in this issue (line 7). This implies that they contacted a variety of people, not just NSs, so they did not have a preference for native-like English, rather they were proud of communicating in their styles of English (lines 5-6). When the question turned to the perceptions of ungrammatical English, they confirmed the idea that they did not mind it. IR 7 in line 19 acknowledged her errors in the language use as well. Although IR 2 and IR 6 admitted that they could sometimes notice mistakes or errors in their interlocutors' emails (lines 20-22), they overlooked them and let the email interaction continue smoothly as if there were nothing wrong, seeking overall comprehension as the priority. Besides, IR 1, IR 2, IR 5 and IR 7 added that there were forms – a kind of language guide or examples of messages, provided by organizations such as the embassies. If email messages needed to be very formal, so anyone could use those forms or fixed formats and apply them to his/her messages (lines 8-14). Therefore, for the participants in example 8.4, they did not see grammatically correct English as compulsory for being IR staff since supportive resources were available. Furthermore, grammatical mistakes were regarded as commonly found points and were also acceptable. They confessed that they sometimes created emails with such mistakes or errors, and they did not pay much attention to them when receiving emails containing similar mistakes or errors. Hence, native-like English was not perceived as their ideal model of English in communication.

Example 7.5

- 1 **Researcher:** do you care about linguistic and cultural backgrounds of your email interactants
2 individually?
- 3 **FC 4:** from my experience, I directly stated what I wanted with European interactants, but if it's with
4 Japanese ones I had to write an introduction or something before getting to the point – beating
5 around the bush. differently from those Europeans that I could point out since the first sentence
6 stating what I wanted as I often received short and direct emails from them too
- 7 **FC 2:** YES yes yes
- 8 **FC 4:** very short just like “OK”, or “yes”. that's it. thus, I believe it's better to email them with short
9 messages, but STILL I DO care about the language accuracy
- 10 **FC 3:** but I personally place more importance on an interlocutor's social status and our relationships.
11 if he's the one I have a close relationship with, I would start an email by asking about his well-being.
12 for people with higher positions, I needed to be very much careful about language use; it had to be
13 formal. so, I didn't care about different cultural backgrounds, but ONLY aimed to successfully handle
14 business with international interlocutors via email communication

In example 7.5, FC 4 shared his experiences of interacting with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds pointing out that he emailed them differently with the two groups of recipients mentioned: European and Japanese (lines 3-7). That is, he had learned from practical first-hand experience how to properly interact with the interlocutors in the same way that he had been treated by them. He adjusted his email writing styles depending on who his interactants were. This idea was confirmed by FC 2 (line 7), whereas FC 3 focused more on social variables: status and relationship rather than being concerned about what nationality the interactants were or what specific cultural aspects were embedded in his interlocutors' emails (line 10). Thus, FC 3 did not take individual first languages and cultures into account when emailing any of his interlocutors though he was aware of the internationalization of his email interactions (lines 15-17). It is noticed that even though FC 3 claimed that he cared about power and distance more than linguistic and cultural issues, he illustrated his typical cultural practice by asking about his interactants' well-being no matter what nationality they were. This confirms FC3's intercultural awareness (ICA) in intercultural communication of invoking a good relationship between the two parties, whereas FC 2 and FC 4

apparently indicated their cultural awareness which might or might not conceive ICA since the data gained was not adequate to evaluate.

Example 7.6

1 **Researcher:** are cultural differences the thing you need to specifically concern?

2 **IR 5:** kind of. don't wanna say that they are different among people from different continents. it's
3 because the differences occur everywhere. NOT ONLY email interactions between Thais and I, but
4 also between Cambodians and I

5 **IR 2:** the email interactions are normally formal – we try to use neutral style and wording

6 **Researcher:** have you encountered any difficulties when contacting people from different areas or
7 even different people?

8 **IR 6:** YES I have

9 **IR 5:** but I think it depends on how often we communicate with our interlocutors. we will more
10 familiarize ourselves with the ones we contact more frequently. just like in my case, when I emailed
11 my supervisor or anyone often, I used a quite informal style though they were not the same
12 nationality as I am. on the other hand, I prefer formal communication with ones whom I don't know
13 well even they are Cambodian as I am

14 **IR 2:** there are spaces between us

15 **IR 1:** more formal

16 **IR 6:** I feel more comfortable contacting native speakers – it's easier to understand rather than
17 communicating with Asian people

18 **Researcher:** why is that?

19 **IR 6:** the language native speakers use is much easier. it may be because. it is like what we have
20 learned, so it sounds more familiar to me

21 **Researcher:** what do you mean by easier communication with non-native English speakers?

22 **IR 2:** it is a wide range of pronunciations, sometimes

23 **IR 6:** YES

24 **IR 1:** it's difficult to catch the words

In example 7.6, IR 5 tried to say that she was concerned with all interlocutors' individual differences – no matter they had same or different nationality from hers (lines 2-4), and IR 2 revealed that she used the same style with any international interactants as her focus was on a formal style writing (line 5). However, IR 5 further emphasized that the familiarity between each interlocutor and herself affected the level of formality without any concern for the interlocutor's cultural background (lines 9-14), similar to what FC 3 in example 7.5 reported. In addition to the data in example 7.6, IR specified greater ease contacting NSs rather than Asian interactants (lines 16-17). Nevertheless, once being asked for more explanation, she backed up her idea with a reference to pronunciation. She was more likely educated with NSs' pronunciation, so it was more difficult for her to catch NNSs' pronunciations (lines 19-20), and IR 1 felt the same (line 24). Although pronunciation is not a focus of this research, this could suggest how the participants were aware of the use of different varieties of English. The IR staff tended to concentrate more on the relationships between interlocutors. They did not specifically distinguish their interactants' differences in relation to geographical or national levels, rather they paid attention to individuality. For instance, IR 5 who is Cambodian reported her authentic practices with Cambodian email users that she could conduct either formal or informal emails while interacting with them depending on how close they were, not where they were from or what nationality they possessed. In agreement with the rest of the participants, they emphasized the gaps between interactants making the email communication different in terms of formality, indicating politeness.

7.4.3 Politeness

When the topic of the discussion changed to 'politeness', the participants expressed their points of view about what sounds polite to them in email interactions. They mentioned the 'email elements', and came up with the ideas of 'openings', 'closings', and 'linguistic knowledge'. Moreover, they suggested inappropriate factors found in emails making the interactions impolite. That is, the 'impolite phenomena' would occur when emails contained 'emoticon', 'no opening' and 'improper familiarity'.

Example 7.7

- 1 **Researcher:** think about politeness in email communication, what comes into your mind?
- 2 **FC 5:** closing, opening
- 3 **FC 2:** stylistic language – for politeness, you need to be very much careful, especially when asking for
- 4 something by using the proper language
- 5 **Researcher:** depending on purposes?
- 6 **FC 2:** YES
- 7 **FC 4:** I agree to pay much attention to linguistic knowledge. as I have a limit of linguistic competence
- 8 and I am not keen in the field of English language, I have to make sure the expressions or wording I
- 9 use are not impolite, but quite formal
- 10 **FC 3:** generally, my business is to handle with people holding a superior social status, so there is
- 11 certainly not emoticons or the likes in my correspondence
- 12 **FC 2:** I use it with interactants who are about the same age or younger
- 13 **FC 4:** right, I also consider that their age does matter

Example 7.8

- 1 **IR 1:** politeness?
- 2 **IR 6:** wording?
- 3 **IR 1:** wording
- 4 **IR 2:** closings
- 5 **IR 6:** yeah closings
- 6 **IR 1:** both closings and openings

- 7 **IR 5:** yes closings
- 8 **IR 2:** elements like what is seen in a letter – how to greet, something like that. but I found emails
9 impolite when there were no openings or introduction; directly started what they wanted from us as
10 recipients
- 11 **IR 1:** YES YES, no introduction
- 12 **IR 7:** I have experienced many cases sent from students
- 13 **IR 2:** they sometimes used the words which should be used by whoever knew each other quite well,
14 but we were not in such cases; we hadn't even contacted each other before
- 15 **IR 6:** oh RIGHT
- 16 **Researcher:** who were your interlocutors in the case you have just mentioned?
- 17 **IR 2:** mostly, they were coordinators working on their marketing sending me emails

In terms of politeness in email writing, the participants in both groups of the discussions stated components to be found in a polite email in the same vein that FC 5 in example 7.7 thought about opening-closing addresses (line 3) as well as IR 1, IR 2, IR 5 and IR 6 (lines 4-7) in example 7.8. Another element is proper wording proposed by IR 1 and IR 6 in example 7.8 (lines 2-3) including FC 2 and FC 4 in example 7.7 (lines 4-5 and 8-10). On the contrary, relating to impoliteness, in example 7.7, FC 3, who believed that multimodal features should not be applied in emails, repeated that emoticons and other similar features were unacceptable for him since most of his emails interactants had higher positions (lines 11-12).

However, the other teaching colleagues in the group disagreed with FC3; FC 2 and FC 4 admitted that they used emoticons with certain groups of recipients (lines 13-14). Furthermore, the administrative staff in example 8.8 asserted that they recognized impoliteness when receiving emails consisting of neither openings nor introduction preceding the purpose or intention of the email (lines 9-11). Besides, IR 2 and IR 6 in example 7.8 revealed that they felt offended seeing such emails sent by whoever they did not know, acting as if they were familiar with each other (lines 13-16). That is, both of the FC and IR staff acknowledged that opening-closing addresses and appropriate word choice based on levels of formality regarding interpersonal relationships are essential components in constructing polite emails. On the other hand, they perceived emails impolite when

there was no opening address, and/or word choice exaggerating closeness – less formal than it should be – existed. For the multimodal features, although one participant persisted in avoiding them in email messages, the others relatively disagreed with him. They preferred using them with the consideration of social distance meaning that the features were normally employed with equal or younger interactants where such circumstances illustrated a high degree of informality. This is in accordance with the information in example 7.2 where the informants discussed emoticons used in pragmatics, most of them showed a strong preference for applying the features in emails so that they could create a friendly atmosphere, and build rapport while decreasing the levels of formality in further email exchanges.

7.5 Conclusion

The findings introduced in this chapter are derived from the two focus group discussions: the teaching staff working at different faculties and the administrative staff working at the same department of international relations affairs. The data gained from this research instrument show some similarities as seen in the findings from the corpus of emails and the second interviews; some strategies were reported that they were commonly used in the email interactions, such as ‘consulting a peer’, ‘asking for clarification’ when thinking about how to cope with miscommunication, whereas emoticons were used to express feelings and particular punctuation devices to emphasize content meaning. The participants discussed and shared their opinions independently in both groups of discussions. Some of the participants agreed to one direction in the discussion, whereas the others supported the opposite idea against their peers. For example, in the data regarding the awareness of the language and the cultures from the two focus groups, the teaching staff seemed to pay much attention to the idea of nativized inclination. Their administrative colleagues, however, preferred intelligibility, meaning that they did not prefer nativeness as long as the overall messages were comprehensible. However, even in the same group of the staff, some disagreements were revealed between them in some issues discussed – it was not true that all participants in the same focus group were in complete agreement on the topics in their discussion. It could be concluded that in terms of language and cultural awareness, the participants proposed their beliefs due to particular senses of ‘nativized inclination’, ‘egalitarian’, ‘individual cultural awareness’ and ‘intercultural awareness’ differently.

Turning to politeness in email communication, the participants agreed that they took opening-closing addresses and appropriate lexis into account when creating polite emails with different interlocutors. Nevertheless, it is interesting that emoticons became a topic they perceived in very

different ways; one FC staff places the business emails in a formal category, so he claimed such features were improper to appear in the emails, whereas the rest or majority of the participants did not take it that way. They believed the emoticons were informality-provoking, boosting friendly and relaxed environments in email interactions between close-relationship interlocutors. It was their view that when the interpersonal relationship became closer, the business dealing would be easier to accomplish. Besides, they suggested that emails without opening addresses and with improper wording based on levels of formality led to a negative bias for recipients of the emails.

That is, the participants disclosed their ideas and/or experiences over the topics pragmatic strategies, language and cultural awareness, and politeness in email communication on behalf of the university/faculty representatives on the international affairs business. The data gained through the focus groups basically support the findings from the first interviews and the corpus of emails, and the second interviews presented in the previous chapters. Moreover, they exposed the perceptions of what is appropriate or inappropriate concerning politeness in email communication.

Chapter 8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

The information in the three preceding chapters reports how the participants consider pragmatic strategies, and politeness in beginning and ending emails, to be used in their intercultural email communication including their actual application in authentic email exchanges collected through the different research instruments. The presentation of this chapter draws attention to the research results corresponding to the research questions (RQs) and the previous literature related to this study. It starts with the key themes of the study which are pragmatic strategies and politeness where the discussion is based on RQ 1 asking about what pragmatic strategies and politeness strategies are generally employed and why. RQ1 leads into two sub-research questions. RQ 1.1 focuses on the pragmatic strategies theme divided into two groups: pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication and pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication. The discussion based on RQ 1.2 elucidates the focus on politeness detailing how opening and closing addresses are constructed as well as the participants' perceptions of politeness in their email communication. After that, the discussion moves onto the perceptions of English and intercultural awareness (ICA) in order to answer RQ 2 which concerns the participants' understanding and preference concerning nativeness and cultural differences.

8.2 Pragmatic strategies and politeness in email communication

In this study, the authentic email exchanges used by the university staff handling international relations affairs were analyzed in order to discover what pragmatic strategies were selected in order to contribute to successful written discourse communication, as well as what they considered polite especially in certain essential email epistolary elements, namely, opening-closing address. Some of the examples included in the previous chapters of findings were re-presented in this section. The classification of all themes, sub-themes and codes discovered from the findings of this study are integrated and displayed in Table 7 below.

Table 8: Integrated Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Elicited from the Findings

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies	Self-repetition	5.1 and 8.1
		Providing local knowledge and building common	6.2
		Let it pass	6.4
		Consulting dictionary or application	7.1
		Consulting peer	7.1
	Self-initiate interlocutor's response needed strategies	Asking for clarification	5.6 and 6.5
		Confirmation check	8.2
		Direct comment	6.7 and 5.8
	Accommodation strategies	Code-switching	6.8 and 8.3
		Greeting with location	6.10
		Make it normal	6.9
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies	Creating solidarity	6.11
		Multimodal feature	6.14 and 8.4
		Making apology	6.12-6.13 and 8.5
		Abbreviation	6.15-6.16 and 8.6
		Non-standard language	6.16
		Contraction without apostrophe	6.17

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
	Meaning-making punctuation	Content emphasis	6.18-6.21, 6.23 and 8.7
		Unfixed interpretation	6.24-6.26
Politeness: (In)formality	Opening	Formal	6.27 and 8.8
		Informal	6.30
		Semi-formal	8.9-8.10
		Formality decreasing	8.11
	Closing	Formal	6.32
		Informal	8.12
		Semi-formal	6.33
		Formality decreasing	8.13
Language and (inter)cultural awareness	Perceptions of English	Nativized inclination	8.15, 7.3 and 5.11
		Egalitarian	8.17, 7.4 and 5.13
	Intercultural awareness (ICA)	Levels of ICA	5.15-5.17
		Movement of ICA levels	5.12-5.13
	The use of BELF	Simplified English	5.11-5.12, 7.3-7.5 and 6.9
		Specialized vocabulary	6.2, 6.8, and 6.25-6.26
		Interactant's L1 discourse practices	6.8 and 6.30

8.2.1 Pragmatic strategies in email communication

The pragmatic strategies illustrated are the core part of this study detailing what and why the participants intentionally used them in their email interactions. Within a context where English is used as a lingua franca, many researchers show their interest in pragmatic strategies with the focus on spoken discourse (e.g. Cogo, 2009; 2010; Cogo and Pitzl, 2016; Deterding, 2013; Mauranen, 2006) which is unlike this study where written discourse is the focal point. The discovered strategies discussed in this chapter are divided into two groups according to their purpose of use: pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication, and pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication. To be more detailed, such strategies were confirmed by the participants through the research instruments strengthening the importance and existence of the strategies use. It turned out that the email users preferred to firstly manage the unclear or problematic issues by themselves. If they could not solve such problems, they would ask for help from another party involved in order to deal with miscommunication because they strongly believed the responses or information from the interlocutors were necessary and required. On another side, when the participants purposively chose strategies enhancing intercultural communication, they carefully concerned what specific strategies could possibly fit in particular situations with the awareness of whom or what kind of person their interactants were so as to consider choosing appropriate strategies satisfying the interlocutors. What strategies discovered in this study are clarified below based on the objective of the users accordingly. Although some of the strategies are noticed in spoken discourse, some are merely found in this study of business written interactions.

8.2.1.1 Pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication

Once the participants of this study who are (B)ELF email communicators identified any potential problematic communication, they managed to pre-empt and/or to remedy the problems variously with different strategies so as to negotiate the business interactions successfully. They revealed two different groups of the pragmatic strategies to deal with miscommunication (including potential miscommunication): self-initiated self-repaired strategies and self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies.

8.2.1.1.1 Self-initiated self-repaired strategies

For the strategies in the category 'self-initiated self-repaired', they were used when the participants had realized that they themselves had to solve miscommunication found in the emails without asking for support from their email interlocutors. They are 'self-repetition', 'providing local knowledge and building common ground', 'let it pass', 'consulting dictionary or application', and

'consulting peer' strategies. As can be seen in example 5.1 in chapter 5 where the participant pointed out that her email interlocutors might not completely understand her intended meanings conveyed through a few certain words, so she needed to explain more in detail at the same time before being asked. Similar to examples 8.1 below, the participant repeated what had been mentioned by rephrasing expressions. She mentioned in the follow-up interview that she believed if the information in the brackets had not been added, it might cause miscommunication to her recipient (lines 13-14). She decided from her understanding to do so prior to any problems indicated by her email communicative interlocutor (lines 14-15). This phenomenon is in line with Cogo and Pitzl's (2016) strategy called 'partial repetition or paraphrase', and also Deterding's (2013) 'self-initiated self-repairs' strategy where speakers provide more options or a clarification of meaning (see also Cogo, 2009; Cogo and Dewey, 2012; Kaur, 2012).

Example 8.1

1 **From:** [S1/name]
 Sent: 17 October 2016 11:03
 3 **To:** [S2/name]
 Subject: ดอนกัลป์: ดอนกัลป์: Inbound Internship Program.

5 Dear [S2/name],

6 Regarding your students that would like to internship at [S1/organization] University for next semester, we can accept for 1 person per major per semester. So if it's possible that could
 8 you decide one student from the Chemistry major. So we can accept for all students (4 students).

10 **IR 7:** because she sent me a name list consisting of more than 4 students, I wanted to make sure the
 11 EXACT NUMBER of students we could accept.

12 **Researcher:** what if you didn't say "4 students" here

13 **IR 7:** I was not sure if the recipient would correctly understand. she might reply me asking a question
 14 about this repeatedly, so it's better to obviously stated it here. then the negotiation would be clear;
 15 no need to exchange more email

Apart from 'repetition' and 'rephrasing' strategies which were used to prevent prospective communication breakdowns, information relating to particular cultures was found to be applied.

Whenever the email writers sent recipients emails referring to their own cultural issues, they preferred to provide more explanation of the relevant cultural feature as they were worried whether their interlocutors might not understand what they were talking about. In example 6.2 in chapter 6, the findings from the corpus of emails together with the individual interview, show that the participant was not sure if her email interactant knew about Thai traditional New Year. She included a New Year wish in her email message as if she were conversing with other Thai people, hoping that this would make a good impression on her recipient and let the reader learn about her own culture at the same time. In this case, local background knowledge was required in order to prevent misunderstanding. This corresponds to the study by Ren (2016b) that the Chinese student in his study introduced knowledge about the meaning of number 8 in Chinese culture to her Arabic friend who she believed not to be familiar with the culture and to understand it in the same sense as other Chinese people do. This is also similar to the use of the phrase 'we say' in Cogo and Dewey's (2012) study when the French speaker tried to say 'blue flower' instead of 'cheesy' in British English expecting it would have the same sense or meaning to the hearer in the intercultural conversation. The preceding phrase 'we say' was employed illustrating the speaker's cultural practice. The speaker had realized that more explanation or an explicit cultural reference was absolutely necessary in order to ensure the receiver's understanding of their cultural practice in order to pre-empt miscommunication.

In addition to applying strategies in order to cope with (potential) communication troubles, the email users sometimes ignored what could not be understood in the messages received, yet the core parts of the substances were still comprehensible (Firth, 1996). As evidenced in example 6.3-6.4 (see 6.4.1.1.3), the participants let those non-understandings flow as if there were nothing incomprehensible because the main points of the messages were not missed. The neglected information was not crucial in that not to understand them did not lead to communication breakdown. In the end of the email communication, their written communication was successfully constructed without troubles though they confessed there were something left unclear, but they were confident that the ignored information would not affect the core parts of the contents. As email is asynchronous text-based CMC (Tagg, 2015), delayed responses can be commonly found (Warchauer, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Vinagre, 2008). To let such uncertain messages pass is also useful in written discourse in terms of saving time as FC 4 in example 6.4 mentioned in chapter 6. However, this is not in line with Pitzl (2013) where negotiation of the meaning in communication is specifically constructed with the aim of clarity and accuracy (see also Ehrenrich, 2009). This can be explained by the fact that if the message to be missed is sensitive – potentially provoking disaster such as financial figure, the 'let it pass' strategy (Firth, 1996) will not be considered since it may cause

serious problems in such communication, such as losing profits or capital. That is to say, the 'let it pass' strategy is not always recommended as the best way to deal with every miscommunication situation; explicitly asking about unclear messages is sometimes required in a certain way which will be clarified in the next section (see 8.2.1.1.2).

Another option of self-repaired resolution of miscommunication in this study is to consult a dictionary, an application and/or a peer. Though these strategies appeared in a non-linguistic sense of the word, they are considered the strategies constituting resolution of the communicative problems. Examples 5.2-5.3 (see 5.5.2.1.1) are the individual interviews with different participants where they all agreed that they managed their unsure messages by firstly looking up words in a dictionary, an online translation program or an application on the internet. If the problems could not be solved after using such support(s), they later decided to apply another strategy. Regarding the data from the focus group interview in example 7.1 in chapter 7, FC 2 and FC 4 also made use of asking for their peers' help in rechecking their own interpretation. FC 2 raised an interesting reason for choosing his peer to be a consultant; he insisted that it was important for him to save face by not letting his email interactant realize that he did not understand or was unsure that he could comprehend the message correctly or not. This phenomenon can be explained in relation to 'face' or self-image (Goffman, 1967). The participant avoided asking for help from his interlocutor because he did not want to lose face in public, similar to the concept of a defensive 'self-face' orientation where speakers try to protect their self-image (Archer, 2017), so he preferred to handle it himself or ask his colleague who was a person with a close relationship working at the same organization, not a business partner to whom he needed to show his professional communication skills in English.

Overall, the use of the pragmatic strategies above dealing with miscommunication was employed by the participants and they then solved such problems in such a way that their email interlocutors would never know or realize that there was any problematical communicative uncertainty. Even though the participants sometimes appealed for assistance to overcome the miscommunication, possibly disturbing other people was not the first alternative. Asking for help from peer(s) was revealed as the preferred course of action, and they mainly chose colleagues who were in their workplace as this was most convenient, and it was to avoid letting their business interlocutors lessen their self-esteem from their own confusion of the messages.

8.2.1.1.2 Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies

In addition to managing miscommunication occurring in the email exchanges, the email users applied strategies in which their recipients could notice some troublesome issues. More than that,

the recipients' reactions were necessarily required in order to help the senders repair ambiguity. The strategies in this section and the ones mentioned earlier in section 8.2.1.1.1 are different. The strategies disclosed under the category of self-initiated interlocutor's response needed are 'asking for clarification', 'confirmation check' and 'direct comment'. Although the success of using the three strategies depends on the interlocutors' reactions, they are slightly different in respect of how the email senders created their questions or expressions which they sent along with the emails. They are clarified along with examples 5.6, 6.5, 8.2, 6.7 and 5.8 respectively mentioned earlier.

The first strategy to be discussed here is 'asking for clarification'. As seen in examples 5.6 and 6.5, the research participants exhibited in the individual interviews the use of this strategy in cases where they were unclear about the messages received at some points. This is supported by Mauranen's (2006) study claiming that a 'specific question' is used to signal lack of comprehension; it is the easiest way to show that non-understanding has occurred, and then the message sender negotiated with the receiver until a mutual understanding could eventually be reached.

Apart from asking for more information in order to have clearer ideas about what has been mentioned by the email senders, there is another kind of question asked by the recipients called 'confirmation check'. Mauranen (2006) details the strategy 'confirmation check' in spoken discourse preventing misunderstanding by using either a minimal check such as 'yeah?' (p.135) or a more explicit kind of question like 'did I understand it right?'(p.136). Corresponding to examples 8.2 below where the email writer indicated his uncertainty with the questions 'am I right?'(lines 7-8) in the emails. Although the sender seemed to have information on such topic mentioned, he was trying to co-construct mutual understanding with his recipient so that miscommunication could surely be pre-empted. This finding relates to Ren's (2016a) results in his study where the Chinese students used this strategy to negotiate meanings ensuring that communication breakdowns would not occur because the email senders had already provided the recipient an opportunity to correct the issue, especially if misunderstandings could be detected.

Example 8.2

- 1 [S2][S2/last] | < .ac.jp>
2 ถึง: | [S1][S1/last] <v .ac.th>
- 3 Dear Aj. | [S1/nick]
- 4 I need to confirm Aj. [first name1] as for the return trip to KK because I have an appointment with faculty of nursing
5 on 29th, but I really appreciate your kind offer. I cannot thank you enough.
- 6 Please give me a few days to reply you as for the return trip and transportation in [place1]
- 7 Off course, I will send the letter of acceptance to you. I assume I need to ask the permission to your Dean, am I
8 right ? and do you think I need to write the letter in the name of our president, or vice president in charge of
9 international affairs , or me myself would be ok ?

In addition to the previous two strategies mentioned above in this section, another self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategy uncovered is 'direct comment' where the key feature is not in the form of questions, but an affirmative sentence. Referring to example 6.7 in chapter 6 on the topic of 'direct comment', the use of this strategy made it easy to comprehend what had been misinterpreted because it was an explicitly direct sentence stating that miscommunication had occurred. On the other hand, it sounded offensive for the message receiver; the participant as a recipient in the example admitted that she could feel how serious the misconceived message was by such a comment from the sender. She realized that she should have considered more carefully the sensitive nature of offering explicit and direct correction. This result is in accordance with Ren's (2016a) corrective strategy 'metalinguistic comment' in that his participant who is a Chinese teacher teaching English noticed an upcoming misunderstanding from his Ghanaian colleague about a work assignment while communicating via an email interaction. He then replied by saying "It seems that you've got a misunderstanding with the numbers." (p.6). The interesting point is that in Ren's study the sender held a higher position than the recipient's, but there were no more details about how the recipient, who is a subordinate, felt once he had received that reply from the Chinese teacher, whereas the participant of this study revealed her offended feeling in her follow-up interview.

Reinforcing this interpretation with example 5.8 in chapter 5, the participant explained that he assumed his mistake (miscommunication) to be crucial and serious. He further clarified that if the sender were a Thai, the wrong information would be edited and replied to him in the following turn with no comments as if there was nothing wrong. The phrase 'Just a minor correction' (line 3) was

introduced making him perceive that it was significantly weighty in meaning and in the intention of the sender though the sender could also be intended to make the correction sound minor or mitigation, which is beyond the scope of the study. So, what was confirmed is that the participant worried and felt guilty about his communication (lines 10-11).

These two examples could be inferred that using the strategy 'direct comment' brings about an uncomfortable feeling of being directly criticised. The participants felt their interlocutors' disappointment at their misunderstandings, meanwhile they explicitly lost face (Archer, 2017) due to the direct comments from the interlocutors. However, the two participants, as recipients, responded by acknowledging their mistakes and revised their misunderstanding advisedly in the following turns in the email exchanges which are not shown here in the extracts. That is, the receivers' responses to the comments made are required in this type of strategy use ensuring that the communication breakdowns are solved conjointly by all parties involved in the email exchanges. They replied to the emails with the revision of the problematic issues based on their interlocutors' direct comments in the previous emails. Furthermore, other pragmatic strategies are also used in email interactions to emphasize particular meanings, not related to communicative troubles but enhancing intercultural communication, and are discussed in the following section.

8.2.1.2 Pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication

This section discusses pragmatic strategies leading to enhanced intercultural communication used by both the participants and their email interactants. Although the objectives of applying the strategies in this theme and the former section (8.2.1.1) are different, it is possible that sometimes strategies are considered overlapping in some ways which will be detailed here in this section. All the strategies found in this theme can be divided into three sub-themes: 'accommodation strategies', 'intimacy reinforcement strategies', and 'meaning-making punctuation'.

8.2.1.2.1 Accommodation strategies

To begin with accommodation strategies, employing these strategies in email communication in an ELF perspective shows similar aims to appropriately adjusting the strategy users' utterances in a spoken mode to facilitate, cooperate and enhance communication successfully with a particular concern of whom their interlocutors are (see Cogo, 2009; Soliz & Giles, 1987). There are three strategies discovered in the results of this investigation which are 'code-switching', 'greeting with location, and 'make it normal'.

It is noticeably discovered that the participants and their email interactants agreed to create their email exchanges utilizing each other's cultural expressions. As seen in the findings from the corpus of emails in example 6.8 (see 6.4.1.3.1), the two excerpted emails are the data from the same exchange between a Thai research participant and his Bruneian interlocutor who cannot communicate in Thai. Both of them use the words 'Phi' and 'P' which are pronounced exactly the same which is 'pii' in Thai – this title is used to indicate seniority in Thai cultural practice. These codes were switched based on cultural convergence and were administered by all parties in this email exchange even though the participant reported in the follow-up interview in example 6.8 in chapter 6 that he was not sure if the interlocutor knew the meaning of the words or the exact way to use them. He assumed that the interlocutor picked it up from his Thai classmates and followed their use. Consequently, this behaviour was transferred from spoken to written discourse no matter whether the user understood it or not, yet the interlocutor might attempt to adjust his way of calling the participant in the same way as other Thais did according to what he had noticed. This is congruent with convergence in accommodation strategies when one aligns his expression to show approval of the interlocutor (Cogo & Dewey, 2006; 2012).

Likewise, the email sender in example 8.3 below constructed his email by addressing the participant with a Thai word 'Aj' standing for 'ajarn' preceding her name; the Laotian interlocutor aligned with the participant's cultural practice of calling any teachers or lecturers by this word prior to their names. This indicates that he might be aware of a collaborative manner or practice in relation to ELF and multilingualism (Jenkins, 2015). He further added a Thai phrase of greeting 'Sawasdee-krab' (line 7) in his email building common ground – solidarity signalling affiliation. He knew what the expressions meant and how to properly use them in the participant's cultural context even though they communicated through another language which was not Thai. The email writer tried to linguistically accommodate the participant and show his awareness of the interactant's practice by switching to a greeting in the participant's first language (see Cogo 2009; 2010).

Examples 8.3

1 From: [S2][S2/last] <[S2/last].[S2/first].my>
2 Sent: Monday, June 27, 2016 1:39 AM
3 To: [S1]
4 Cc: .
5 Subject: Re: Invitation to [org1] as Strategic Partner University for [org2]'s Study Abroad Fair (14-15 Feb 2017)
6 Dear Aj. [S1/nick]
7 Sawasdee-krub.
8 Thank you very much for your confirmation. Hopefully we will begin having [org2] students doing
9 their internship at [org1] by next year. Then we will have much more exchange of knowledge
10 and experiences among students and staff.
11 Take care and good day!
12 Kind regards
13 [S2]

14 FC 5: yes, but we normally communicated in English

15 **Researcher:** does he know what 'sawasdee-krub' mean?

16 **FC 5:** YES he does. he came here often and also was an external examiner at the faculty

The examples demonstrate how the ELF email users, whether senders or receivers, accommodated themselves to particular communicative situations, especially from a cultural point of view. They tried to understand why and how such instances were applied, and they then adapted themselves to the contexts by remaining flexible. The participants showed their shared multilingual practices by code-switching words or phrases from English – a contact language – into their L1 or the interlocutors' L1 in particular situations. In the same way, Brunner and Diemer (2018) report that their European students in their study conversing in ELF often switched into their L1 and also their interlocutors' L1, while other languages were rarely included. It is noticeable that the email interactants shared common attributes of linguistic and cultural perspectives which were effective to create a connection between interlocutors showing engagement in the written conversation with explicit accommodation to each other's linguacultural backgrounds (see Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018). The participants and their interlocutors made use of 'code-switching' in creating affiliation and alignment in the same community of practice of multilingual ELF speakers (Birlik & Kaur, 2020; Cogo, 2009, 2016; Wenger, 1998). They created a friendly atmosphere between the email interactants by decreasing formality and increasing the hybridity of shared linguistic repertoires (see Cogo, 2012). That is, the strategy 'code-switching' when considered in an ELF framework was different from the

perspective of second language acquisition (SLA) where the use of other language(s) generally signifies a lack of competence in English (Cogo, 2009; 2010).

Additionally, two more strategies are disclosed in this investigation in the category of accommodation strategies: 'greeting with location' and 'make it normal', but they do not specifically rely on cultural issues. The 'greeting with location' strategy was displayed in the email exchanges as evidenced in example 6.10 in chapter 6. The participant admitted that he had no idea why he chose to greet and specify a location at the beginning of emails, but he imitated what he had noticed from his interlocutors' email messages – he felt he needed to conform to them. He employed the strategy to align with his interlocutors as several email interactants used this strategy to invoke the feeling of in-group membership or community of practice (see Cogo, 2009). Though there is no previous evidences or studies illustrating that this kind of greeting in emails helps communication run smoothly, the intention revealed was to create alignment, solidarity and in-group belonging and was felt to be significantly important in invoking successful communicative events (see Cogo, 2009; 2010; Cogo and Dewey, 2006; 2012).

The last strategy to be considered as a way to accommodate communicative efficiency in this study is the strategy 'make it normal' (see Firth, 1996). Even though lexical utterances unmatched with standard English linguistic forms (Milroy & Milroy, 2012; see also Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins & Leung, 2019; Otsu, 2019) were presented in this written discourse, the interlocutors did not find the situations troublesome because they eventually achieved mutual understanding. Moreover, the mismatched lexical forms were repeatedly used among the interlocutors due to the commonness of linguistic use in such communication (see Cogo and Dewey, 2006). The data from the email exchange in example 6.9 in chapter 6 revealed the use of the strategy 'make it normal'; the participant sometimes imitated the ungrammatical selection – the use of 'i' rather than 'I' (line 7) – initiated by his interlocutor (line 3). He adopted the incorrect grammar point consciously because he intended to let the communication flow smoothly and more importantly to comfort his interlocutor as well as to consolidate their communicative interaction through email exchanges. This is along the same lines with Cogo (2010) in that collaboration in ELF focuses more on shared repertoires of linguacultural resources rather than convergence towards ENL linguistic norms. Taguchi and Ishihara (2018) also support this perspective in that rather than strictly adhering to native speaker norms, ELF speakers find it acceptable to co-construct mutual norms in a given situation.

8.2.1.2.2 Intimacy reinforcement strategies

Apart from the accommodation strategies discussed above, the strategies 'intimacy reinforcement strategies' are discovered among the email users in order to enhance successful email interactions by creating a more relaxed environment of communication. The participants claimed that in their experience, the more informality they employed in their emails, the easier it was to achieve their business goal with the intercultural interlocutors through email communication. The following discussion clearly illustrates how intimacy construction through email exchanges in the forms of 'creating solidarity', 'multimodal feature', 'making apology', 'abbreviation', 'non-standard language' and 'contraction without apostrophe' helps business interactants create efficiently professional email exchanges.

To start off, the participant explained how the 'creating solidarity' worked with him. He described that he was happy feeling as if he were talking to someone he had familiarly known before though they had never even met once. When his interlocutor tried to minimize the social distance through their email communication by mentioning what they had in common as displayed in example 6.11 in chapter 6, it had a positive effect on the participant. This lessened communicative distance between them; it seemed like the two parties were members of the same community.

In addition to example 6.11 mentioned, the multimodal feature – a smiley facial symbol – was utilized by the participant to suggest intimacy. Furthermore, the participant intentionally placed a smiley emoji at the end of the body of the email in example 6.14 in chapter 6 to show his willingness, delight and intimacy, and to reduce distance between the interlocutor and himself through the written discourse. This is supported by example 8.4 below which is a second interview with another participant clarifying why she included a smiley emoticon into her email.

The participant in example 8.4 below, as an email recipient receiving emails containing smiley emoticons, explained that she felt happy seeing the emoticons and more relaxed in an intimate atmosphere. More importantly, in her opinion, the use of emoticons also enhances communication in less formal communicative events and made her feel at ease. All multimodal features used by the participants in this project tended to clarify the users' particular moods (see Oshima, 2007) indicating emotions, non-emotional meanings, and illocutionary force (Dresner & Herring, 2010) depending on the contexts and their individual intentions. Specifically, the features found are to reinforce the function of the texts or to intensify emotions such as happiness as seen in the examples illustrated (cf. D'addario & Waltner, 2001). These graphic representations of facial expressions are also considered strengthening hedges oriented towards the recipients' positive face

(Skovholt, Gronning & Kankaanranta, 2014). Most of the participants have a tendency to apply these features in their emails which corresponds with research by Rodrigues, Prada, Gaspar, Garrido and Lopes (2018) indicating that there is a growing trend in the use of such facial expressions in the virtual world of communication including emails.

Example 8.4

- 1 **IR 2:** ... she put the smiley in emails when we had exchanged many emails – making me feel closer to
- 2 her. I noticed her use and I, as a receiver, felt good to see it in the emails, then I decided to apply in
- 3 into my own emails sending to others whom I feel familiar with making it less formal but closer. it
- 4 helps to conduct business easier I think

In addition to creating a pleasant atmosphere in email communication, 'making apology' is another strategy observed in this research investigation. In examples 6.12-6.13 in chapter 6 and 8.5 below, they are the individual interviews and the emails from different exchanges collected from different participants. The similarity noticed in these extracts is that the strategy 'making apology' was for the late replies. It is not only used by the research participants as shown in examples 6.12 and 8.5, but also the participant's interlocutor in example 6.13. The participants emphasized that it was necessary to show guilt feeling due to the late response and was utilized to avoid interlocutors' possible dissatisfaction with being ignored. It is similar to Kankaanranta's (2006) study that making an apology is considered in a late response to create a good relationship between email interactants. On the other hand, the participants would feel offended if any email interactants let them wait without excuse or reason thinking that their messages were not important enough to pay attention to. In order to alleviate the feelings of offense and guilt from all parties involved in the email interaction with delayed responses, making apology is considered a useful and common pragmatic strategy applied in such situations in email writing (Hatipoğlu, 2004). It can be inferred that this strategy could reduce uncomfortable feeling, and at the same time create positive dependence to regain good feeling encouraging the communication easier.

Example 8.5

- 1 **FC 2:** ... I left all emails unattended for a while and absolutely it was really rude to do so. Thus, I
- 2 started the email stating I was so much sorry that I didn't reply the email because I had been in Italy
- 3 and later in Trad Island. It'd be better to tell him the truth why I couldn't reply him immediately. I

4 believe it was rude, and I felt much guilty, so I began the email that way in order to reduce stressful
5 atmosphere and turn the situation more relaxed without bias

6 **Researcher:** conversely, if it is you who send emails to other people and they then reply you late
7 without excuses. How will you feel?

8 **FC 2:** certainly I will feel something. Feel like I am not their priority or neither my message sent via
9 email; they don't see it important to them at all

One more strategy 'intimacy reinforcement strategies' found in the data collected is the 'abbreviation'. The participant noticed the abbreviation 'Btw' in the email received in example 6.15 in chapter 6. He reported in the second interview (see 6.4.1.4.4) that he first made use of the 'let it pass' strategy (Firth, 1996) as he did not know what it stood for. He perceived the reason for using the abbreviation in the email was that his interlocutor might prefer a shorten form of the written word because the content in the email did not need much formality. Accordingly, another participant in example 8.6 revealed her use of 'coz' instead of 'because' in the email communicating with a younger Cambodian student. She emphasized that she made use of the abbreviation because the interlocutor was at a lower social status, so the informality of the message was appropriate. She claimed that their style of writing was not formal, so she preferred to communicate at the same level of formality as being offered by her interlocutor – using a speech-like form of written language. It is in line with Rosen et al.'s (2010) study where young adults apply online textisms differently (Crystal, 2008) in relation to formal and informal writing.

Example 8.6

1 **Researcher:** as I can see you use 'coz' here, I want to know why

2 **IR 5:** it's like what I'm familiar with. I don't know if other people would understand it or not, but for
3 any Cambodians they know that it is from 'because'

4 **Researcher:** supposed you are contacting someone older who is also Cambodian, will you use this
5 abbreviation?

6 **IR 5:** NO

7 **Researcher:** is that because this interlocutor in the email is younger than you?

8 **IR 5:** YES. as I am a staff and she called me ‘pii’ [courtesy title for anyone older in Thai culture], she
9 may be younger. Moreover, the message in her email is not that formal; it’s like the way when we
10 communicate in an instant message service via Facebook. Then I think I’d better reply her in the
11 same way – a speech-like language

The participants accepted emails containing abbreviations; they felt comfortable seeing abbreviations in emails, and considered levels of formality significant – wherever abbreviations were found, it inferred that the emails were not very formal, but friendly and relaxed. This phenomenon can be explained by Baron's (1998) idea in that the written language in an email context is changing towards a more speech-like pattern than in the past. Furthermore, an abbreviation is more common in informal writing including in CMC (Ling & Baron, 2007). Therefore, it is not surprising for email users to feel more familiar with the use of abbreviations in business email writing (cf. Mallon & Oppenheim, 2002) nowadays as long as the business negotiations are still successful and smooth.

Along with the intention of conducting less formal email interactions, another strategy called 'non-standard language' was used as occurring in example 6.16 in chapter 6. The word 'kinda' (line 8) spelled in a spoken form and similar to what is called 'creative spelling' in email writing in Mallon and Oppenheim's (2002) study was employed. The participant specified there was close distance between them and the email content was not very serious. This signifies that closeness was required if he decided to apply this lexical creativity in his email interactions explicitly showing informality and encouraging an intimate atmosphere of communication where both parties would feel comfortable negotiating through written communication.

Likewise, the application of contractions without apostrophe also signifies ‘intimacy reinforcement strategies’ while politeness still exists in a friendly circumstance in CMC, email interactions. The participant in example 6.17 in chapter 6 elucidated her experience regarding contractions appearing informal in email writing – omitting the apostrophe. It is not only because she wanted to shorten the phrase when typing rather than using full forms; it was also to avoid the complexity of creating apostrophes (Ling & Baron, 2007). She also insisted that she adopted this omission of the grammatical feature because it was initiated by her email interactant as a way of mitigating formality. She believed that such creative textism (De Jonge & Kemp, 2012) comforted her interactant because it felt familiar, increasing closeness. Besides, De Jonge and Kemp's (2012) study shows that apostrophe omission is the most common textism found in their investigation (see also Plester, Wood & Joshi, 2009). It is considered a common practice used by adolescents to apply such textisms with the underlying the function of enhancing social relationships or group membership by

resisting conformity to standard grammar restrictions and creating a hybrid form of textuality in their digital literacy (De Jonge & Kemp, 2012; Lewis & Fabos, 2005).

8.2.1.2.3 Meaning-making punctuation

Further examples of punctuation occurring in the corpus of emails are reviewed in this section. Even though they partially overlap with punctuation in the previous section (see 8.2.1.2.2), the prominent purpose of the punctuation use in this section is not to increase intimacy, but to indicate or emphasize a particular meaning of the specifically selected contents of the emails. To be more specific, two categories of punctuation are illustrated: 'content emphasis' and 'unfixed interpretation'.

All the punctuation found in the corpus of emails in this study emphasized the importance of particular messages. Examples 6.18-6.21, 8.7 and 6.23 illuminate emphasis by the use of 'capitalization', 'bold-facedness', 'underlined expressions', 'coloured phrases', 'exclamation mark' and 'asterisk' respectively. The participant in example 6.18 in chapter 6 disclosed that he would intentionally like his recipient to notice his stress of the sentence "PLEASE LET ME KNOW ASAP !!!!!" with the use of capitalization expecting that the interlocutor found his inquiry more urgent than using a normal full stop at the end of a sentence. It is corroborated by Mallon and Oppenheim's (2002) and Petrie's (1999) studies that the use of capital letters in emails is a way of showing emotion in written discourse. Petrie's (1999) finding indicates that capitalization is one of the three most frequent stylistic features occurring in emails simply signifying manipulation of the standard character set. Also, Mallon and Oppenheim (2002) reveal that instances of capitalization in their study occurred more in impersonal business emails than in personal business and in social categories as they claim that it is the most straightforward way to emphasize contents in emails.

Other stylistic features discovered in this study are bold-faced, underlined and coloured phrases shown in examples 6.19-6.21 and 8.7. However, the participants involved in the emails argued that they did not see any distinct differences in the use of the three punctuations as they all had the same intention of making emphasis on selected messages as reported in the individual interview shown in example 8.7 below.

Example 8.7

- 1 **IR 1:** NO. I think it's all about personal preferences. Like I myself prefer to underline any messages I
- 2 wanna emphasize, but I never differentiate contents by using colourful fonts. Though this email
- 3 contains different colours in some sentences, I think the writer just wanted to make it clearly noticed

Additionally, Mallon and Oppenheim (2002) and Petrie (1999) admit that asterisk use is an alternative to point out the importance of specific parts in email messages. This phenomenon can be seen in example 6.23 in chapter 6 where the participant in this investigation tried to stress the emphasis of the information selected in his email. He further explained in the second interview (see 6.4.1.5.1) that he deliberately combined triplets of asterisks at a time so as to let his interlocutor realize that the information given was even more important than ones accompanying with only one asterisk. In the same vein, this links to the explanation of the excessive use of the punctuation such as asterisks and exclamation marks even though there is more than one exclamation mark used at a time at the end of the sentence "PLEASE LET ME KNOW ASAP !!!!" in example 6.18 mentioned earlier. It is evident that the user's intention of applying the punctuation is to reinforce content emphasis differently from the use of those trailing dots and question marks containing various possible meanings in different contexts which will be discussed afterward in this section.

The last point to make about punctuation in business emails concerns punctuation with 'unfixed interpretation'. They are the excessive use of dots and question marks. To start with the dots, Petrie (1999) reveals that the use of trailing dots is the most frequent emailism in her study indicating the purpose of conveying emotion. In line with Mallon and Oppenheim's (2002) study, these features are often found in emails both in social and business categories; they are basically employed to leave suggestions as well as questions in virtual informal speech in emails. This was also reflected in the participant's use of a series of dots in example 6.24 in chapter 6. The participant reported in the second interview (see 6.4.1.5.2) based on the email containing dots that she was unsure if her suggested date would be fine for her interlocutor, she used a series of dots thinking that her recipient might not feel like she was forcing the recipient to agree on her suggestion. Interestingly, the trailing dots used in the email in example 6.25 in chapter 6 from a different email exchange derived from another participant unveiled different intentions or interpretations. The participant guessed that her interlocutor forgot her name that should be placed at the position of a series of dots in the email because the interlocutor later addressed her correctly after he received a reply from her with her sign-off signature written at the end of the reply. That is to say, the participant interpreted the use of trailing dots as a replacement of unrecognized information which is neither a kind of suggestion nor a question.

One more unconventional punctuation use in this study is the excessive use of question marks which can be seen in example 6.26 in chapter 6. The participant shared his opinion when seeing the punctuation (see 6.4.1.5.2) in that the question marks used at the time were not only used to

emphasize (see Mallon & Oppenheim, 2002), but also indicate the need of an urgent reply. This correlates with Ling and Baron's (2007) conclusion that many question marks used together imply a pragmatic request for a response from the recipient of the written message.

In summary, all the pragmatic strategies presented in section 8.2.1 are naturally occurring phenomena found in authentic email communication. The one mutual goal of using the pragmatic strategies discovered and discussed here is to achieve a cooperatively successful negotiation via business email communication. The participants and their interlocutors selected particular strategies dealing with particular communicative circumstances in the email exchanges.

There are two distinctive groups of strategies in the category 'pragmatic strategies dealing with miscommunication': one can be completely solved within the turn by the person who initially noticed potentially communicative problems, and another is the strategies requiring co-construction from both parties in the interactions to ensure that the breakdowns are remedied.

Nevertheless, successful communication was eventually constructed by various means relying on contexts and preferences of the strategy users with the same key point of eliminating miscommunication. It was found that some strategies were uncovered in accordance with the previous literature which mostly conducted in spoken discourse while this study is written-based: 'self-repetition' (Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Deterding, 2013), 'providing local knowledge and building common ground' (Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Ren, 2016b, 2016a), 'let it pass' (Firth, 1996), 'asking for clarification' (Deterding, 2013; Mauranen, 2006) 'confirmation check' (Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Mauranen, 2006; Ren, 2016a, 2016b) and 'direct comment' (see Ly, 2016; Ren, 2016a, 2016b). Meanwhile, there are emergent strategies authentically utilized to self-repair the miscommunication: 'consulting dictionary or application' and 'consulting peer' to save one's face when doubtful issues relating to understanding occurred.

In the pragmatic strategies enhancing intercultural communication, almost all of the strategies 'accommodation', 'intimacy reinforcement strategies' and 'meaning-making punctuation' were utilized with clear purposes, except those found in the category 'unfixed interpretation' under the matter of meaning-making punctuations. Previous research clarifies strategies 'code-switching' (Cogo, 2009, 2010; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; see also Cogo & House, 2017; Seidlhofer, 2009) and 'make it normal' (Firth, 1996) to be used to accommodate interlocutors encouraging the flow of communication and creating a comfortable atmosphere between the interactants. The 'greeting

with location' was a surprising discovery that has not yet been mentioned in the field and was also categorized into the sub-theme 'accommodation strategy'.

Additionally, the strategy 'multimodal feature' in the category 'intimacy reinforcement strategies' was revealed in the data observed; it seemed to be used as a type of equally non-verbal or body language in a written form reflecting human gestures (Thurlow, 2003), signifying in-group membership, decreasing social distance, and encouraging informality in email communication (Dresner & Herring, 2010; Rodrigues, Prada, Gaspar, Garrido, & Lopes, 2018; Skovholt, Grønning, & Kankaanranta, 2014). Besides, other strategies exploited with the same goal in the study but had never been explicitly revealed in previous research are 'creating solidarity', 'making apology', 'abbreviation', 'non-standard language' and 'contraction without apostrophe'. Similarly to the strategies hardly been illuminated, the strategies grouped in the category 'meaning-making punctuation' emerged from the findings as a way of manipulating clearer understandings of intercultural communication. They are words or phrases capitalized, bold-faced, underlined and colored, that highlighted particular messages that required more attention.

8.2.2 Politeness in email communication

Due to the focus of this study which is on email communication, the basic epistolary conventions (Herring, 1996) or vital email components (Bunz & Campbell, 2002; Chen, 2005; Lima, 2014): openings and closings, could not be overlooked. These elements could signify formality in email messages where formality demonstrates politeness in BELF email interactions (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010). That is why opening-closing address in email communication is an essential feature in this study as the presence and/or absence of them refers to (im)politeness (e.g. Chen, 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012; Hallajian & Khemlani David, 2014; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). The opening-closing address functions as politeness markers demonstrating a recipient's face (see Goffman, 1967) and structuring relationships between the email interactants (Waldvogel, 2007). Here in this study, the opening-closing address functions as a politeness marker. Moreover, it implies cultural traits in the use of the address expressed by individual email writer with the concern of whom the recipients were which has hardly been acknowledged in the previous studies. The following table is the opening-closing formulae based on the data found in this investigation triangulated through all the research instruments as well as adapted from Bjorge's (2007) categorization and McKeown & Zhang's (2015) classification of formality (see 4.4.4). There are four levels of formality firmly revealed in this email communication both in the openings and the closings: formal, semi-formal, informal and formality decreasing, where the outstanding factors

affecting their awareness of the address selection are social status and relationship. In addition, it is found that in any one certain email, it was not guaranteed that the levels of formality displayed by the opening and the closing addresses were the same. However, it is disclosed that this phenomenon does not significantly affect the communication success because such communicative achievement could be reached with unpredictable use of the addresses depending on various factors detailed in the next section (see 8.2.2.3).

Table 9: Formality, Opening, and Closing Formulae adapted from Bjorge’s (2007) and McKeown & Zhang’s (2015) Categorizations

Formality	Opening	Closing
Formal	Dear/ Temporal Greeting + Professor(s)/Sir/Madam/Teacher + honorific/title + (first name) + surname + Mrs/Mr + (first name) + surname + full name	Your respectfully/ Your sincerely/ Your faithfully/ Sincerely/ Best regards/ Best wishes + honorific/title + (first name) + surname + Mrs/Mr + (first name) + surname + full name
Semi-formal	Dear/ Hi/Hey/Hello + honorific/title + first name/nickname	Your respectfully/ Your sincerely/ Your faithfully/ Sincerely/ Best regards/ Best wishes

Formality	Opening	Closing
		+ honorific/title + first name/nickname + first name/nickname Gratitude statement/ Cheers + (first name) + surname
Informal	Dear/Hi/Hey/Hello + first name/nickname Hi/Hey/Hello only Name only No opening	Best/ Gratitude statement/ Cheers/ Take care/ Phonetic spelling + first name/nickname Name only No closing

8.2.2.1 Opening address

There is previous literature describing the results of their empirical studies in relation to greetings or openings in email use (e.g. Bjorge, 2007; Crystal, 2001; Kankaanranta, 2005; McKeown & Zhang, 2015; Waldvogel, 2007). However, distinct categorization of levels of formality is rarely seen, that is, most of the studies neither reported the exact salutary greetings employed by their participants, nor did the researchers classify the discovered data of opening address into explicit themes or categories in terms of fixed level of formality, especially with the consideration of segment combination in an opening address – salutation and name(s). Besides that, norms commonly used in business emails, especially from the perspective of levels of formality, are not determined in the exactly same range (e.g. Crystal, 2001; Meierkord, 2002; Chen, 2006; Waldvogel, 2007). Many factors are taken into consideration such as how well the email interactants have known each other, how well established

their working relationships are, and what an individual's preference in addressing or being addressed is, etc. (Bjorge, 2007). These kinds of factors also affect a variety of openings in emails constructed by the participants, and they are deliberated in the topic of social variables influencing the opening-closing address in section 8.2.2.3.

Bjorge's (2007) classification is adapted to be the framework of this investigation (see Table 1: Bjorge's (2007) Categorization of Opening-Closing Addresses in Emails). Her data of the opening address are classified into two categories: formal and informal. However, in the present study, the use of greetings/openings employed was expanded into four categories. Based on levels of formality in the opening address, the addresses were classified into 'formal', 'semi-formal', 'informal', and 'formality decreasing' categories.

The formal opening salutations discovered in this study are similar to the phrases in Bjorge's (2007) formal category and in the studies conducted by other scholars demonstrating such email salutations even though they do not obviously identify the addresses as the formal opening forms (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2011; McKeown & Zhang, 2015). In examples 6.27 in chapter 6 and 8.8 below, the participants employed the formal opening addresses all through their email exchanges revealing their consideration of higher relative power held by their interlocutors who are not their colleagues (see 6.4.2.1.1). In example 6.27, the participant kept using the formal opening addressing her interlocutor whom she had never contacted before; she paid more attention to the distance between the two parties. In line with Goudarzi, Ghonsooly and Taghipour (2015), formal salutations are applied when there is a high degree of social distance between the interactants in order to preserve the receiver's face (see Goffman, 1967). While the participant in example 8.8 paid much attention to the social position of the interlocutor, he insisted on addressing his recipient with the formal opening address because he was in a lower rank no matter whether his interactant changed the opening addresses or not. It resonates with Peterson et al.'s (2011) findings that power reflects on the senders' choice of formality, and lower rank senders are likely to create formal emails sending to higher power recipients.

Example 8.8

1 On Fri, Apr 21, 2017 at 3:06 PM, [S2][S2/last] | < |@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dr. [S1][S1/last]

3 Thank you for your interest to collaborate with [org 2]. As you said in your email message, there are several areas of interest for both parties to work together. We are also keen to work with [org 1] in all areas you mentioned. For the detail of cooperation, let's discuss when you visit [org 2] next month. And if you could prepare the draft of our MoU, it would be better and we will have shorter time for the process at the Ministry.

7 Will you please inform me the date of your visit to my university as soon as possible.

9 Regards,

Dr. [S2][S2/last]

11 On Mon, Apr 24, 2017 at 10:09 AM, [S1][S1/last] | < |.ac.th> wrote:

Dear Dr. [S2][S2/last]

13 Thank you very much for your reply and interest in having collaboration with [org 1]. I will consult with my dean and administrative staff and then will confirm the date with you again. In addition, I will be more than happy to bring the draft of the MoU with me for your consideration when we visit [org 2]. I can even send it via email before we go.

17 On May 31, 2017, at 10:24 AM, [S1][S1/last] | < |.ac.th> wrote:

Dear Dr. [S2][S2/last],

19 First of all, I do apologize for taking so long to get back to you. Our university has just finished the final examination and grading process which took all our time and energy.

21 I have discussed with the dean of my faculty and reached the conclusion that we would like to visit [org 2] on July 4, 2017. If this date is not convenient for you, we can also come on July 5.

23 This is the earliest time that we can arrange the visit. If you approve this proposal, please kindly inform me of the date when we can come. If these dates are not convenient for you, could you please suggest other possible dates? Then, we can plan the travelling. For the time being, I will also prepare the draft of the MoU and send it to you to consider.

27 On Thu, Jun 1, 2017 at 2:13 PM, [S2][S2/last] | < |@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear [S1]

29 I have scheduled the meeting with your delegation on 4th of July at 11:00 AM at [org 2] at the reception hall. Looking forward the draft of MOU,

31 Regards,
[S2][S2/last]

33 On Fri, Jun 2, 2017 at 11:25 AM, [S1][S1/last] | <[redacted].ac.th> wrote:

Dear Dr. [S2][S2/last]

35 Thank you very much for your approval of our request to visit [org 2]. As you proposed, we will be at the
37 reception hall of [org 2] on July 4, 2017 at 11:00 AM. Please also see the draft of the MoU in the attached file and
kindly let me know if it needs some adjustment. Regarding the number of our delegates, I will inform you at least
one week prior to this visit.

39 From: [S1][S1/last] | <[redacted].ac.th>

Date: Fri, Jun 9, 2017 at 9:33 AM

41 Subject: Re: MoU of MSU & YUFL

To: [S2][S2/last] | <[redacted]@gmail.com>

43 Cc: [redacted] | <[redacted]@gmail.com>

Dear Dr. [S2][S2/last],

45 Now I am preparing the trip to visit [org 2], and would like ask for a favor from you. Could you please write an
official invitation letter to our faculty? The letter should state that [org 2] would like to discuss academic
47 collaborations with delegates from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, from July 4-5, 2017. You can

From: [S2][S2/last] | <[redacted]@gmail.com>

49 Date: Tue, Jun 27, 2017 at 9:25 PM

Subject: Re: MoU of [org 1] & [org 2]

51 To: [S1][S1/last] | <[redacted].ac.th>

Dear [S1],

53 Sorry for the errors. I will ask my staff to correct. During these days, we are so busy and our chairman of national
education policy commission passed away which led to the President of Myanmar Government and the First Lady
55 came to us and stayed with us for two days. Sorry again for late reply too.

Referring to the informal openings in Borge's (2007) classification, all the patterns mentioned were also noticed in the corpus of emails (see 6.4.2.1.3). Apart from that, one significant pattern was recognized in different circumstances in different email exchanges – the opening address 'Dear + nickname'. It is appointed an informal opening category because a nickname is informal used in any situation including in written discourse. As seen in example 6.30 in chapter 6, both the participant and her interlocutor used informal opening addresses because they have a close relationship contacting each other for a long time. The interactants in the ACE corpus in Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick's (2014) study reveal that they applied potential face-threats or mock politeness strategies to signal solidarity and create rapport between the ELF interactants in a conversation. Besides, the participant in this example sometimes even did not include an opening in her

responding email when she composed a reply of short length. It is the same with Waldvogel (2007) in that a reply of the follow-up email is less likely to have a greeting (see also Crystal, 2001). Nevertheless, this concurs with Caron, Hwang, Brummans and Caronia (2013) who argue that openings conveyed social meanings; a specific opening would be chosen regarding whom the recipient was as well as the relationship between the two parties involved. It is noticed that the participant focused more on their close relationship than on their unequal social power, so she selected informal opening addresses in line with Bou-Franch (2011) that when more intimacy was developed, less complexity and greater informality were constructed.

One striking form of opening address which has rarely been described elsewhere is in the 'semi-formal' category (see 6.4.2.1.2). Even though the opening address consisting of 'title + first name' is claimed to be grammatically unacceptable in English (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011), it is considered common in the dataset in this study. As with the Iranians in Hallajian & Khemlani Davis's (2014) study, it is discovered that first names were used more often than last names in the greeting forms. In agreement with Chen's (2015) findings, the Chinese participants made use of 'Dear + academic title + first name'. The academic title used in this case is the word 'teacher' that Chen considered as an 'incorrect academic title', but it is viewed in a different way in this study in the context of ELF. That is, it is not incorrect, and it is understandable and acceptable regarding the email writers' cultural practices. The findings in this investigation also show the use of 'semi-formal' openings in the different pattern 'Dear + honorific/title + first name/nickname.' For example, the honorifics/titles used in example 8.9 is 'K.' (line 3) standing for 'Khun' – a courtesy word expressing respect and politeness in Thai culture, and 'Ajarn' (line 5) in example 8.10 – a Thai word meaning teacher.

The reason why these opening addresses were classified as 'semi-formal' is that there is a combination of an informal form of calling people by their first name or nickname together with a formal honorific expression of respect. However, the deference term 'Dear' itself is not particularly considered because 'Dear' can happen in both formal and informal situations signifying nothing in terms of formality. Zhu (2017) claims that 'Dear' is unmarked or appropriate in emails regarded as a written letter. Remarkably, it is noticeable that all the semi-formal opening addresses presented here are entirely involved in Thai cultural practices expressed by the Thai or non-Thai participants. Hence, this phenomenon is hardly ever spotted in the previous literature specifying opening addresses in English email exchanges. Also, it is in agreement with Chen (2006) in that not only

linguistic ability but also cultural norms and values involved are of L2 email writers' concerns (see also Varner & Beamer, 2011).

Example 8.9

1 [S1][S1/last] <[S1]@[S1].ac.th> Fri, Jun 16, 2017 at 10:28 AM
To: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS <[S1]@[S1].ac.th>

3 Dear K. [S2]

I have been transfer the money 12,000bahts to your university bank account without charging any transaction fee.

5 Below is the transaction attachment.

Best regards,

7 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS <[S1]@[S1].ac.th> Fri, Jun 16, 2017 at 1:13 PM
To: [S1][S1/last] <[S1]@[S1].ac.th>

9 Dear [S1]

Thank you very much for your kind help.

11 Best regards,

Example 8.10

1 From: [S1/nickname][S1] <[S1]@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2017 1:35 PM
3 To: Urban_Environment_FAR_[org 2]
Subject: Re: Internship for staff and Students form [org 2] 2017

5 Dear Ajam [S2],

I was talking with my dean about plans to welcome a staff and students from [org 2] and arrange
7 the accommodation and now is full because of just start a new term and we discussed about
could be postpone to start a schedule next mount September to October and we hope it will be
9 good for [org 2] too.

From: Urban_Environment_FAR_[org 2] <[redacted]@gmail.com>
11 Sent: Friday, August 4, 2017 4:39:40 PM
To: [redacted]@hotmail.com
13 Cc: [redacted]@hotmail.com
Subject: Re: Internship for staff and Students form [org 2] 2017

15 Dear Ajam [S1/nickname]

Thank you for your prompt response. Your kind support is truly appreciated.

17 We understand that time is very limited for your preparation. Please do not worry about time schedule. We can adjust it according your time of convenience.

19 Best regards,

[S2][S2/last]

In addition to the three levels of formality mentioned, there is one more group called 'formality decreasing'. It exhibits development of levels of formality in email opening address in one certain email exchange from more formal to less in the email chain addressed by the same email users. Generally, one email exchange in the corpus contains more than two emails – more than one turn of emails was conducted by the research participants, and a series of opening addresses used indicated different levels of formality in any particular email exchange.

In the category 'formality decreasing', example 8.11 below was a case where the participant contacted his interlocutor whom he had met and talked to once before communicating through these emails. He firstly started his first turn by using the formal opening, and the semi-formal one in the follow-up email. It is revealed that the more emails they exchanged, the less formality of opening address should be utilized as this phenomenon helped to increase intimacy and ease in their business communication (see 7.4.2.1.3). It is typical to see a less formal tone in a thread of a written conversation once contexts are developing as well as interpersonal relationships (McKeown & Zhang, 2015; Pavlick & Tetreault, 2016). The more emails were exchanged, the closer distance the email users established bringing in a higher rate of informality (Peterson, Hohensee & Xia, 2011). In addition, Nickerson (1999) affirms that an opening address will be changed once the social distance between the email interactants decreases; the change will become less formal and unfixed. When the level of formality decreases, it directly affects opening addresses chosen to be less formal; not as formal as the one that has been used in the beginning or not even reverse to be more formal.

They neither know each other well nor have close relationships, so he decided to make it formal at the first place. Then in the later response, he intended to show respect by calling his interlocutor 'Prof.' on the one hand, but still show their familiarity on the other by using the 'first name' (line 34) (see Hallajian & Khemlani David, 2014) as he revealed in the follow-up interview that they both call each other by 'Khun + first name' in their precedent verbal conversation. One crucial factor affecting his use of the semi-formal opening address is that he was aware of the third-party involvement in this email exchange. He preferred less formal opening because he believed it could lead his interlocutor including himself to feel more comfortable in communication, but he still showed courtesy and formality to his interlocutor as the third person involved in this email (lines 29-40) had not known his recipient. Similar to Perez Sabater et. Al's (2008) findings in that email writers tend to be more formal when addressing many recipients rather than to one person at a time (see also Bou-Franch, 2011; Heylighen & Dawaele, 1999). Also, in accordance with Peterson et al.'s (2011) assumption, a sender prefers a more formal style in emails sent to many recipients as they perceive less formal emails are unprofessional. That is, the openings in follow-up emails could be less formal than the previous one if no other people were getting involved in the email circulation due to the writer's preference for contacting in a friendly and intimate way.

Example 8.11

1 **From:** [S1][S1/last] <[S1]@[S1].ac.th>
2 **Sent:** 31 August 2017 11:25:19
3 **To:** [S2]@hotmail.com
4 **Subject:** | [name 1] University, 2 specialists
5 recruitment

Dear Prof., [S2/last]

7 The Faculty of Fine and Applied Art is now looking for 2 new specialists,
8 working as lecturers or academic staff. If you have friends or someone who
9 may be interested in these positions, please let me know.

Thank you so much

11 Best Regards,
[S1]

13 On Fri, Sep 1, 2017 at 10:57 AM, [S2][S2/last]
@hotmail.com wrote:

15 Dear [S1]

It was very nice to meet you and please do not
17 hesitate to contact my if I can assist you.

I shall notify the Arts Colleges and University
19 faculties in the UK as well as the alumni
organisations who have good websites.

21 The Faculty Dean is welcome to pass more
information to me on pay, conditions job
23 description which are standard for European
advertises if he so wishes. In the meantime if the
25 Faculty wants my help I am very pleased to offer to
assist from the perspective of my work in art
27 history linked to music.

Best regards

29 **From:** [S1][S1/last] <[S2][S2/last].ac.th>
Sent: 31 August 2017 11:25:19
31 **To:** [S1]@hotmail.com
Subject: [name 1] University,2 specialists
33 recruitment

Dear Prof.: [S2]

35 The Faculty of Fine and Applied Art is now looking for 2 new specialists,
working as lecturers or academic staff. If you have friends or someone who
37 may be interested in these positions, please let me know.

Thank you so much

39 Best Regards,

[S1]

To conclude, the formal, the informal and the semi-formal levels of formality in the opening addresses were found as of those previous studies (e.g. Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009; Bjorge, 2007; Bou-Franch, 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). Substantially, the semi-formal category pinpointing specific cultural aspects is barely presented by other scholars in the context of the English email opening address. For the formality decreasing openings, all the participants emphasized that they intentionally developed their levels of formality this way because they tried to build relationships with the interactants which brought about ease of communication where formality seemed to be avoided and replaced by intimacy. Again, the purpose of communication achievement is hidden behind all the selection openings.

8.2.2.2 Closing address

The closing address is another topic to be discussed here as a focus of this study in relation to politeness expressions in email valediction (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2011; Kankaanranta, 2005; Perez Sabater et.al, 2008; Waldvogel, 2007; Zhu, 2017). It is considered as an indicator of building and/or continuously maintaining positive relationships between email communicators (Kankaanranta, 2005; Waldvogel, 2007) and indicating (im)politeness in email interactions (Félix-Brasdefer, 2012b). Similar to the opening address mentioned in section 8.2.2.1, the closing addresses discovered in the corpus of emails are classified into four levels of formality: 'formal', 'semi-formal', 'informal', and 'formality decreasing'. The last level could be explored in a certain dimension of development from the three former concrete levels mentioned. That is, the fixed forms of closing addresses are detailed in the first three levels as shown in Table 3, while the 'formality decreasing' is a one certain way of development from more to less formality.

Again, the distribution of complimentary closes raised by Bjorge (2007) and McKeown & Zhang's (2015) closing valediction is adapted to be a conceptual core formula of closing formality in this study. Nonetheless, the focus of Bjorge's (2007) closing address is only on complimentary closes, not including the ways email writers sign off, whereas the sign-off signatures were included in this study. Also, McKeown and Zhang (2015) do not categorize their closing valediction into different groups. This leads into the differences between their classifications and the one generated in this study where highlights are on both complimentary closes and sign-off names at the end of the emails, and they all together are graded into three clear categories. Each of these elements solely signifies a different level of formality indicating politeness, so the levels of formality of closing address derived from a combination of both elements.

To begin with the formal closings used in the dataset, it is evident in example 6.32 in chapter 6 that the participant decided to employ the formal closing with the interlocutor whom she had not contacted before – there was a high degree of social distance. The formal closings were likely to be used to show deference in email communication. In the same line with Alafnan's (2014) participants as employees using business email interactions in a workplace that they are concerned more about social distance than relative power, so they prefer using formal politeness strategies with people they were not familiar with (cf. Vinagre, 2008).

Informal closing address forms were also observed in the corpus of emails. This is in agreement with Waldvogel's (2007) study where the emails in the corpora from an educational organization and manufacturing plant certainly contain informal closing addresses. In example 8.12 below, the participant used exactly the same informal pattern of the closing 'All the best + nickname' all through his seven emails in the exchange with the aim at showing his closeness in terms of social relationship with the interlocutor whom he has contacted and met several times. Besides, he always signed off with his nickname since his interlocutor called him that way in their verbal communication – this indicates that how communicators verbally addressed each other could directly affect their address in email interactions. Many emails in the corpus were ended without closing address considered 'informal' closing valediction, and this phenomenon is commonly found in business emails (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2011; Caron et.al, 2013; Lindgren, 2014). Furthermore, some participants pointed out that it seemed not necessary to include any closings in emails that were immediate replies – it seemed like a virtual face-to-face interaction. The reason supporting this idea is not closeness or intimacy, but it is because of a quick reply which Waldvogel (2007) claims that in case of immediate responses, especially between interlocutors holding a close relationship, no closing is usually found. This finding shows disagreement with Biesenbach-Lucas's (2009) results in that the NNSs preferred more formal or conventional closing addresses in business letter templates due to the perceptions of high power-distance context. Rather, the participant deliberately selected closing addresses based on the individuality basis – who her interactant was and how their interpersonal relationship was, not the concern of NS or NNS.

Example 8.12

```
1 >>>>> On Dec 15, 2016, at 17:08, [S1][S1/last] <[redacted].ac.th> wrote:
>>>>>
>>>>> Dear Dr. [S2/last]
>>>>>
3 >>>>> I hope this finds you well. How was the TEMUN this year? I believe it was very successful like last year.
You must have worked very hard on it.
>>>>>
5 >>>>> I have already brought the draft of the MOU from [name 2] University to the faculty meeting. The
committee agreed with the draft and would like to have the MOU processed.
>>>>>
7 >>>>> We would like to visit [name 2] University to sign the MOU but haven't got the exact date yet. Please let
me know if this plan is possible. We will keep in touch!
>>>>>
9 >>>>> All the best,
>>>>> [S1/nickname]
```

```
11>>>>> On Thu, Jan 19, 2017 at 11:27 AM, T. [S2/last] <[redacted].ac.jp> wrote:
>>>>> Dear [S1/nickname]
>>>>>
13>>>>> I apologise you for my belated reply to your mail, that I have just discovered in looking for your address. I
hope that you and your wife are fine.
>>>>>
15>>>>> To answer to your question, there are steps:
>>>>> 1) we have to make a draft of MOU contract (not yet done);
17>>>>> 2) you and me agree on it
>>>>> 3) I will have to submit it to the steering committee of the Faculty
```

```
19>>>>> It will be good that you can introduce me [name 1] high school (or other schools).
>>>>>
>>>>> Best
>>>>>
21>>>>> T. [S2/last]
```

```
>>>>> On Jan 19, 2017, at 15:15, [S1][S1/last] <[redacted].ac.th> wrote:
>>>>>
23>>>>> Dear Dr. [S2/last]
>>>>>
>>>>> It is great to hear from you. I will look at the draft one more time and fill in the information. Then, I will
25send it back to you. After we agree upon it, I will also have to submit it to my university's board members for
approval. If there is no problem from both my side and your side, we can set the date when my faculty members
27and I can come to sign the MOU at [name 2] University. Hopefully, this can happen in June or July because this
period is the summer break at my university.
```

Moving onto the 'semi-formal' closing address, example 6.33 in chapter 6 is one of those emails consisting of a semi-formal closing address 'Sincerely + first name'. The participant admitted in the interview that she was aware of her interactant's higher relative power making the complimentary close 'Sincerely' formal, whereas she did not use a formal full name because she intended to display their familiarity indicating the long time they had known, worked and communicated with each other. These semi-formal closing addresses were also applied by other participants as well as their foreign interlocutors in other email exchanges in the corpus of email dataset. This can be described as a similar pattern as that found in the use of the 'semi-formal' opening address in section 8.2.2.1 in that the particular cultural practice influences the closing addresses selected (Hallajian & Khemlani, 2014). First names seem to be formal and polite for Thais when calling someone, whereas it is not in English (Economidou-Ko, 2011). Hence, it is regularly used in a Thai context where the interlocutors seemed to understand the context where power inequality exists alongside familiarity.

Lastly, the category 'formality decreasing' was found in the emails when relationships between the email interactants were getting closer – the more emails they exchanged, the more familiar they could feel between the two parties which can be described as the same pattern as what happened in the formality decreasing openings (see 8.2.2.1). As shown in example 8.13 below, the participant claimed that her closings were formal 'Best Regards + title + first name + last name' at the beginning and became less formal later 'Thanks + title + first name + last name' (semi-formal) by which she could create more familiarity in the written interaction. This is evident in Waldvogel's (2007) study where in later turns, the messages contain less formal greeting and closing so as to create a greater sense of solidarity. However, what she always emphasized in the interview were social variables which encouraged her to select different levels of formality with individuals including this case who holds a higher position than hers. The same explanation of the use of opening address 'formality decreasing' can be applied in this email exchange where more familiarity was being created while the number of emails was increasing (MeKeown & Zhang, 2015; Pavlick & Te, 2016), encouraging the informality between the email interactants in the email exchange (Peterson, Ho & Xia, 2011).

Example 8.13

1 3. Lastly, could you please include Library visit in USSH Campus Tour.

4. And for the FINAL DATE of Study Tour: November 5-9, 2017

3 Looking forward to hearing from you.

Thank you so much.

5 Best Regards

Ms. [S1][S1/last]

7 **Foreign Specialist**
International Relations Office

9 [name 1] University

Dear [S1][S1/last]

11 Regarding to 10 MA students want to take 03 separate theme classes, we have asked our professors to see if they
are available on November, and they are OK with it. So I think there is no problem to prepare those classes for your
13 students.

However, we need to clarify that the budget plan we sent you earlier was for 20 students in one class. Now if you
15 divide them in 2 different classes (from 3 theme classes to 6 theme classes), then we need to raise a little bit of the
cost for each student to 139 usd/student (not include Halong Bay Trip).

17 Please have a look at the revised schedule and let me know are you OK with it?

Cheers,

19 [S2/Initials]

Dear, [S1][S1/last]

21 How are you?

Firstly, I just handed the MOU draft to our Office for Int'l Cooperation and soon they will get signature of our Rector.
23 And the OIC office might contact you directly (maybe) to ask for some information.

Secondly, I just edit the Invitation letter address to the President of [org 1], but I'm not sure is it what you want? So
25 can you please have a look at it and give me some advice?

And also, we have received a call from Dr. [first name 1][last name 1] the lecturer of the class "Mass Communication in
27 South East Asia", she'd like to ask if she could change the topic to "Mass Communication in Vietnam, in the
television and internet culture context"? Because, she realize that the students are from Thailand so she thinks
29 that she might not be able to spend only 3hrs just to talk about 10 countries in ASEAN communities (that'd maybe just
a brief introduction). So she's advice to give a talk on Vietnam mass communication and more specifically in Television
31 and internet culture.

Beside, on this four students also taking a class on "Politics and media in Vietnam: an overview" so there will be an
33 overview on Vietnam mass media and Dr. [last name 1] will give talk to a specific example on Vietnam's television and
internet culture. So is it ok if Dr. [last name 1] can change the topic?

35 [S2][S2/last]

And for this, we might send about 10 undergrad students for which will be for the previous program you
37 prepare. The number will be finalized tomorrow.

For the Invitation, will give you my words later and for the MoU, looking forward to get in touch with the OIC
39 Officers.

Once again, thank you so much.

41 Best Regards

Ms. [S1][S1/last]

43 Foreign Specialist
International Relations Office
45 [name 1] University

Dear, [S1][S1/last]

- 47 It is pity that your Master students can not make it this time. But we're looking forward to see them in Hanoi some other time.
- 49 Due to the reduce number of student attend to the study tour this time, I've recalculated the cost to organize the study program and I'm afraid that we might need to raise the fee a little bit from 139 usd/students (apply for 20 students and more) to 149 usd/student (for group of 10 students).
- 51 And also, the cost for Halong Bay trip that the travel agency claimed earlier (50 - 59usd/ pax) also will be more expensive, until you give us the exact number of students then I can ask the travel agency to recalculate the cost.
- 53 I hope you could understand that the cost we announced earlier (139 usd/student) is for group of 20 students and more, but actually to organize a study tour there are so many things we need to cost in aside from organizing theme classes, sight seeing tour, renting buses, renting dormitory and other activities... so we have no other solution but to raise the fee to 149 usd/ student.
- 55 There's only less than one month left from now to the day [org 1] students come, we hoping that there will be no big changes on the study tour's plan. I still hope you can bring more than 10 students to come to the tour.
- 57 By the way, please have a look at the revised schedule I made for you today.
- 61 Looking forward to hear from you on the FEE thing.
- [S2][S2/last]

63 I think you offer 119 USD for the first 20 students not 139 USD. Kindly check please.

Thanks

65 Ms. [S1][S1/last]
Foreign Specialist
67 International Relations Office
[name 1] University

The closing addresses in the categories 'formal', 'semi-formal' and 'formality decreasing' in this study are frequently noticed in business interactions (see Biesenbach-Lucas, 2009) including the 'informal' ones (Waldvogel, 2007). The closing addresses in this investigation were variously employed regarding the individual's perceptions of the significant importance of the key variants mentioned earlier influencing their selection of the address in particular communicative situations. That is, not only the social power and relationship between the interactants determined the opening-closing addresses (Lindgren, 2014), but also the uncertainty raised by the email communicators.

A similar idea revealed by the participants in almost all of the email exchanges in this study can be summarized from the corpus of emails together with the interviews that they were aware of what positions and/or relationship they were holding – whether it was lower or higher than their interlocutors'. These factors significantly influence their selection of politeness in terms of different

levels of formality in opening and closing addresses they would use in each email though the exact use of the addresses could not be always guaranteed or absolutely predicted. That is, to select the opening and the closing in any one email or even all through the email exchange, it could not be predicted that the addresses were in the same level of formality. It does not mean that any email started with a formal opening address must be ended with a formal closing address. The sole social variables cannot anticipate the fixed forms of both opening and closing addresses (Hallajian & Khemlani, 2014). In other words, the number of openings and closings in one exchange could possibly be varied; some emails might contain either opening or closing or even both or none of them. However, the relative power and social distance are critical factors in the present investigation as they were always mentioned by the participants concerning politeness through the levels of formality. The following section will more clearly clarify how the social variables are important to the participants as well as their perceptions of politeness in email communication in institution-relevant settings.

8.2.2.3 Social variables affecting politeness in email communication

In accordance with Félix-Brasdefer (2012a), Hallajian and Khemlani David (2014) and Waldvogel (2007), where the persistence of opening-closing address implies politeness in email communication, most of the participants in this study explicitly agreed in the focus group interviews that opening and closing addresses were prioritized (see examples 7.7-7.8). Moreover, they also revealed in their individual interviews that relative power and social distance significantly influenced the selection of such consequential elements in emails (see 6.4.2). Hence, the two social variables are the focal points in this discussion leading to the use of different levels of formality in terms of opening-closing addresses in email interactions.

In the aspect of power or social status, it is a substantial issue considered by the participants as email writers whether formal, semi-formal or informal opening-closing addresses would be selected and sent to individual interlocutors holding various levels of relative power. It is because such use of the address forms in email discourse signals respect and politeness to specific recipients (Bjørge, 2007; Hofstede, 2001; Waldvogel, 2007) due to face maintenance from the sender's perspective (see Goffman, 1967). Besides, the phenomenon that higher social status people tended to be treated with a high degree of formality by lower power senders were commonly found (e.g. Bjørge, 2007; Chejnova, 2014; Peterson et al., 2011; Waldvogel, 2007; Varner and Beamer, 2011) as shown in example 8.34. That is, the social power has an impact on the senders' choice of formality, especially those who stand in a lower position who tend to create formal emails when communicating with higher power recipients (Peterson, Hohensee, & Xia, 2011).

Nevertheless, some investigations reveal a significant concern lying underneath the written discourse communicators' choices; low- or high-context cultures directly influence writers' tone of writing. Emails created by senders from high-context cultures, specifically most of the Asian countries (Wei-Kong et al., 2015) including Thailand where seniority is a prominent concern of politeness (Wongwarangkul, 2000), are more likely to embrace a formal or deferential style in opening-closing addresses in order to express politeness as they have a clear congruence between level of formality and social hierarchy (e.g. Bjorge, 2007; Chen, 2001; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012; Panina & Kroumova, 2015; Wei-Kong et al., 2015; Zhu, 2012; 2017). Moreover, informality is considered impolite or lack of respect when used by subordinates in emails sent to superiors (Varner & Beamer, 2011).

However, even though some researchers conclude that the politeness expressions in written discourse are attached to specific cultures including Thailand, this essentialist notion does not apply to this study. As the participants are considered as (B)ELF email users, individuality manipulated their use of opening-closing addresses; it is not attached to any national cultures. Referring to example 6.29 in 6.4.2.1.2 where the participants intentionally addressed her high power interlocutor with the semi-formal addresses, she pointed out in the interview that she thought it explicitly showed their friendliness and great relationship whereas politeness and respect were neither decreased nor disappeared. In this example, the participant did not mention even a single word or idea relating to a specific nationality in the interaction. It could be noticed that national frame of reference was ignored. Besides that, not only the (higher) power determined the levels of formality in email addresses, but social distance between the interlocutors also influenced their addresses.

Another crucial social variable indicating the email users' decision on what forms of openings and closings to be chosen in each email interaction, is social distance or relationship between the parties involved in the communication. In Bjorge's (2007) idea, email users will choose an opening-closing address in terms of levels of formality based on how they perceive their relationship to convey social meaning (Caron et al., 2013). Lindgren's (2014) results show that the level of formality in the opening address does not depend on whether the email correspondence is internal or external interactions, but how well the email correspondents know each other or how frequently they communicate (see also McKeown & Zhang, 2015). It resonates with Goudarzi et al.'s (2015) finding that social distance is a key factor deciding different types of salutations or greetings. The participants in their study are more likely to use formal salutations with great social distant receivers so that the receivers' faces can be saved. Also, social distance implies the level of formality in a closing address in a similar direction as of those in the opening address. That is, the bigger gap of

distance or relationship between the interactants, the greater degree of formality in closing valediction is preferred (McKeown & Zhang, 2015). As can be seen in example 6.35, the participant of this study agreed to use semi-formal and informal closing addresses with the apparent idea that they are close and have been contacting for a long period of time, so they show less formality through the email addresses between the interactants.

Bou-Franch (2011) asserts that email interactants are trying to negotiate their relationship while exchanging more emails. More formal opening-closing addresses in interpersonal communication are less desired because they tend to use less formality while building more intimacy. This idea is agreed with Peterson et al.'s (2011) results that the email users get closer in the social distance when they correspond more emails invoking an increase of informality (see also Pavlick & Tetreault, 2016). Email senders try to reduce the distance by employing less formal forms of address so that they can construct solidarity between recipients and thus strengthen their association (Waldvogel, 2007; Zhu, 2017). These studies support the use of opening-closing address development found in the present investigation, specifically in the categories 'semi-formal', 'informal' and 'formality decreasing' (see 8.2.2.1 - 8.2.2.2). This development of informality found in the addresses was observed in two patterns: gradually changing based on a number of exchanges and manifestly changing within the same exchange. For example, for the former one, formal addresses could be used in one email exchange, and later in the following exchanges with the same interlocutor, the addresses were semi-formal or informal. Slightly different from the former pattern, the opening-closing addresses in the latter pattern could be noticed that formality was decreasing in different emails interacting within the same email exchange.

Interestingly, congruence of levels of formality in both opening and closing addresses in the same email is not necessary (Bjorge, 2007; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012; Lindgren, 2014). Bou-Franch's (2011) results reveal that the occurrence of opening addresses is likely to decrease since solidarity is elaborated when several emails are exchanged, meanwhile closing forms do not display exactly the same rate of variation; the closings tend to appear more often than the openings. For example, in any email, there can be an informal greeting at the beginning followed by a formal closing at the end of the email. Example 8.14 below is one of the cases containing different levels of formality in opening and closing addresses in the same email. There were eight emails exchanged in this email thread; five were written by the participant consisting of the same pattern of opening-closing addresses. He addressed his interlocutor with the formal opening 'Dear + Dr + last name', while closed with the informal address 'All the best + nickname' all through the five emails in the exchange.

Example 8.14

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Fri, Oct 7, 2016 at 10:07 AM
Subject: Re: Collaboration Plan -- [REDACTED] University and [REDACTED] University
To: [REDACTED] .ac.jp>

Dear Dr. [REDACTED]

Please find my biodata and photo in the attached files. Keep in touch!

All the best,
[REDACTED]

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no fixed rules or certain patterns to be used with any specific recipients in an email exchange. Not only power and distance are solely taken into account when considering what and how opening-closing addresses to be used in order to compose an appropriate business email, but also other aspects such as senders' preferences or styles and recipients' concerns about necessity of such elements (Whelan, 2000 cited in Bjorge, 2007). This interpretation can be linked to the concept of no fixed standard or no certainly predictable formulae in politeness in terms of opening-closing address created by an individual email correspondent (Hallajian & Khemlani David; 2014; Zhu, 2012). It is suggested that email senders showed politeness based on either their own or others' preferences based on individual notions perceived, not the focus on national cultural scales.

8.3 Language use and intercultural awareness

In addition to pragmatic strategies and politeness in terms of email opening-closing addresses, which are the core parts of this investigation, the participants' perceptions of English language and intercultural awareness in their communication are emphasized to disclose their thoughts in daily-life communicative circumstances. There seems to be a discrepancy in both prominent points mentioned from the data collected. The information in this section is based on the findings from the individual interviews and the focus group discussions mainly because there were no email exchanges in the corpus of the emails composed by any particular participants sent to many recipients at a time with the intention to convey the same messages. That is, there is no substantial empirical evidence comparing how they communicated with different interlocutors when they wanted to convey the same meanings of the messages with different interlocutors. Moreover, the emails in the corpus were generally exchanged between the participants and their Asian interlocutors as a majority;

emails exchanged with NSs were hardly found from the data collected although at some points the participants distinguished between the two groups of interlocutors – NSs and NNSs. In the following three sections, how the participants perceived English language use, how aware they were of intercultural communication, and how they made use of BELF are discussed. It is obvious that the email communicators' perceptions in relation to English as well as BELF and ICA co-constructed communicative success in business communication via English email exchanges as detailed below.

8.3.1 Perceptions of English

When the participants were asked about their English language use in email interactions with interactants who have different first languages, their answers could be divided into two categories regarding native-like English.

8.3.1.1 Nativized inclination

For the participants who were concerned about their interlocutors' nationalities or origins, they raised an idea of native speakerism (Holliday, 2005) which inevitably related to standard language (Milroy, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2018) and language ownership (Jenkins & Leung, 2019; Phan, 2009; Pennycook, 1998; Widdowson, 1994). They believed native speakers of English make use of the language grammatically and perfectly without errors. This can be linked to what Milroy (2001) calls 'standard-language cultures' where everyone believes in correctness as the standard ideology. To make it clearer, in any situations when more than one variant of linguistic or grammar points are considered, there must be only one of those correct whereas the others must be wrong or less prestigious, and also the standard is the 'measure of achievement' while standardization can be imposed by uniformity. The participants in this study who perceived English this way thought that those NSs normally communicate in more complicated and formal ways or styles of writing including levels of vocabulary and sentence structures as displayed in example 8.15 below. Specifically, FC 3 in example 7.3 in chapter 7 called the NS English a 'proper English' which is similar to Japanese BELF users in Otsu's (2019) study believing in the standard language ideology that only correct or proper English will conduct a good image of the company as well as the users. They committed themselves to be NNSs of the language who had to accept the NS norms since they thought that it is the correct English (Butler, 1999). In accordance with Seidlhofer's (2018: 87) concept of the standard language which "equated with standards of linguistic behaviour and educational achievement.", the participants placed NSs of English in a superior position expecting not to see any linguistic errors, but fixed rules of linguistic stability.

Example 8.15

- 1 **FC 4:** it's different because I feel like we have commonality among Asians as we are in the same
- 2 geographical zone, so the magnificence of English use or message meanings constructed by us are
- 3 NOT as in-depth or perfect as the NSs do. we all are second language learners, so we make our
- 4 conversations easy to understand by using SIMPLE patterns of the language. the interactions with
- 5 NSs and among us are much different in terms of word choices or structures I think.

The participants who accepted the idea of nativized inclination exhibited the need for language use adjustment when conversing with foreign interactants living in neighboring countries – ASEAN or Asian countries in particular – as seen in example 8.15 above. They indicated the feelings of being users of English as an L2 perceiving their language use to be different when communicating with the non-native English speaking interlocutors than with those native interactants from 'Centre' English speaking countries (Holliday, 2014) including all people considered Caucasians seemingly appear as NSs for most Thais (Watkhaolam, 2005). That is, they sensed that it worked better for them and their NNSs interlocutors to communicate by applying more simplified vocabulary as well as less complicated sentence structures or grammar in email interactions. They preferred to construct a less formal style of email writing with such interactants compared to the NSs. They agreed to employ more formality when conversing with NSs due to the feeling that they were not in the same position – being inferiors to whom English is their mother tongue as seen in the data from the first interview example 5.11 in chapter 5. This can be explained concerning the social factor of power (see 3.4.2) where the participants believed that English is owned by NSs as language guardians (Jenkins & Leung, 2019), whereas they are in a lower position being NNSs, so the ways they communicated or treated people – NSs and NNSs – were different. It is supported by Otsu's (2019) study of attitudes towards English unveiled by Japanese BELF employees working in Asian countries. She claims that social power has an impact on language performance since English use can reflect an image of their company or themselves. Moreover, her participants perceived correct or proper English adhered to standard English referring to standard English ideology (Cogo, 2015; Seidlhofer, 2018) and social power. That is, the language used with NNSs was simpler to avoid confusing the interlocutors with whom they sensed equality in terms of being L2 users leading to a more relaxed atmosphere when contacting such interactants. Overall, this leads to the conclusion that the participants communicated differently when sending messages to native and non-native interactants; the interlocutors had an impact on how they constructed their messages and what kind of language they used.

However, there revealed a contradiction in practice performed by the same participant FC2, who insisted that his language use ought to be different in an interaction with a NS – more formality was needed, between examples 5.11 mentioned earlier and 8.16 below. The example 8.16 is his first email sent to a British person whom he had never contacted before. He employed positive politeness indicating closeness (see Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2012) by addressing his interlocutor with an informal opening 'Dear + first name' and a semi-formal closing 'Best regards + first name'. It is obvious that what he had stated in the interview (see example 5.11) contradicted what he truly performed in the email. Therefore, it is noticeable that what he thought and how he really acted cannot be firmly guaranteed to be the same thing. More factors influencing this phenomenon should be taken into consideration as mentioned earlier (see 9.2.2.3).

Example 8.16

From: [S1][S1/last] .ail.com>
Sent: 04 September 2017 10:00:25
To: [S2] 1@hotmail.com
Subject: Re: [org1] University, 2 specialists recruitment

Dear [S2]

First of all, please allow me to introduce myself. My name is [S1] and I am currently working at Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts (FA), [org1] University, Thailand. As you may acknowledge regarding with the recruitment of FA from [first name1], we are looking for 2 expert who are specialized in Dance or Visual arts to work with us at FA. The contract of employment is 1 year and can be renewed continually for other years if the outcome of performance is met an achievement. The salary is 30,000 Thai Baht.

If you have any recommendations please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

[S1]

8.3.1.2 Egalitarian

Moving on to the participants who were egalitarians or who revealed that all interactants should be treated equally; no one was differently ranked in terms of linguistic proficiency. They insisted that there was no need to change or adjust the messages sent to a variety of recipients who belonged to diversified linguistic backgrounds (see examples 8.17 below, 7.4 in chapter 7 and 5.13 in chapter 5).

There are two reasons found supporting the idea of not changing the contents in emails linguistically when sending messages to various interlocutors: 1) Some participants claimed that they perceived no differences in individual interlocutors no matter whether they were NSs or NNSs, and 2) Some confessed that they feared changing some parts of the messages as mistakes or errors might unintentionally occur in the adjusted versions of the emails. That is, the former reason shows that the participants did not differentiate who their recipients were because they intended to create the contents in emails in the same way as seen in the examples below. Interestingly, one participant added a point into the focus group discussion in example 7.4 in chapter 7 that they did not contact only 'native speakers of English'. This can be inferred that they were likely concerned about the diversity of the recipients' individually linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds, but they continued using the same way or style of the language in the email messages. While in the latter reason, the participants preferred to employ exactly the same messages without changes because they feared changing the contents; if they changed the structure or wording in their messages, the meanings might not be the same. Hence, the participants seemed to be aware of individually different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but they strongly preferred to perform the same practices with all interlocutors. It is in agreement with Baker's (2018) notion that culture and identity surely exist in any intercultural interactions at different levels at certain points; there is no absolutely neutral communication in an ELF context.

Examples 8.17

- 1 **IR 4:** NO. if they are just foreigners no matter if they are NSs or not, I will DEFINITELY use the SAME
- 2 messages, no differences

Apart from considering whom the recipients were, it can be seen in example 7.4 mentioned above where the participants revealed their use of (B)ELF that they put more focus on comprehensibility or intelligibility leading to successful communication than on linguistic and grammatical accuracy in business communication. Similar to the Thai business professionals in Kantabutra's (2018) study, they prioritize the message to be conveyed and effective communicative circumstances over NS-norm based linguistic correctness. Matched with Ehrenreich's (2018) idea of BELF, it is not only the language for communication, but also a range of identification in intercultural interactions – it could be considered as a social language where the language users shared repertoires of their community of practice (Wenger, 1998) where whoever successfully does business via ELF can be called a competent BELF user (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012). Rather, adaptability is a prime concern in communicative events in the 'rapidly changing contemporary world' (Seidlhofer, 2018). That is, the participants believed that successful communicators handling business with international interlocutors via email communication, did not always need to adjust their language used in message contents due to different interlocutors' L1 background or which Krachu's concentric circles they were from, but they prefer focusing on individuality instead. Moreover, they overlooked mistakes or errors made by their email interactants including themselves as long as the overall contents are understandable. This emphasized that the participants have positive attitudes of ELF focusing more on intelligibility leading to communication success than when they communicated with international interlocutors (see Ishikawa, 2017; Wang, 2015).

Moreover, in the context of this study, the FC staff occasionally passed some correspondence onto the Division of Public Relations and International Affairs to let the IR staff continue contacting external recipients for them. The IR staff officially contacted those organizations on behalf of the university and then returned to the FC staff for the results of the business transactions. It is observed that the IR staff generally had more opportunities to contact or deal with more and variety of people than the FC staff's due to their responsibilities. Thus, the more diversified chances or experiences presumably affected the IR staff's perceptions of the English use in that all of them appreciated more flexibility and fluidity of the language used by and with interlocutors from various linguistic backgrounds than their FC staff peers. The more flexible or adjustable use of the language was likely employed by more experienced participants to successfully conclude the business outcome through their email communication. In the same vein, Fang and Ren (2018) argue that the more exposure to global Englishes, the more tolerant of 'non-standard' English use the language users become. Similar to what is called 'the dynamics of ELF' (Seidlhofer, 2018), when the sophisticated staff constructed communicative effectiveness even though they themselves and their interlocutors did not follow standard English (Milroy, 2001;

Seidlhofer, 2018) or NS norms (Holliday, 2005), they could establish successful communication through the adaptive processes of accommodation in particular contexts (Cogo & Dewey, 2012). As most of the staff, particularly the IR staff, showed more flexibility and diverse acceptability of the language use, it can be inferred that varied language awareness exists in communicators' perceptions depending on the exposure of linguistic input and examples (Wang, 2015). In line with Baker's (2011) intercultural awareness (ICA), experiences from authentic intercultural communicative circumstances encourage interactants' concept and development of ICA which are detailed further in the next section.

8.3.2 Intercultural awareness (ICA)

8.3.2.1 Levels of ICA

This investigation is claimed to be ELF-context communication as it is by nature of the situations that all the participants are involved in intercultural communication (e.g. Baker, 2015; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Jenkins, 2014). This social practice inherently contained concerns of differences of various identities and cultures of whoever participates in the interactions. Regarding awareness of cultural differences, it is accepted that the participants were also concerned with this issue even though it could not be concretely expressed via the written discourse in email communication, but it emerged in the interviews. The participants mentioned it in the interviews from either their experiences or opinions. Interestingly, FC 1 in example 5.15 in chapter 5 strongly insisted that it was compulsory to be aware of individual cultural differences when communicating with different people. He indicated that levels of formality and politeness which could be obviously noticed were very important to each recipient differently relying on his/her cultural basis. Furthermore, the participant in example 5.16 also in chapter 5 supported this point by claiming that he found his way of saying or writing varied from person to person in order to conduct polite and appropriate messages with every single recipient. Although he specified particular cultures in his interview, he concluded by emphasizing the importance of individuality; different cultures were of interest but focused more on individual preference. This can be again linked to the concept of ICA (Baker, 2011) in that the participants paid a great deal of attention to intercultural awareness in order to have a smooth and successful communicative interaction with individuals, and tried to avoid miscommunication and possibly dissatisfactory events due to the interlocutors' cultural-based frames of references.

From the interviews and the focus group data in this investigation, the participants variously displayed their ICA in Baker's (2009; 2011; 2015) model at different levels. The participant in Example 5.17 in chapter 5 confessed that she considered who her interlocutors were together with their cultural backgrounds, but she maintained the written discourse in a similar way to all of her interlocutors. This means she noticed the different national cultures of each interlocutor, but the cultural differences did not invoke the adjustment of contents in emails. It is in line with ICA level 1 – basic cultural awareness – where the participant has an understanding of a variety of cultures from an essentialist perspective.

For ICA level 2: advanced cultural awareness, some participants revealed that they could foresee possible problems in communication regarding cultural differences. As seen in example 5.15 mentioned above, the participant indicated that when learning any languages, cultures could not be ignored because levels of politeness and formality through the language could make the communication different. He inferred that communicators should be careful when having conversations in written discourse because cultural backgrounds could bring communicative breakdowns or miscommunication into any intercultural communication. The participants' ICA at level 3 was exhibited in example 5.16. He realized that with particular recipients in particular situations he needed to adjust his contents or accommodate the style of writing in emails based on the individual recipients' cultural preferences beyond national levels. That is, the participant focused more on the on-the-go process or interactions happening at the time without concepts of individual national cultural entities and on final products of successful communication.

8.3.2.2 Movement of ICA levels

Furthermore, Baker (2009) describes the model of ICA (see 3.5) in that there are moves between levels that can unsurprisingly occur to anyone at any point. He claims that these three levels are not developed and fixed in one direction; intercultural communicators may find themselves at any level in any communicative circumstances. This can explain the phenomenon happening to the participants that they sometimes revealed contradictory ideas of how they communicated with their intercultural interlocutors in different situations. As can be seen in examples 5.12-5.13 in chapter 5, the participant affirmed that he concerned whom his interlocutors were – native or non-native speakers of English – because he would choose different levels of word choice and also formality with the two groups. Later, he admitted that he would construct the same style of writing to any recipients as he avoided making mistakes or errors in the emails. This infers that one communicator can be in different positions in terms of his/her ICA in various communicative events. Similar to Abdzadeh's (2017) study, the Iranian participants aligned with a non-linear development of ICA; a trajectory of awareness could be found fluctuating at different points

throughout the investigation. Moreover, it is in agreement with the investigation of researching Thai students' ICA. In Sangiamchit's (2017) study, it is found that her Thai international students revealed different levels of ICA in their online intercultural communication through the use of ELF. Also, the Thai students in Baker's (2011) study appreciated English cultural practices differently, so they negotiated and mediated fluid cultural references in multiple situations at different levels.

Therefore, the results from this study can be confirmed that the participants have intercultural awareness at different levels when they communicate with their international recipients through (B)ELF. Though some of them mentioned some specific cultures in the data given, they eventually manipulated the email interactions based on the interlocutors' individuality; the ICA existed at any particular level in intercultural communication and functioned as one of the indicators leading to communicative success in ELF interactions.

8.3.3 The use of BELF

Generally, in a Thai society when norms and manners are publicly performed, seniority and hierarchy are greatly significant to be considered and displayed (Kantabutra, 2018). This phenomenon brings into avoidance of showing disagreement with anyone, especially colleagues who are older or hold higher positions as it is perceived inappropriate due to the Thai traits (e.g. Chaidaroon, 2003; Darasawang, Reinders, & Waters, 2015; Sriussadaporn, 2006).

Many studies reveal recent or gradually changing perceptions and/or authentic performance of Thai students and workers when communicating in a business environment (e.g. Boonsuk, 2015; Ploywattanawong & Trakulkasemsuk, 2014; Rajprasit & Hemchua, 2015; Rattanaphumma, 2013; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015). Nevertheless, the informants in those studies reported their perceptions against what had been believed to be proper in relation to the Thai cultural traits mentioned earlier; what were discovered and expressed were more practical in business communication invoking mutual understanding and agreement of successful business communicative interactions. Similar to the participants in this thesis, they demonstrated the ways they coped with communication breakdowns as well as how to prevent such failures through the use of a variety of pragmatic strategies and politeness indicating levels of formality in email communication in BELF. It infers that it seems impractical to keep quiet rather than discuss the problematic points with the interlocutor(s) until the mutual agreement is met when people interact with others in reality and then dispute or disagreement occurs.

Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013) proposed that competent BELF users achieve business communicative success by using business knowledge and shared norms and strategies. Moreover, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2012) suggest three important features in such

communication while the context-based language is only used as a tool to convey messages: simplified English, specialized vocabulary and genre in the field of expertise, and reflection of the interactants' L1 discourse practices.

The participants in this study displayed their awareness and use of simplified English when they foresaw possibilities of mis- or non-understanding to happen as seen in examples 5.11-5.12 in chapter 5, 7.3-7.5 in chapter seven. They adjusted their email messages differently in terms of wording, grammar and levels of formality depending on whom they were contacting in order to individually and satisfactorily best suit their interlocutors' understanding of the messages conveyed as well as their own's when receiving emails from another party no matter such messages were grammatically correct based on an ENL approach or not. For instance, the participant FC 4 in example 6.9 in chapter 6 used the strategy called 'make it normal' (see Firth, 1996) intentionally conveying some ungrammatical point to align what his interlocutor did and not to point out or correct his sender's linguistic errors even though he realized that it was grammatically incorrect.

Besides, particular terms used in higher educational context such as 'panellist', 'credit transfer', 'dean', and 'MoU' were found in the dataset of email exchanges as can be seen in examples 6.2, 6.8, 6.25, and 6.26 respectively in chapter 6 which match with the important element frequently discovered in successful business communication – specialized vocabulary – proposed by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2013), for example. Also, this phenomenon can be explained as a domain-specific factor indicating the importance of expertise in the specific business domain where English is a communicative resource in international business context (Ehrenreich, 2016). That is, these words may or may not be used in other contexts apart from the university atmosphere, but the exact meanings might not be exactly the same as in this particular context. It is not necessary to explain more when they are mentioned by people in higher educational field what the words really are in the communication because all the interactants involved have a common sense of what they specifically are or whom they are talking about in each communicative event while an outsider may have no idea what is being discussed.

For the last feature– reflection of the interactants' mother tongue discourse practices – suggested by the same scholars, it is in line with the concept of multilingualism (see Cogo, 2018; Ehrenreich, 2010; Jenkins, 2015b) indicating that not only English is utilized in international communicative events, but also other languages make sense to the interactants involved in. Examples 6.8 and 6.30 in chapter 6 where the research participants and their email interlocutors used Thai words illustrating respect in a common Thai cultural practices for seniority and social power respectively even though the interlocutors are not Thai and could not converse in Thai.

Explaining in relation to a sociocultural aspect, all the email communicators considered particular words to be used in specific events so as to implicitly display how they did care about their recipients and aim at building rapport between the two parties. Though the words used do not verbatim replace meanings of English words, they made more senses of closeness and solidarity constructing with the communicators' intercultural awareness in the written interactions. This can be described in the same vein as the results in Alsagoff's (2010) study that the language users employed code-mixing and code-switching (see Cogo, 2009; 2010) to purposively reveal sociocultural identities. These are such essential elements found used in a corporate language in business communication unveiling their own social and cultural identities (e.g. Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Nair-Venugopol, 2000). More than that, Ehrenreich (2016) affirms that multilingualism as a lingua franca in a business communication shows the focus on English used across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and it works as a communicative means leading to successful BELF communication.

Supported by the concept of politeness indicating by the persistence of opening-closing address (see Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Hallajian & Khemlani David, 2014; Waldvogel, 2007) and intercultural awareness or ICA (Baker, 2015), the BELF users in this study purposively selected the addresses and thought about ICA bringing into their adjustment of language use as well as the addresses due to their interlocutors' individuality basis as shown in examples above (see 8.2.2 and 8.3.2). In line with Gerritsen and Nickerson (2009), the lack of awareness of cultural differences and individual identities are causes of unsuccessful BELF transactions (see also Trakulkasemsuk, 2015). That is, there is no fixed rules of how to address recipients as well as the ways they conveyed email messages, however, what obviously observed from the dataset are these factors mentioned – the three features found in BELF communication, linguistic and cultural differences, and politeness indicating by levels of formality. Hence, to communicate with different single interlocutor in international business interactions, the participants concerned all these issues and came out with the use of particular strategies, appropriate and also simplified linguistic choice including opening-closing addresses differently to reach communicative success in BELF (see Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011a) with the awareness of different levels of ICA in each circumstance (see Baker, 2011, 2015a, 2018).

8.4 Conclusion

The information in this chapter illustrates what and how pragmatic strategies were utilized by the participants in order to eliminate communicative problems and encourage successful intercultural communication. Furthermore, politeness indicated by different levels of formality in email opening-closing addresses was clarified to have a clearer picture of how to start and end the

interactions differently. In the last part of the chapter, there reveals the participants' perceptions on English as well as intercultural awareness contributing to communicative achievement in BELF email interactions.

It is evident that a variety of pragmatic strategies were employed in BELF email interactions in this study. Although the strategies handling communicative problems discovered are quite similar to those found in spoken ELF studies, a few strategies were uncovered in this written conversation since natures of spoken conversations and written email interactions are different. The strategies 'consulting dictionary or application', 'consulting peer' and 'providing local knowledge and building common ground' are found specifically used in the asynchronized written communication. Besides, the strategies enhancing intercultural communication were found useful in that they helped creating rapport between the interactants, accommodating each other, and building intimacy affecting better relationships and business transactions in the future. Therefore, these types of email language positively evolve in (B)ELF email communication.

In terms of politeness in emails in the aspect of levels of formality, the opening-closing addresses used in emails constitute different levels of formality sub-categorized in politeness mainly based on social factors of power and distance. The data in this study confirmed that opening-closing addresses are significant indicators of levels of formality, but also revealed that there are more levels of formality than had been found in previous studies. The opening-closing addresses were used by the participants to signal the dynamic and evolving nature of the email relationships and also to manage the relationship in the direction of more familiarity which they felt would be beneficial to their negotiation through BELF emails. The politeness in the forms of greetings are used to signal the dynamically evolving nature of a relationship. These fixed expressions acquire certain meanings and significance that evolve through the email exchanges and show varying degrees of sensitivity to others' position and culture.

The last part is the perceptions of English language used and the intercultural awareness. It is observed that one's own perceptions and experiences considerably affect the ways they constructed and interpreted the messages. However, some participants revealed a discrepancy of their language use; what they thought to be performed in the intercultural communication was sometimes different from what they actually practiced. The ENL notion seems to be inherently embedded, whereas their actual use frequently follows ELF. As well as the ICA where they positioned themselves at different levels in various circumstances, once the situation changed, the participants as communicators, also changed their mindset concerning different ICA levels which finally led to the mutual understanding and achieving the communication competently.

Therefore, this suggests that pragmatic strategies and politeness, especially in ELF written business discourse, should be researched further since little attention is paid nowadays and also they altogether encourage achievement in the written communication. In the aspect of (B)ELF, such components mentioned were inevitably created or utilized with the concept of ICA. That is, the strategies manage mutual understanding of the messages on the one hand, and politeness is a key thing signifying rapport of business communication on the other hand. These features combined co-construct success in business interactions through the use of BELF as a social practice.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary of the thesis. Firstly, the research rationale will connect the motivation of conducting this research to the objectives, and it is followed by the research questions. After that, the research methodology and the findings are restated describing how the data were collected and what the results were. The limitation, the contributions and the implications of the study are subsequently discussed before ending with the conclusion of the chapter.

9.2 Research rationale

The motivation for this investigation derived from circumstances in which non-native English speakers in Thailand communicated through English email interaction with interlocutors who have different first languages and cultures from them. The trend for using email in business is steadily increasing (Radicati Group, 2015) and widely spread in the digital age (Tagg, 2015) due to its ease, convenience and cheapness compared to letters or phone calls, especially in intercultural communication (Ren, 2016). Moreover, many features such as pictures, videos and any type of multimodality can be attached to an email and sent at once (Vinagre, 2008). More importantly, an email can be saved and printed so as to be proof of communication between the sender and the receiver(s) without hindrance of time consumption or distance found in the communication through postal letters. Thus, this means of communication is popular, especially in business communication (Ren, 2016a; Shachaf, 2005).

Business emails are commonly used internally and externally by teaching staff as well as administrative workers in educational institutions with various communicative purposes, whereas generally academic emails are expected to be exchanged between lecturers and students. Although sometimes academic and business emails could not be distinctly distinguished as there could possibly overlap, this investigation focuses solely on the emails constructed by the international relations affairs staff dealing with intercultural interlocutors on behalf of the university or the faculties. Therefore, these email exchanges were defined as business emails. The staff work on behalf of the organization in charge of contacting or cooperating with international interlocutors in order to create and/or maintain a relationship between the two parties. Therefore, they are good representatives of communicators using email exchanges in a BELF context. Although the participants are not at executive levels, they are key persons coordinating

with external academic partners and organizations in other countries. That is, they are responsible for university business, so all of such email interactions are required to be clearly understood and successful in communicating in order to facilitate successful business interactions without causing problematic issues to the organization. In addition, the English language used in this investigation is claimed as ELF because the participants' interlocutors are those who have different first languages and cultures and have decided to use English as a tool of communication (Seidlhofer, 2011). It is flexible and hybrid (Baker, 2012; Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017) used among multilingual communicators in this setting. It is opposed to an EFL approach which is based on native norms or so-called 'norm-dependent' (Jenkins, 2015) even though the EFL approach has been promoted in Thailand for decades (e.g. Darasawang, 2007; Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015).

In addition to being successful in business encounters, global communicative competence (GCC), identified as having three significant elements: multicultural competence, BELF competence, and business knowhow, is also required (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). In accordance with this concept, the staff did not only need to know how to conduct their international business through English, but also how to generate shared communicative understanding between the counterparts by using diverse pragmatic strategies (e.g. Cogo 2009; Cogo & Dewey, 2012; Cogo & Pitzl, 2016). Moreover, it is undeniable that individual differences arise from linguistic and cultural backgrounds which bring ICA into their communicative situations (Baker, 2009; 2011). These invoke different ways of creating business emails suitable for each interlocutor in particular situations in order to achieve successful communication.

Even though a great deal of research in ELF focuses on pragmatic strategies (e.g. Cogo, 2009; Deterding, 2013; Mauranen, 2006) and politeness (e.g. B. Batziakas, 2016; V. Batziakas, 2016; Ferenčík, 2012), the previous studies are mostly in spoken discourse. There are limited studies in an ELF written discourse, especially in business email exchanges in a global professional setting (Ren, 2016) in higher education institutes. Hence, this thesis is aimed at exploring how BELF users employ pragmatic strategies including politeness in their written intercultural communication, as well as raising awareness of individual preferences through an ELF perspective to handle their business in email interactions successfully.

9.3 Research questions

In order to fulfil the aforementioned objectives, the research questions were formalized so that an insight into pragmatics and politeness in successful email communication through an ELF perspective could be achieved. The two research questions are as follows:

1. How are pragmatic strategies employed in business English as a lingua franca (BELF) email communication by international affairs staff in a Thai university context?
 - 1A. What are the pragmatic strategies used in the email exchanges to deal with miscommunication and enhance intercultural communication, and why?
 - 1B. How is politeness constructed as an aspect of formality through the lens of opening-closing addresses used in the email exchanges, and why?

2. To what extent does language and intercultural awareness influence the participants' email communication through BELF?
 - 2A. In what way do they adjust their email communication to interlocutors from different linguacultural backgrounds?

9.4 Research methodology

A qualitative approach is employed in this study because it deals with an understanding of naturally occurring phenomenon – email exchanges in business encounters in intercultural communication, to reveal insights into pragmatic strategies and politeness used with a concern of ICA in BELF. Three research instruments were used in collecting data consisting of a corpus of emails, two rounds of semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

The corpus of emails is the authentic business email exchange between the participants and their international interlocutors, considered the main resource of social interactions reflecting natural features of BELF communication in the workplace (Kankaanranta, 2005). The two rounds of interviews conducted with all participants were administered at different times with specific purposes; the first round was to gain data about their English use in everyday life, while the second round was more specific regarding what had been discovered in the corpus of emails and also their opinions supporting performances in the emails. Last, the focus group was conducted after all the other research instruments had been administered with the expectation of gaining more ideas, experience sharing, and understanding of BELF email communication including relevant issues that emerged from the participants. This is to triangulate the data received from all research instruments enhancing confirmability of the investigation.

The fieldwork was conducted in a three-month period with 13 international relations affairs staff: five staff working for the different faculties and eight staff working for the university at the International Affairs Section, in Thailand. Two of them are not Thai: one Filipino and one Cambodian. They all were drawn based on a purposive sampling technique where they shared

experiences of job responsibilities in the same context (Dornyei, 2007; Etikan, et al., 2016). I, as a researcher, placed myself as an outsider not taking part in the data (Robson, 2011) when collecting the corpus of emails and organizing the focus group, whereas I took the role of an insider (Robinson, 2002) when interviewing the individuals with their cooperation and consent. I tried to travel along with them in a metaphorical way sharing my ideas on the topics or situations which both of us were familiar with so as to gather data about their language use on duty as well as personal ideas or attitudes towards multicultural communicative circumstances.

The content analysis was utilized as an analytical approach in order to report the collected data in the forms of textual and oral expressions to the actual use in specific contexts (Cohen et al., 2011; Krippendorff, 2004). All forms of data were stored in NVivo 12 including the transcriptions based on the VOICE transcription conventions. The data was coded, grouped and categorized (Mackey & Gass, 2012; Silverman, 2014) applying both inductive and deductive approaches (Cohen et al., 2011; Schreier, 2012; Weber, 1990).

9.5 Research findings

All of the research questions of this investigation were answered in this section. The first question discovered pragmatic strategies and politeness employed in successful BELF email exchanges, and also an explanation of the features of their use. The second question explored the participants' perceptions of language use and awareness of intercultural communication influencing their email construction and/or adjustment when contacting interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In answering RQ1, there are two core parts to be mentioned: pragmatic strategies and politeness, which were explained more in details in two sub-questions. Due to the nature of BELF that the goal is to accomplish business purposes in particular situations (Ehrenreich, 2009; 2010; Kankaanranta et al., 2015), the participants variously applied the pragmatic strategies and politeness regarding levels of formality, particularly in the opening-closing addresses in their emails to prevent and/or to eliminate problematic issues in email communication.

To begin with RQ 1A specifically in terms of the pragmatic strategies, the findings revealed two main types used in the BELF emails: the strategies dealing with miscommunication and the strategies enhancing intercultural communication. Generally, the participants preferred to solve miscommunication by themselves rather than asking for someone else's assistance of clarification, but if they could not interpret the meanings of the messages, they eventually asked a colleague(s) who they could trust and felt familiar with to provide assistance. This was because

they were concerned about self-esteem and didn't want to lose face (Archer, 2017; Goffman, 1967) to their business partners. However, the strategies that need interlocutors' response to ensure mutual intelligibility were also utilized in cases where the receivers could not handle the issue solely from their side. This type of strategy was generally employed when the participants were sure that the miscommunication could not be resolved without the interlocutor's reaction to the messages previously sent.

Apart from the pragmatic strategies used to avoid miscommunication, it is noted that the strategies enhancing intercultural communication were significantly employed. The participants, as BELF users, were adaptive in particular situations to share mutual repertoires with interlocutors indicating an attempt to be members in the same community of practice (Wenger, 1998). For instance, they applied words or phrases according to either their own or interlocutors' cultural practices displaying certain norms or politeness or aligned with the interlocutors' use of greeting with location and ungrammatical linguistic forms. It is because they purposely imitated the interlocutors' use so as to create commonality and let the interaction flow without causing discomfort to the interlocutors. Therefore, what could be revealed from the findings concerning the pragmatic strategies is the email users' willingness to manifest their effort in negotiating or comprehending meanings of the email substances. Moreover, relationships between the interlocutors could be strengthened through the use of different strategies variously based on the matters encountered and preferences in particular circumstances.

In RQ 1B, in relation to politeness relying on the levels of formality in opening-closing addresses, there are four categories of formality levels in the openings and also four categories in closing addresses found. The three categories: formal, informal and semi-formal were frequently found as of those studies in Biesenbach-Lucas's (2009), Bjørge's (2007), Bou-Franch's (2011), and Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011). In formal and informal categories, the participants indicated that they considered relative power and distance between the interlocutors and themselves to be of high importance. It was common when they first made contact, and the two factors mentioned affected their choices of the addresses leading to the use of formal openings and closings. Later when the distance was considerably reduced, the informal ones were used to show their closer relationship and intimacy. Meanwhile, the semi-formal category was employed with the two ideas altogether; the users wanted to display the awareness of the interlocutors' higher relative power by applying a formal element of the address, but at the same time emphasized familiarity through an informal element of the address in one email. A third distinct category is that of gradually decreasing formality. All the participants emphasized that they intentionally decreased their levels of formality from more to less formal because they were trying to build a closer relationship with

the interactants. This brought about ease of communication where much formality seemed to be abandoned and replaced by intimacy.

In almost all of the email exchanges in this study, the positions and/or relationship they were holding compared to their interlocutors' affected the politeness shown via different levels of formality in the forms of opening-closing addresses in emails. Nevertheless, not only power and distance are to be taken into account when considering what and how the addresses were chosen in order to compose an appropriate business email, but also other aspects such as senders' preferences or styles and recipients' concerns about the necessity of such elements (Whelan, 2000 cited in Bjørge, 2007). Therefore, it is concluded that both the pragmatic strategies and the politeness in emails were selected differently in situations depending on the individual's perceptions of appropriateness.

In answering RQ 2, it is noted that the participants perceived themselves as non-native English language users, and showed two different views in intercultural email interactions: language use and intercultural awareness. Concerning the language use, some of them provided less complicated word choice and sentence structures when communicating with other NNSs, and they felt more relaxed when making linguistic mistakes or errors including when receiving the messages from the recipients whom they perceived to be NNSs in the same place containing such phenomena. Communicating with those NNSs made them feel of uniformity sensing the community of practice (Wenger, 1998; 2009). Although all the participants acknowledged the recipients' national diversity, some participants admitted that they did not adjust the contents in the emails no matter who their recipients were – NSs or NNSs. For the latter group, intelligibility was even more of a focus than grammatical accuracy or specific nationalities of the interlocutors with the aim of creating communication flow so that the goal of the interactions was eventually achieved. Indeed, this finding linked with the concept of BELF competence (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Additionally, the notion of ICA (Baker, 2009; 2011; 2015) was noticeably disclosed in that the participants considered themselves at different levels of ICA in particular situations. The participants were aware of their interlocutors' cultural backgrounds which differed from theirs; however, they conveyed messages in many ways which were not consistently aligned with only the other parties' cultural backgrounds. They also considered other factors such as power, intimacy and the interlocutors' preferred practices. Hence, their ICA happened inconsistently in ELF interactions which is commonly found in intercultural communication (e.g. Baker, 2009; Sangiamchit, 2017).

9.6 Limitations

In this investigation, it is inevitably accepted that limitations exist. Firstly, a small number of participants were involved in this study affecting generalization. Nevertheless, all the participants were purposively selected with salient criteria (Snape & Spencer, 2003) based on a qualitative approach. Therefore, sufficiently relevant and insightful data were provided along with the notion of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) specifying the context of the research. Secondly, the data were collected in the single site of a university in a north-eastern part of Thailand where English use may or may not be the same to other locations. That is, the results may not represent all performances of all staff working on international relations business at other universities all through the country. On the other hand, this investigation may lead to further studies in a similar context, so that the conclusions may have transferability to other studies in the future.

In addition, the privacy of the email interactions is another issue of the limitations. The emails were selected and forwarded to the researcher; the participants selected the email exchanges according to the criteria given (see 4.5.1) along with their willingness to pass on the information. Also, some participants contributed more emails than others due to their duties, frequency of contacting and availability to share the information, so this affected the quantity of emails received – it brought into a small number of email exchanges in the dataset. In addition, the follow-up interviews were conducted with merely the participants whereas their interlocutors were neither involved nor shared their ideas or understanding of what happened and why they decided to create or how they interpreted the emails. Therefore, the results of the study were overwhelmingly focussed on the participants' perceptions of the email interactions as it is difficult to approach their interlocutors asking for their communicative performances through such emails within the limited time of data collection.

Another issue to be concerned about is the short time frame of data collection. Due to the participants' availability, especially those who were teaching staff, it was quite difficult to approach them and obtain their data through all the research instruments. To be more specific, some of them were considerably busy teaching, meeting and constructing projects away from the campus, so they were not available to be met in person or approached in time. Although some staff had agreed to take part in this investigation, they never passed on their emails in this time frame. It was then impossible to collect the data in time, thus the staff in such cases were necessarily omitted from the study.

Lastly, as I am familiar with most of the participants including the setting, the researcher's bias might occur in the process of data interpretation. Therefore, an outsider's perspective was

applied in order to avoid bias and to maintain the trustworthiness of the data interpretation by the collaboration of PhD peers and the thesis supervisor (see 4.8).

9.7 Contributions

The results of the investigation contribute to the increasing trend of ELF research (e.g. Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Jenkins, 2000; Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011) specifically in a Thai setting (e.g. Baker, 2009; Boonsuk, 2015; Huttayavilaiphan, 2019; Ploywattanawong & Trakulkasemsuk, 2014; Rattanaphumma, 2013; Sangiamchit, 2017), as well as in the BELF field (e.g. Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Millot, 2017).

The study supports previous research regarding English used as a contact language in workplace situations where people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds communicated successfully with the application of a variety of pragmatic strategies (e.g. Bartolo, 2014; Cogo & Pitzl, 2016; Kankaanranta, 2006; Kantabutra, 2018; Otsu, 2019; Skovholt et al., 2014; Vettorel, 2018; Zhu, 2017) as well as politeness in terms of opening-closing addresses (e.g. Bou-Franch, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; McKeown & Zhang, 2015; Vettorel, 2018). Moreover, it sheds more light on written discourse communication, particularly in email exchanges (Ren, 2016a; 2016b) on the aspects mentioned. Furthermore, the findings gathered from the international relations affairs staff on such issues have never been researched on the (B)ELF paradigm. Though there are some studies in a Thai context in relation to communication/pragmatic strategies use (e.g. Rattanaphumma, 2013; Sriussadaporn, 2006) and ELF (e.g. Foley, 2005; Suwanarak, 2012; Kongkerd, 2013; Ploywattanawong and Trakulkasemsuk, 2014), the participants of those investigations were either students at universities or business professionals in international companies. Hence, the pragmatic strategies and politeness in successful business email communication on the ELF aspect used by the administrators working at educational institutes were uncovered. Particularly in rural areas, there are limited studies conducted in those settings even though internationalization does not include only big universities in urban areas such as Bangkok and neighborhoods (Baker, 2009). In other words, carrying out this study in the Northeast of Thailand with contextual variants from universities in the capital city may expose different perspectives due to different atmosphere and surroundings. Therefore, the outcome of this study contributes to further research in the field and shares ideas with other researchers with similar interests.

In addition, the participants' perceptions of English use as well as their awareness of intercultural communication were revealed through their lens as they are some of the key persons

encouraging the internationalization of the institute. Even though English used by native speakers has become the model of learning English language in the country (e.g. Darasawang, 2007; Trakulkasemsuk, 2015) this study can confirm that native-like English is not always or not only the most suitable model for learners because the language in authentic use in the context did not conform to the EFL approach, but corresponds closely with the ELF approach of prioritizing intelligibility among communicators. It is clearly observed that native English norms were no longer obligatory to communication success; the achievement of international or intercultural communication was not determined by native English proficiency. No data gained from this study explicitly displayed superiority from various degrees of English exploitation; that is, it could not be concluded that native English conformity predominates other conventions or practices expressed by the communicators.

In accordance with languages and cultures, it is inevitably accepted that national linguistic and cultural references or practices existed in the findings; however, they were applied in unfixed, fluid and hybrid manners because the participants paid more attention to the individuality of their interlocutors beyond the belief or fixed national cultures of people from certain countries. Any particular linguistic and cultural practices were not always attributed or tied to such particular interlocutors from those nations. This is confirmed that BELF users dealing with people from different first languages and cultures are aware of interculturality with the notion of ICA (Baker, 2009; 2011; 2015) encouraging successful intercultural interactions.

That is to say, the findings of this study explicitly contribute a wider understanding of the use of pragmatic strategies and politeness, and also raise awareness of English use including ICA in intercultural business interactions in relation to the (B)ELF approach. Specifically, for administrators working on international affairs business, educational sectors and business stakeholders where English language use in reality is ELF, it is beneficial for them to realize how important these issues are in order to conduct successful business encounters, communicating with the target of mutual understanding with communicators who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

9.8 Implications

The results of this study have provided implications for successful intercultural email communication among BELF users. The study was conducted with the participants who were mainly Thai and some foreigners working for a Thai university, about how they carried out business with various counterparts through email exchanges where English was primarily used as a contact language. Thus, the study has various implications for the importance of pragmatic

strategies, politeness, conceptualization of English use and intercultural awareness through the (B)ELF approach in both pedagogical and business sectors.

To start with English language teaching in Thailand, the national language policy and curriculum should have a wider view of English use, especially in business English in an international context. Standard English based on NSs norm may not be no longer the best or ideal model at present since ELF is more practical in reality to both local and global contexts because its goal of communication is to co-construct mutual intelligibility. The ELF approach should be explicitly promoted as it is the most suitable in the context. ELF should be part of the English language curriculum in courses such as general English and ESP; students will receive efficient English for their communication, especially in intercultural interactions where intelligibility is essential for communicative success. Also, BELF courses relating to pragmatics and politeness should be given much attention as it is necessary in professional communication. Possibly, English assessment dimensions should focus more on proficiency in practice – if language users can negotiate meanings and achieve mutual understanding between interlocutors – rather than on linguistic accuracy (see Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007).

For further studies, more research is being looked forward to since BELF is a trend in English practically used and it has been officially recognized in less than two decades (see Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Moreover, teachers of English should be trained and made aware of (B)ELF so as to have a clear understanding of the concept, so they will be able to further create appropriate teaching materials including teaching practices, and pass on the knowledge into classrooms to suit students' English use in real-life communicative situations (e.g. Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Boonsuk, 2015; Dewey, 2014; Galloway, 2018; Romanowski & Bandura, 2019; Sifakis, Lopriore, Dewey, & Bayyurt, 2018; Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018; Vettorel, 2018). This incorporates multilingualism and intercultural awareness which are inherent in the (B)ELF approach (e.g. Baker, 2009; Cogo, 2018; Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2007, 2018; Kantabutra, 2018; Kirkpatrick, 2014; Lopriore & Grazi, 2016; Pitzl & Ehrenreich, 2015; Smit, 2018). Furthermore, training and workshops on BELF could be valuable for business stakeholders. It is obvious that both internal and external communication in any organization is significantly important for business encounters. All levels of staff should provide their interlocutors with professional and appropriate messages in communication. Interactions in different contexts do matter; language hybridity, fluidity and flexibility should be acknowledged and dealt with, and also pragmatic strategies as well as politeness should be appropriately exploited regarding intercultural awareness and communicators' individuality.

To sum up, this study presents the perspectives of English used as a lingua franca in the context of intercultural business emails by BELF users in Thailand. The implications should be beneficial for pedagogical practices such as reconsidering the native English model in English language teaching and learning in the country. It has implications for activities created by teachers or practitioners both inside and outside classrooms in order to prepare language learners with the knowledge and concepts necessary to develop successful ELF users in the future. In addition, other stakeholders who are possibly involved in BELF should be involved, especially in terms of pragmatic strategies and politeness. Language teachers and administrative staff should participate in activities or training in order to improve communicative strategies and avoid misunderstandings. This should encourage the reconceptualization of English in communication in terms of pragmatics, politeness, linguistic and cultural repertoires where adjustment is necessary with different interlocutors based on one's styles or preferences, to achieve competence in international business communication.

9.9 Conclusion

The overview of this thesis is provided in this chapter. It briefly restates the rationale of the research, followed by the research questions and the methodology demonstrating how the data were collected. Then, the findings are presented in accordance with the research questions. Lastly, the limitations, the contributions and the implications are described.

In conclusion, the thesis had endeavored to examine pragmatics and politeness encouraging successful BELF intercultural communication via email exchanges. It is firmly claimed that in order to get messages across and business done through English email exchanges, language skills themselves cannot guarantee business achievement because there are additional elements involved. The ways to prevent and/or solve communication breakdowns are one of the key things needed in such successful communication. Moreover, how to enable the communication to run smoothly creating a satisfactorily communicative atmosphere is another factor to be considered. It is necessary to raise awareness of BELF competence and intercultural communication where the nature of such events is fluid, dynamic and complex based on the individual's preference. As this study was conducted with (B)ELF email users in Thailand communicating with international interlocutors who had different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, it may lead to further studies of a variety of language use in (B)ELF in general and also of email writing to gain a better understanding of business communicative interactions in an ELF approach. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a better understanding of how (B)ELF email users deal with intercultural

communication through English along with appropriate pragmatic strategies and politeness in use.

Appendix A Information of Data Collected

No	Pseudonym	Interview 1	Emails	Interview 2	Focus group	No. of email exchanges	No. of emails
1	IR 1	/	/	/	/	15	64
2	IR 2	/	/	/	/	20	124
3	IR 3	/	/	/	X	34	481
4	IR 4	/	/	/	X	5	27
5	IR 5	/	/	/	/	19	81
6	IR 6	/	/	/	/	5	16
7	IR 7	/	/	/	/	15	119
8	IR 8	/	/	/	X	2	7
9	FC 1	/	/	/	X	4	11
10	FC 2	/	/	/	/	6	29
11	FC 3	/	/	/	/	19	101
12	FC 4	/	/	/	/	5	33
13	FC 5	/	/	/	/	14	66
total		13	13	13	9	163	1,159

Appendix B Sample of Email Exchange

On 9 January 2017 at 19:41, [S1][S1/last] wrote:

Dear Ajarn [S2]

First of all may I say Happy New Year 2017! I hope you all the best wishes, good health and good luck with everything.

We have been talked to [name3] that they would like to join us workshop then I have an idea for us normally for our workshop have about 40 people from [name2] 20 people and [name1] 20 people.

For workshop 12th still have about 36 people that easy to manage for the bus in Malaysia that I have talked with Ajarn [first name3] before.

I have an idea:

[name2] 13 people

[name1] 13 people

[name3], 10 people

What do you think? And please let me know then I will inform [name3] to confirm the amount.

And also please let me know for the schedule and the date for the 12th workshop and now [name1] in the process of interviewing for our students to join the workshop.

I am looking forward to hearing from you so soon.

Best wishes,
Ajarn [S1/nickname]

From: [S2][S2/last]
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2017 1:46:31 PM
To: [S1][S1/last]
Cc: [first name1][last name1], [first name2][last name2]
Subject: Re: Happy New Year 2017!

Dear Ajarn [S1/nickname]

Hello, Ajarn [S1/nickname] I would like to which you & all members in [name1] Happy New Year. As we planned in the previous edition of the workshop, it is good to expand our collaboration and have new friends from [name3] to join us. For the coming 12th JWUD, I think that ratio should be good enough.

Regarding this matter, we should consider that [name2] will start their **mid-term semester break on 31st March 2017(Friday)-8th April 2017 (Saturday)**. Thus, the local student should be able to join next workshop during that period. So far that is the best period that we can look on.

Best regards,

[S2][S2/last]

Ph.D. in Urban & Regional Planning

Mobile: [thing1]

From: [S1][S1/last]
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 3:09 AM
To: [S2][S2/last]
Subject: Re: Happy New Year 2017!

Dear [S2]

Thank you for the wishes,

for the date of the JWUD that sounds suitable between **31st March 2017(Friday)-8th April 2017 (Saturday)** and if not change I will let's NOUI (Laos) know and trying to book the flight early.

May I have a draft of the schedule that i will be doing some a paperwork please.

I am looking to hearing from you to confirm to date and a draft of the schedule.

Thank you so much,

Best wishes,

Ajarn [S1/nickname]

Dr. [S1][S1/last]
Lecturer

Appendix C Pragmatic Strategies and Politeness

C.1 Categorization of the pragmatic strategies in this study

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Pragmatic Strategies	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies	Self-repetition
		Providing local knowledge and building common
		Let it pass
		Consulting dictionary or application
		Consulting peer
	Self-initiate interlocutor's response needed strategies	Asking for clarification
		Confirmation check
		Direct comment
	Accommodation strategies	Code-switching
		Greeting with location
		Make it normal
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies	Creating solidarity
		Multimodal feature
		Making apology
		Abbreviation
		Non-standard language

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
		Contraction without apostrophe
	Meaning-making punctuations	Content emphasis
		Unfixed interpretation

C.2 Categorization of the politeness in this study

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Politeness: (In)formality	Opening	Formal
		Informal
		Semi-formal
		Formality decreasing
	Closing	Formal
		Informal
		Semi-formal
		Formality decreasing

Appendix D Interview Guides

D.1 Interview guide of the first interview

The first interview is about their educational background, use of English in general, how and whom they use emails with, and also attitudes of using English in ELF perspective including what they think about intercultural communication.

1. What is your major of study?
2. Is English language involved in your job?
3. How long have you been working in this job?
4. How often and with whom do you use English in daily-life communication both in spoken and written languages?
5. How do you find your own English when using it with others, especially those who are foreigners to you?
6. Contacting people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, do you perform differently? Does nationality matter to your performance? If so, how and why?
7. Do you usually use emails contacting people? Who are your interlocutors?
8. Do you think that broken English in email affecting your understanding?
9. When you do not understand or are not sure the intended meanings of the messages received via emails, how do you cope with these situations?
10. When there are misunderstandings occur in email messages, what do you usually do?

D.2 Interview guide of the second interview

In the second interview, the participants were asked about what was happening in their emails; the interpretation would be more clarified. This time the participants explained their attitudes towards the use of English in business email exchanges in terms of pragmatic strategies and politeness, as well as awareness of intercultural communication.

1. Due to the messages in your emails, what did you mean by using this phrase, sentence or symbol? Why did you write this information in the emails?
2. Did you think that your recipient understood your intended meaning by using this phrase, sentence or symbol? Were there any replies following up with non-understanding?
3. You have mentioned that you concern about professional positions and seniority between your recipients and yourself, so can you explain why you used this type of opening and closing addresses in this email?
4. How did you feel when you saw linguistic mistakes or errors in the messages received?
5. How did you feel when your interlocutors addressed you like this?
6. Did you understand this symbol? If not, how did you solve this problem?
7. How did you feel when you saw some words/phrases sent by foreigners in your own language?
8. Did you use some words or sentences in your recipients' languages?
9. How did different levels of formality in emails affect your relationship and work with the interlocutors?
10. Do you think that writing to people from different languages and cultures requires different ways of writing? Why and how?

D.3 Interview guide of the focus group interview

The last research method which is a focus group interview was used to discuss on communication in written BELF, politeness, and intercultural communication.

1. Do you think that using email communication is necessary for your job handling with international affairs?
2. Since almost all of you hold a degree in English, is it important for the staff's qualification?
3. Do you agree that a native-like English conformity is necessary for you to work efficiently?
4. Do you think linguistic errors in emails really matter in communication by international relations affairs staff?
5. Do you concern differences in cultural or linguistic backgrounds when contacting a variety of people in email communication?
6. When talking about politeness in emails, what primarily comes to your mind?
7. How do you create emails concerning politeness in writing to everyone?
8. How do you feel about using other features such as symbols or emoticons in emails?
9. When miscommunication occurred, what did you usually do? How did you solve the problems?
10. What factors or qualifications help you communicate successfully in email exchanges?

Appendix E Coding Scheme of the Study

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Pragmatic Strategies	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies	Self-repetition
		Providing local knowledge and building common
		Let it pass
		Consulting dictionary or application
		Consulting peer
	Self-initiate interlocutor's response needed strategies	Asking for clarification
		Confirmation check
		Direct comment
	Accommodation strategies	Code-switching
		Greeting with location
		Make it normal
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies	Creating solidarity
		Multimodal feature
		Making apology
		Abbreviation
		Non-standard language
		Contraction without apostrophe
	Meaning-making punctuations	Content emphasis
		Unfixed interpretation

Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Politeness: (In)formality	Opening	Formal
		Informal
		Semi-formal
		Formality decreasing
	Closing	Formal
		Informal
		Semi-formal
		Formality decreasing
Language and (inter)cultural awareness	Nativeness	Nativized inclination
		Egalitarian
	Cultural differences	Cultural awareness
		Intercultural awareness

Appendix F Transcription Convention

The transcription used in this study is adapted from the Vienna Oxford International Corpus English (VOICE) Transcription Conventions [2.1]. Some qualifications are omitted since this is aimed at transcribing the collected data verbally and analysing based on the content analysis approach.

Mark-up conventions

1. SPEAKER IDS	
S1: S2:	Speakers are generally numbered in the order they first speak. The speaker ID is given at the beginning of each turn.
2. INTONATION	
<u>Example:</u> S1: that's what my next er slide? does	Words spoken with rising intonation are followed by a question mark "?".
<u>Example:</u> S7: that's point two. absolutely yes	Words spoken with falling intonation are followed by a full stop ".".
3. EMPHASIS	
<u>Example:</u> S7: er internationalization is a very IMPORTANT issue <u>Example:</u> S3: toMORrow we have to work on the presentation already	If a speaker gives a syllable, word or phrase particular prominence, this is written in capital letters.
4. LENGTHENING	
<u>Example:</u> S1: you can run faster but they have much mo:re technique with the ball	Lengthened sounds are marked with a colon ":".
<u>Example:</u> S5: personally that's my opinion the: er::m	Exceptionally long sounds (i.e. approximating 2 seconds or more) are marked with a double colon "::".

5. WORD FRAGMENTS	
<p><u>Example:</u> S6: with a minimum of (.) of participa- S1: mhm S6: -pation from french universities to say we have er (.) a joint doctorate or a joi- joint master</p>	<p>With word fragments, a hyphen marks where a part of the word is missing.</p>
6. NON-ENGLISH SPEECH	
<p><u>Example:</u> S5: <L1de> bei firmen </L1de> or wherever</p>	<p>Utterances in a participant's first language (L1) are put between tags indicating the speaker's L1.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S7: er this is <LNde> die seite? (welche) </LNde> is</p>	<p>Utterances in languages which are neither English nor the speaker's first language are marked LN with the language indicated.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S4: it depends in in in <LQit> roma </LQit></p>	<p>Non-English utterances where it cannot be ascertained whether the language is the speaker's first language or a foreign language are marked LQ with the language indicated.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S2: erm we want to go t- to <LNvi> xx xxx </LNvi> island first of all</p>	<p>Unintelligible utterances in a participant's L1, LN or in an LQ are represented by x's approximating syllable number.</p>
7. ANONYMIZATION	
	<p>A guiding principle of VOICE is sensitivity to the appropriate extent of anonymization. As a general rule, names of people, companies, organizations, institutions, locations, etc. are replaced by aliases and these aliases are put into square brackets []. The aliases are numbered consecutively, starting with 1.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S9: that's one of the things (.) that i (1) just wanted to clear out. (2) [S13]?</p> <p><u>Example:</u></p>	<p>Whenever speakers who are involved in the interaction are addressed or referred to, their names are replaced by their respective speaker IDs.</p> <p>A speaker's first name is represented by the plain speaker ID in square brackets [S1], etc.</p> <p>A speaker's last name is marked [S1/last], etc.</p>

<p>S6: so: (1) ei:ther MYself or mister [S2/last] or even boss (.) should be there every year</p> <p><u>Example:</u> S8: so my name is [S8] [S8/last] from vienna</p>	<p>If a speaker's full name is pronounced, the two tags are combined to [S1] [S1/last], etc.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S2: that division is headed by (1) [first name3] [last name3] (1)</p>	<p>Names of people who are not part of the ongoing interaction are substituted by [first name1], etc. or [last name1], etc. or a combination of both.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S5: erm she is currently head of marketing (and) with the [org2] (1)</p>	<p>Companies and other organizations need to be anonymized as well. Their names are replaced by [org1], etc.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S1: i: i really don't wanna have a: a joint degree e:r with the university of [place12] (.)</p>	<p>Names of places, cities, countries, etc. are anonymized when this is deemed relevant in order to protect the speakers' identities and their environment. They are replaced by [place1], etc.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S8: he get the diplom {diploma} of [name1] university (.) and french university can give him also the diplom {diploma}</p>	<p>Other names or descriptors may be anonymized by [name1], etc., as in e.g. Charles University.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S3: erm i- in the [thing1] is very well explained. so i can pa- er pass you this th- the definitions. S4: <2> aha </2> S4: <3> okay <@> okay </@> </3></p>	<p>Products or other objects may be anonymized by [thing1], etc.</p>
<p>8. UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEECH</p>	
<p><u>Example:</u> S4: we <un> xxx </un> for the supreme (.) three possibilities S1: next yeah</p>	<p>Unintelligible speech is represented by x's approximating syllable number and placed between tags.</p>
<p><u>Example:</u> S7: obviously the the PROCESS will <un> x <ipa> θeɪŋ </ipa> </un> (.) w- w- will (.) will take (.) at least de- decade</p>	<p>If it is possible to make out some of the sounds uttered, a phonetic transcription of the x's is added between tags.</p>

Appendix G Coding Scheme from Research Instruments

G.1 Coding scheme from the first interview

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies dealing with miscommunication (D)	Self-repetition (D)	5.1
		Consulting dictionary or application (I)	5.2-5.3
		Consulting peer (I)	5.3-5.4, 5.6
		Let it pass (D)	5.5
	Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies dealing with miscommunication (D)	Asking for clarification (D)	5.6
		Confirmation check (D)	5.7
		Direct comment (I)	5.8
	Accommodation strategy (D)	Code-switching(D)	5.9
	Multimodal feature (D)	Emoticon (D)	5.10
	(Inter)cultural Awareness (D)	Nativeness (D)	Nativized inclination (D)
Egalitarian (I)			5.13-5.14
Cultural differences (D)		Awareness (D)	5.15-5.17
		Unawareness (D)	5.18
Politeness (D)	Social variables (D)	Power (D)	5.19-5.20
		Distance (D)	5.22-5.23
	Opening-closing addressing (I)	Opening (I)	5.24-5.25
		Closing (I)	5.25

G.2 Coding scheme from the emails and the second interview

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example	
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies (D)	Self-repetition (D)	6.1	
		Providing local knowledge and building common ground (D)	6.2	
		Let it pass (D)	6.3-6.4	
	Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies (D)	Asking for clarification (D)	6.5	
		Confirmation check (D)	6.6	
		Direct comment (I)	6.7	
	Accommodation strategies (D)	Code switching (I)	6.8	
		Make it normal (D)	6.9	
		Greeting with location (I)	6.10	
	Intimacy reinforcement strategies (I)	Creating solidarity (I)	6.11	
		Making an apology (I)	6.12-6.13	
		Multimodal feature (I)	6.14	
		Abbreviation (I)	6.15	
		Non-standard language (I)	6.16	
		Contraction without apostrophe (I)	6.17	
	Meaning-making punctuations (I)	Content emphasis (I)	6.19-6.24	
		Unfixed interpretation (I)	6.25-6.27	
	Politeness: (in)formality (D)	Opening address (I)	Formal (D)	6.28
			Semi-formal (I)	6.29
Formality decreasing (I)			6.30	
Informal (D)			6.31	
Formality unsteady (I)			6.32	
Closing address (I)		Formal (D)	6.33	
		Semi-formal (I)	6.34	
		Formality decreasing (I)	6.35	
		Informal (D)	6.36	
		Formality unsteady (I)	6.37	

G.3 Coding scheme from the focus group interview

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Example
Pragmatic Strategies (D)	Self-initiated self-repaired strategies (D)	Consulting peer (D)	7.1
	Self-initiated interlocutor's response needed strategies (D)	Asking for Clarification (D)	7.1
	Intimacy reinforcement strategy (I)	Emoticon (I)	7.2
	Meaning-making punctuation (I)	Content emphasis (I)	7.2
Language and (inter)cultural awareness (D)	Nativeness	Nativized inclination	7.3
		Egalitarian	7.4
	Cultural differences	Individual cultural awareness	7.5-7.6
		Intercultural awareness	7.5-7.6
Politeness (D)	Polite email element (I)	Opening (D)	7.7-7.8
		Closing (D)	7.7-7.8
		Proper wording (I)	7.7-7.8
	Impolite email element (I)	Emoticon (I)	7.7
		No opening (I)	7.8
		Improper wording (I)	7.8

Appendix H Examples of the Interview Transcripts

H.1 Example of the first interview transcripts

Research: what's your major of study when you studied at a tertiary level

IR 1: English

Research: since you had been studying until now, did you have opportunities to spend time abroad for a while where English is necessary for your living during that time

IR 1: yes

Research: where and how long have you been spending time there

IR 1: I have been spending time in Singapore and in Japan.

Research: how long for Singapore?

IR 1: for 1 week

Research: when was it in Singapore. can you be more specific?

IR 1: it was in 2012

Research: and how about Japan?

IR 1: it's in 2014

Research: it means you have become a worker before you went there, don't you?

IR 1: S: when you say ONLY ENGLISH, I had been working at King Power meeting foreigners all the time; is it the case you are asking for?

Research: ah, yes

IR 1: OH so I can say that I have used English all through my job there. all the time

Research: ah that's all the time?

IR 1: yes yes

Research: well, mostly a spoken or written language?

IR 1: spoken mainly. just 20% of a written language used I think. less opportunities to write.

Research: OK. so, whom did you contact by written communication then

IR 1: I use a written mode to contact organizations such as embassies or institutions like [org1]. yes, I have contacted [org1] recently

Research: here you are saying that what you do when you are an international affairs staff here, right?

IR 1: ye:ah yes. in terms of a written mode, it wasn't made use often. like when I was in Singapore, I contacted [org2]. it's all English, English documents.

Research: so, you mainly coordinate with staff at those organizations or universities?

IR 1: yes yes

Research: do you contact international students, teachers or researchers?

IR 1: ah YES

Research: by using emails? do you normally use email exchanges with them?

IR 1: yeah

Research: how do you feel when you use English with them. have you compared your own English with theirs?

IR 1: in my opinion, I could comprehend what we were dealing, but what I was afraid of when conversing with them is that whether they could understand me or not. if I made use of appropriate word choices, it took much time for me to write an email each time because I was fear of picking wrong words and then they misunderstood or didn't understand me. supposed that I intended to say this and I didn't know which word to be chosen, I would search for it on a dictionary website called [name1]. I use a Thai-English dictionary, and then back translated them by putting the words into [name2] dictionary in order to check its contexts of use. to see if it is appropriate and practical, I generally prefer to do like this.

Research: it seems like you double checked it?

IR 1: yes because I think if I selected any word I wanted to use, it might not be proper somehow. I was really worried about it. I feared of using wrong words in any particular contexts. and then interlocutors interpreted the meanings totally different

Research: OK. to avoid miscommunication?

IR 1: yes. miscommunication is not likely to happen often. there was one situation I can remember. it was emails exchanging with a staff at a university in Japan. the thing was not relating to a grammar issue or English language itself actually. it was about the confusing time I mentioned. I was used to the time saying <L1th> bai 4 mong </L1> when it turned into English, I wrote 14 am or pm which was not commonly used. then my recipient was confused what I really meant.

Research: well, do you differently use English in communication with different interlocutors, such as with native and non-native speakers?

IR 1: no. I have the same standard with everyone because I also fear of making mistakes

Research: alright. let's move onto social factors affecting your communication. supposed that you are contacting with people who have different power when comparing to you, just like when you contact the university president and of course you are an administrative staff, do you need to be more careful or have a special concern about something in particular?

IR 1: yes, certainly

Research: comparing with contacting a student who is of course at a lower position to you in terms of social status

IR 1: in this case, I think I won't perform much differently, but I pay respect to everyone whom I contact though they are just students. I prefer to make it formal. power doesn't mean that much.

Research: how about familiarity? we won't think about social status now, but just closeness. like contacting the one you feel familiar with and deal business with for a while and another interlocutor whom you just know. will your language different?

IR 1: no. I mean I will try to use the same things with everyone still

Research: so you also say that intimacy doesn't matter either apart from power?

S: NO, it doesn't matter how I will communicate

Research: and how about the cultural differences? do you think they affect your consideration when communicate with people from different cultures?

IR 1: it does not affect my ways of communication I can tell

Researcher: if you have to send an email with the same details to many people, will you use the exactly same messages?

IR 1: ye:ah yes

Research: you seem not to concern about these factors at all. well, what if there is something you aren't sure or don't understand in the received messages, how will you cope with that

IR 1: like when they send me emails and I don't understand or can't interpret the meanings?

Research: yes

IR 1: I will keep reading it again and again, and think about what they are trying to say. like what I have said, searching for the proper words in the dictionaries and cross-checking it. if I can solve it by myself, it will be fine. but if it still confusing, I will ask the interlocutors

Research: so, you firstly consult the dictionaries, then your interlocutors will be contacted later if necessary?

IR 1: that's right.

Research: why? why don't you ask him or her as soon as you are confused? why using dictionaries first?

IR 1: it might be because it is my characteristics I think. I don't want to disturb people, so it will happen just in cases that I can't resolve it after trying many ways by myself.

Research: do you have cases that you needed to reply back asking for clarification via emails?

IR 1: not many. mostly it is because I misunderstood it. when I replied them, they stated like "no, I mean...". this is what I have encountered in the past.

Research: alright, thank you so much.

H.2 Example of the second interview transcripts

Researcher: the first email exchange. whom did you communicate with

FC 4: a student

Researcher: have you met him or contacting via emails before this exchange?

FC 4: no

Researcher: what is his nationality

FC 4: Indonesian

Researcher: did you know at the beginning that he was a student

FC 4: yes

Researcher: he greeted you with this phrase. did you know what it mean or how did you feel when you firstly saw it

FC 4: this one? I personally understood the context. he is a student and when he expressed his written utterances, they just represented how he really was. I didn't care much about this point

Researcher: it is seen that there is the use of 'i' many times here. did you feel like it should not be used this way or something

FC 4: well, it's not that bad, but yes I NOTICED it – many 'i's were chosen in his emails rather to be 'I's. however, it was not that important to ask why he used it that way

Researcher: did it affect your reply or what he was asking for?

FC 4: NO. moreover, he is still a student who may not be cautious about how to write correctly. actually I didn't feel offended by his way of using the small 'i' or even his incorrect forms of contraction. they were just normal and acceptable for me. rather, I sometimes intentionally used the small 'i' as same as he did because I hoped it might lead to his comfortable feeling like what he expressed was commonplace, and I also used it the same way. I hope it was meaningful and he would be happy communicating with me without grammatically linguistic worry

Researcher: over here why did you say 'Hi'

FC 4: same reason. because he is a student. Generally when I had a conversation with any student, I tried not to indicate differences in terms of social positions

Researcher: seems like you encouraged intimacy?

FC 4: YES. that's right

Researcher: OK. next, he called you 'Mr.' here quite often. are there any other students calling you this way via emails?

FC 4: no. only him

Researcher: or it relates to cultural issues?

FC 4: could be. when Indonesians students saw me at the faculty no matter they were male or female, they called me 'mister'. It's like they didn't know or remember what my name was at the moment, so they kept calling me that way which might be the exact way they do in their own culture

Researcher: and you were OK with that?

FC 4: oh yes, why not? I didn't pay much attention to: I cared about quickness and comprehensibility what the sender wanted from me or what I wanted from him. I headed to the body of the message immediately seeing the content

Researcher: OK. the next one

FC 4: it's a university coordinator in Japan. we both have an MOU to exchange cooperation

Researcher: have met before?

FC 4: yes. he had come here visiting my faculty

Researcher: did he understand Thai?

FC 4: just a few. On the day we met and had a chance to talk, he told me that he had come here long time ago about 7-8 years ago. but occasionally came here

Researcher: he addressed you by 'Dear Aj.[S1] and Aj.[name1]'. is it because he also orally called you 'Ajarn [S1]' when meeting?

FC 4: oh YES

Researcher: did he know what 'Ajarn' mean?

FC 4: yes. he had visited Thailand and learnt this word

Researcher: and when you met him in person how did you call him?

FC 4: I called him '[S2]'

Researcher: there is a greeting like this. apart from this on, have you seen it sent by other interlocutors before? Do you think it is necessary to greet the same way in return. or even when you addressed other interlocutors did you use this kind of addresses?

FC 4: no. I would just say 'hi' because I didn't. for example, 'from Thailand'. I think they have already known where I came from

Researcher: how about this? you closed the email with only your name here. when you met him in person how did you call yourself

FC 4: P: for face-to-face interaction, I have an English name

Researcher: OH? you didn't use this name?

FC 4: NO. I would be called [S1/pseudonym]

Researcher: but why then you signed off here with?

FC 4: it's because before I contacted [S2], [name1] introduced me to him as [S1/nickname]. When we eventually met, I told him that I had an English name which is [S1/pseudonym] to be easier to pronounce. Generally when I met foreigners, I never used my real nickname but always [S1/pseudonym]. But I think for this guy, he might get used to call me with my nickname as being introduced at the beginning. However, I always said [S1/pseudonym] when referring to myself in our oral conversations

Researcher: was he confused somehow?

FC 4: NO. he could distinguish between spoken and written languages

Researcher: well, how about this email exchange? whom did you contact

FC 4: a student from Brunei. He wanted to enrol in the courses provided by my faculty

Researcher: haven't met before this emails?

FC 4: no NEVER. this was the first time

Researcher: referring to the following messages, you mostly used lower-case letters, but what happened to this sentence. why all upper-case letters were used here

FC 4: I intentionally highlighted that phrase because I needed his attention on the content. He was in between to choose my or another faculty. I was trying hard to explain the information from my side and finally I asked him to inform me as soon as possible. trying to say grab his attention and needed his quickest reply. if I used common lower-case letters as same as the rest of the message, it wouldn't sound significantly important what I was doing or explaining and waiting for the answer. thus, I thought the upper-case letters were needed here and also the exclamation mark

Researcher: is this implying some hidden intention? normally people used it only one mark at once, but here there are more. very important?

FC 4: oh YE:S. see, not only the capital letters but also the exclamation marks. I was indicating that he had to reply me as quick as possible. if you see this interaction as a business deal, we shouldn't let him choose another option

Researcher: alright. well, here you addressed him with 'Dear'. is it because you haven't known him?

FC 4: yes. I didn't know him

Researcher: but then he replied you with this opening address while you both haven't known each other. were you OK with that?

FC 4: I was fine as I said he is only a student. you know, sometimes some students didn't even use 'hello', but nothing. I remembered

Researcher: NO opening addresses AT ALL?

FC 4: NO. they suddenly opened the messages with their enquiry, but anyway I wasn't annoyed or irritated

Researcher: it reflected how you replied him on the same date? You employed NO OPENING ADDRESS over here?

FC 4: right. no greeting. it seemed like a written conversation in the same thread. I thought that I had sent him information in the previous email, so when he sent me a short message. Length of sentences is meaningful for me in terms of formality. if the sentences are short. like these. I feel like the writers tend to put less formality into the messages.

Researcher: do you mean that you feel less important?

FC 4: ye:s. I feel so. I do care about the quantity of messages conveyed

Researcher: reflecting this email?

FC 4: yes I interpreted the intention that way. he might not want to make in formal. besides, making it short was precise. no need to greet or address recipients often. yes about to do like this

Researcher: well, that he is a student have less social power than you. what if he had more or equal power such as being a dean at another faculty or university and replied you like this. will you reply him without opening address as what you had done with the student?

FC 4: OH NO no no. better to see who my interlocutor is. But for a short message I still feel the same. I understood the meaning of the message, but you know how I felt? I wrote a lot, while the reply was just so short. It's all about my emotional feeling less important. However, it's not necessary to react exactly the same, like he responded me this way then I had to do the same decreasing formality. no. just the feeling of being slighted, why weren't I treated better than this

Researcher: why did you put an exclamation mark at the end of the sentence "You are welcome!"

FC 4: because I wanted my recipients, new coming students, to see that I was really glad to have them here – to show my feeling which I couldn't express orally through the email interaction

Researcher: OK, and this? three asterisks at once, why?

FC 4: well, they were to indicate importance of the information given. I made it triple as it was MUCH MORE IMPORTANT than those with only one asterisk

Researcher: and how do you feel that there is a closing address in the beginning of the exchange, but none was found anymore when more emails were exchanged

FC 4: it's like we just started the written conversation, so we included the closing addresses. later, if you can see them, they are quick replies. LOOK almost all of them happened on the same day, and also the messages are short and concise in each email

Researcher: but you finally made use of the closing address in your last email

FC 4: YES, it's because I think I sorted out the problem and knew how to deal with it. it's like a signal implying that it's not necessary to exchange more emails

Researcher: were you fine receiving the emails from the student without closing addresses?

FC 4: at first glance, I was a bit surprised. but well as I said they were just the quick responses as if they were face-to-face interactions where opening-closing addresses were not crucial. more than that, he is a student; I don't care much about these email elements from him

Researcher: this one? who is this?

FC 4: a coordinator of the seminar on measurements of certified international curriculum in Hong Kong

Researcher: have you known her?

FC 4: NO

Researcher: but you know her first name and last name?

FC 4: I searched for it on the website and found it at the contact address, so I just copied the information there and pasted here

Researcher: what did you mean by this sentence

FC 4: well, I just wanted to greeted her as she was an event organizer that we were about to join. if we think about power, she has more. I was trying to express my greeting sentence. thought that I wanted to say 'how are you', but what we have learnt since we were young is that we'd better to say 'how do you do'. It sounded more formal I could feel but not so sure

Researcher: it can be infer that you focused more on power because you have never use this with students?

FC 4: absolutely yes. I won't say it to students

Researcher: OK. this one. who is your email interactant?

FC 4: a coordinator at a university in Brunei, he works in international relation affairs

Researcher: have you met or known him?

FC 4: YES. we met, and hung out together. his wife is also Thai, too

Researcher: and using 'sir' here. did u use it on purpose?

FC 4: well, I didn't really know; I just changed his title because of my mood at that moment without any serious intention. it can be anything I want to; I have no standards for this recipient. but it happened only with whom I have very close relationships

H.3 Example of the focus group interview transcripts

Researcher: do you think that using email communication is necessary for your job handling with international affairs?

IR 6: how often do you use emails, [S1/nickname]

IR 1: yes, so often. I handle with international interlocutors via email communication.

IR 2: for?

IR 1: to communicate with other universities abroad. it's fast and so convenient, besides that, it's safe. what I prefer the most is safety and privacy. chances to lose the data or messages conveyed along the interactions are much less

IR 6: for me, I sometimes email since most of the time I make phone calls. I basically contact foreign colleagues within the university, so it's easier to get connected this way or maybe just meet them at their faculties having face-to-face conversations. thus, emails are occasionally used, but not every day

IR 7: for international students, whenever I give them any information email interactions are more convenient

IR 2: yes more convenient. since we don't need to provide documents via post. many attached files can be sent at a time

IR 5: I think email is good for transferring data. like when we send data through applications such as Facebook or Line, the capacity of those applications is not as much as of in email. more than that, some files sent may be possibly lost on the way from senders to receivers, while more files and sizes can be attached through email and they can be kept even permanently

Researcher: since almost all of you hold a degree in English, is it important or necessary?

IR 1, IR 2 and IR 7: NO

IR 2: but not many applied for the positions

IR 1: people think that whoever works as IR staff needs to be fluent in English

Researcher: do you agree that a native-like English conformity is necessary in your job? or is a grammatically correct English necessary?

IR 1, IR 2, IR 5, IR 6 and IR 7: NO. not necessary

IR 2: at the present time, I think it's not necessary. we just

IR 6: comprehensible

IR 2: want to communicate successfully. that's all. as we don't converse with only native English speakers.
just keep using it in our own ways.

IR 1, IR 6 and IR 7: YES YES

IR 7: if it needs to be very formal, like to send emails to embassies, there is

IR 2: fixed templates

IR 1: YES. there are forms

IR 2: with fixed wording to be used

IR 1: there are patterns

IR 5: we have standard forms of documents to be employed or adapted in our international relations
business

Researcher: whenever you receive an English email from any senders with ungrammatical points, do you
feel anything?

IR 6: for me, NO

IR 5: no

IR 7: NO because even I myself can't make it 100% correct either

IR 2: I can feel something, but just ignore it

IR 6: RIGHT. Just overlook at any mistakes or errors; as long as we are able to comprehend the whole
contents, it's just fine

IR 2: just grab the overview

Researcher: are cultural differences the thing you need to specifically concern?

IR 5: kind of. don't wanna say that they are different among people from different continents. it's because
the differences occur everywhere. NOT ONLY email interactions between Thais and I, but also
between Cambodians and I

IR 2: the email interactions are normally formal – we try to use neutral style and wording

Researcher: have you encountered any difficulties when contacting people from different areas or even
different people?

IR 6: YES I have

IR 5: but I think it depends on how often we communicate with our interlocutors. we will more familiarize
ourselves with the ones we contact more frequently. just like in my case, when I emailed my

supervisor or anyone often, I used a quite informal style though they were not the same nationality as I am. on the other hand, I prefer formal communication with ones whom I don't know well even they are Cambodian as I am

IR 2: there are spaces between us

IR 1: more formal

IR 6: I feel more comfortable contacting native speakers – it's easier to understand rather than communicating with Asian people

Researcher: why is that?

IR 6: the language native speakers use is much easier. it may be because. it is like what we have learned, so it sounds more familiar to me

Researcher: what do you mean by easier communication with non-native English speakers?

IR 2: it is a wide range of pronunciations, sometimes

IR 6: YES

IR 1: it's difficult to catch the words

IR 2: better to interact via emails. too hard to converse orally. prefer receiving emails

Researcher: do you think that having an understanding of a variety of use regarding linguistic and cultural knowledge is a qualification for anyone who wants to work as an IR staff?

IR 2: if possible, to realize it before applying for this job is better

IR 1: yes I think it's a good idea

IR 2: but actually it can be learnt while working. it's not necessary, no experience is needed. if we don't allow non-experienced to work on it, how can they gain experiences from authentic situations. It's all about learning. when you don't understand oral communication, solve it by changing a means of communication to emails, for example. Just learn how to handle on-the-job difficulties

Researcher: when talking about politeness in emails, what primarily comes to your mind?

IR 1: politeness?

IR 6: wording?

IR 1: wording

IR 2: closings

IR 6: yeah closings

IR 1: both closings and openings

IR 5: yes closings

IR 2: elements like what is seen in a letter – how to greet, something like that. but I found emails impolite when there were no openings or introduction; directly started what they wanted from us as recipients

IR 1: YES YES, no introduction

IR 7: I have experienced many cases sent from students

IR 2: they sometimes used the words which should be used by whoever knew each other quite well, but we were not in such cases; we hadn't even contacted each other before

IR 6: oh RIGHT

Researcher: who were your interlocutors in the case you have just mentioned?

IR 2: mostly, they were coordinators working on their marketing sending me emails

Appendix I Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Pragmatics and Politeness in Email Communication by BELF Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting

Researcher: Raenumart Kotarputh

ERGO number: 30346

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research project is requirement of the PhD programme in applied linguistics at the University of Southampton, UK where I am a current student. It is also sponsored by Mahasarakham University in Thailand where I work for.

This research aims to understand how users of (B)ELF in a Thai context make use of pragmatic strategies and politeness in terms of formality in email exchanges in business/administrative transactions with other English language users who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Discovering their pragmatic strategies and politeness in authentic conveyed email exchanges is beneficial since both successful and unsuccessful email communication will help to raise an awareness of not only linguistic knowledge but also multilingual and multicultural differences in a formal written form of communication in a higher education context for users of English in business encounters with intercultural interlocutors.

Why have I been asked to participate?

The potential participants of this study are those who use English emails in their daily life communicating with people from different backgrounds of languages and cultures in academic environment with business perspectives.

The International Relations Affairs administrative staff at a Thai university are responsible for international collaboration and communication. It is crucial for them to successfully communicate with partner organizations because their messages represent the university collaboration, not their personal issues.

Therefore, your use of English in email exchanges and your attitudes of using it will reveal wider understanding of BELF in written CMC.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will personally approach you and explain the significance of my study with your participation after I receive the ethical approval from the University of Southampton. After that, I myself will give you a consent form and details of research procedures by myself in order that you have some questions before deciding to participate in this study.

Receiving the consent forms from you, I will interview you individually approximately 30 minutes about your use of English in general, how and whom you use email with, and attitudes of using English.

You will be then asked for your email exchanges contacting people who have different language and cultural backgrounds. This corpus of authentic emails will be analysed based on the selected theories in the literature review.

Again, you will be interviewed within 30 minutes about how you use English in your emails and awareness of intercultural communication including interpretations of your email exchanges.

A focus-group interview will be conducted within 45 minutes in order to elicit similar and different ideas from you and your colleagues in the office on communication in email exchanges, interpretations, pragmatic strategies and awareness of intercultural communication. Every interview will be audio-recorded with your permission.

Finally, the discussion and the conclusion will be drawn based on the evidence found and the data collected by me.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

There may be no benefit to the individual, but a benefit to others perhaps, or in respect of adding to current knowledge on pragmatic strategies in email exchanges in business/administrative transactions by users of ELF in a Thai higher education context.

Are there any risks involved?

You may feel uncomfortable to share your personal information with me as the researcher, however, there are not any sensitive or difficult questions in the interviews.

There are risks to both the researcher and participants in one to one interviews. Therefore, all interviews will be conducted either in public places (e.g. at the University) or via Skype.

Will my participation be confidential?

There may be confidential information in some of the emails. All participants and institutions will be anonymised before being presented to anyone outside of those directly involved in this project. Furthermore, participants will be allowed to edit any emails that they feel containing sensitive information.

All the information recorded will be strictly kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act/University policy. Accessing the data in the protected computer or laptop needs the password to ensure that they will remain confidential.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part in this study, please fill in the consent form and return it to me.

What happens if I change my mind?

During participating in this project, you are allowed to ask me any questions at any time. You have the rights to withdraw with any reasons at any stages during the period of this study.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be written up as a final product of a PhD programme requirement. The anonymised research data will be made available for future research projects due to the University of Southampton policy that the data will be a minimum of 10 years for staff and postgraduate research students. Publications and anonymised data relating to the research should be made available through the institutional repository.

Where can I get more information?

You can contact me for more details at this email address: rk2u16@soton.ac.uk.

What happens if something goes wrong?

You can contact the Research Integrity and Governance Manager at 023 8059 5058 or rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research. I really appreciate your kind participation.

Appendix J Consent Form

Study title: Pragmatics and Politeness in Email Communication by BELF Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting

Researcher name: Raenumart Kotarputh

ERGO number: 30346

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (<i>insert date /version no. of participant information sheet</i>) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my rights being affected.	

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Name of researcher (print name).....

Signature of researcher

Date.....

Appendix K Risk Assessment Form

ETHICS IN RESEARCH RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Faculty of Humanities

To be completed in accordance with the attached guidelines

This is not a Health and Safety Risk Assessment. If your project also involves Health and Safety Risks you will also need to complete a Health and Safety Risk Assessment form. Contact your supervisor for more information about this.

Activity:

As a requirement of a PhD programme in the University of Southampton, I am working on the research project entitled 'Pragmatics and Politeness in Email Communication by BELF Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting'.

This study aims to understand how users of BELF in a Thai context (staff working on the international relations affairs) make use of pragmatic strategies in email exchanges in business/administrative transaction with other English language users who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and to raise an awareness of linguistic knowledge, multilingual and multicultural differences in a formal written form of communication in a higher education context for users of English in business encounters.

Locations:

The corpus of emails will be asked online via email, and the interviews will be conducted at the university in Thailand.

Potential risks:

The participants may feel uncomfortable to share their personal information with the researcher, however, there are not any sensitive or difficult questions in the interviews.

There may be confidential information in some of the emails. All participants and institutions will be anonymised before being presented to anyone outside of those directly involved in this project. Furthermore, participants will be allowed to edit any emails that they feel contain sensitive information.

There are risks to both the researcher and participants in one to one interviews. Therefore, all interviews will be conducted either in public places (e.g. at the University) or via Skype.

Who might be exposed/affected?

The participants and the researcher

How will these risks be minimised?

I will inform them their rights to ask the researcher questions while I am explaining them the details of the project and they are able to withdraw with any reasons at any stages during the period of this study.

Moreover, I will provide them the Ethical Committee Approval from the university to ensure that it is necessary to keep their data confidentially.

Risk evaluation:

Low / Medium / High

Can the risk be further reduced?

Yes / No

Further controls required:

Date by which further controls will be implemented:

Are the controls satisfactory: **Yes / No**

Date for reassessment:

Completed by:	Raenumart	Raenumart	05/09/17
	Kotarputh	Kotarputh	
	_____	_____	_____
	Name	signature	Date
Supervisor/manager:	Will Baker	Will Baker	06/09/17
If applicable	_____	_____	_____
	Name	signature	date
Reviewed by:	_____	_____	_____
	Name	signature	date

Appendix L Student Research Project Ethics Checklist

Ethics application form - Humanities

All mandatory fields are marked (M*). Applications without mandatory fields completed are likely to be rejected by reviewers. Other fields are marked “if applicable”. Help text is provided, where appropriate, in italics after each question.

1. APPLICANT DETAILS

1.1 (M*) Applicant name:	Raenumart Kotarputh
1.2 Supervisor (if applicable):	Dr Will Baker
1.3 Other researchers/collaborators (if applicable): <i>Name, address, email, telephone</i>	

2. STUDY DETAILS

2.1 (M*) Title of study:	Pragmatics and Politeness in Email Communication by BELF Users in a Thai Higher Education Setting
2.2 (M*) Type of study (<i>e.g. Undergraduate, Doctorate, Masters, Staff</i>):	Doctorate
2.3 i) (M*) Proposed start date:	September 2016
2.3 ii) (M*) Proposed end date:	January 2020

(M*) What are the aims and objectives of this study?
This study aims to understand how users of ELF in a Thai context (staff at the international relations office) make use of pragmatic strategies in email exchanges in business/administrative transaction with other English language users who have

different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and to raise an awareness of linguistic knowledge, multilingual and multicultural differences in a formal written form of communication in a higher education context for users of English in business encounters.

(M*) Background to study (*a brief rationale for conducting the study*):

Email communication is important now. It is one of the forms of text-based Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (Santoro 1995; Vinagre 2008; Ren 2016) which is considered as a proof of communication, especially in a formal communication. It is used both in academic and business contexts (e.g. Chen 2001; Wei-Kong Ko et al. 2015; Bulut & Rabab'ah 2007; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Holtbrügge et al. 2013; Ly 2016).

My focus is on email exchanges by administrative staff at a Thai university who work under pressure, therefore appropriate pragmatic strategies in communication mean so much to them. They might employ BELF in their communication, so they will be good representatives of communicators using email exchanges in BELF aspect.

(M*) Key research question (*Specify hypothesis if applicable*):

What are pragmatic strategies used by Thai ELF administrative staff in email communication with foreigners?

What are reasons for choosing those strategies in email exchanges in different settings?

Are they aware of pragmatic strategies in their written language interaction - email exchanges? If so, how?

2.7 (M*) Study design (*Give a brief outline of basic study design*)

Outline what approach is being used, why certain methods have been chosen.

This study is based on a qualitative approach to manifest how pragmatic strategies are used in a written CMC in an ELF perspective by Thai administrators, and the results might reveal intercultural communication between the Thais and their interlocutors who have different language and cultural backgrounds. The corpus of emails, semi-structured interview and focus-group interview are this research tools.

3. SAMPLE AND SETTING

3.1 (M*) How are participants to be *approached*? Give details of what you will do if recruitment is insufficient. If participants will be accessed through a third party (e.g. children accessed via a school) state if you have permission to contact them and **upload any letters of agreement to your submission in ERGO.**

With the ethical approval from the University of Southampton, the researcher will contact the potential participants via email informing what the researcher is doing and asking for their voluntariness to participate in the study. In case of insufficient data, more International Relations staff at other universities in the same region of the country will be asked to participate in this study.

3.2 (M*) Who are the proposed sample and where are they from (e.g. fellow students, club members)? List inclusion/exclusion criteria if applicable. NB The University does not condone the use of 'blanket emails' for contacting potential participants (i.e. fellow staff and/or students).

It is usually advised to ensure groups of students/staff have given prior permission to be contacted in this way, or to use of a third party to pass on these requests. This is because there is a potential to take advantage of the access to 'group emails' and the relationship with colleagues and subordinates; we therefore generally do not support this method of approach.

If this is the only way to access a chosen cohort, a reasonable compromise is to obtain explicit approval from the Faculty Ethics Committee (FEC) and also from a senior member of the Faculty in case of complaint.

*NB. If work with children within the UK is planned, the researcher MUST obtain a **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check** (formerly Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check). If work with children overseas is planned, clearance in line with national guidelines must be obtained.*

The participants will be eight university staff at International Relations Office(s) in the northeast of Thailand.

3.3 (M*) Describe the relationship between researcher and sample (*Describe any relationship e.g. teacher, friend, boss, clinician, etc.*)

colleagues

3.4 (M*) Describe how you will ensure that fully informed consent is being given: (*Include how long participants have to decide whether to take part and how – if necessary – you will obtain the consent of participant’s parents or guardians. If there is any reason to believe participants may not be able to give full informed consent, what steps do you propose to take to safeguard their interests?*)

I will personally approach the staff and explain the significance of my study with their participation after I receive the ethical approval from the university of Southampton. After that, I myself will give them a consent form and details of research procedures by myself in order that they have some questions before deciding to participate in this study.

4. RESEARCH PROCEDURES, INTERVENTIONS AND MEASUREMENTS

4.1 (M*) Give a brief account of the procedure as experienced by the participant

*(Make clear who does what, how many times and in what order. Make clear the role of all assistants and collaborators. Make clear total demands made on participants, including time and travel). **Upload any copies of questionnaires and interview schedules to your submission in ERGO.***

Receiving the consent forms from the participants, the researcher will interview them individually about their use of English in general, how and whom they use email with, and attitudes of using English.

They will be then asked for their email exchanges contacting people who have different language and cultural backgrounds. This corpus of authentic emails will be analysed based on the selected theories in the literature review.

Again, the participants will be interviewed about how they use English in their emails and awareness of intercultural communication including interpretations of their email exchanges.

A focus-group interview will be conducted in order to elicit their similar and different ideas among the group of participants on communication in email exchanges, interpretations, pragmatic strategies and awareness of intercultural communication.

Finally, the discussion and the conclusion will be drawn based on the evidence found and the data collected.

5. STUDY MANAGEMENT

5.1 (M*) Detail any psychological or physical discomfort or distress and/or any other adverse effects that the participants may experience arising from the study.

Since the questions in the interviews will not be particularly personal or difficult, the participants will not feel discomfort or distress. However, they have the rights to withdraw any time when they feel not to participate in the study.

5.2 (M*) Explain how you intend to alleviate any such discomfort, distress or adverse effects that may arise? (if applicable)

I will inform them their rights to ask the researcher questions and to withdraw with any reasons at any stages during the period of this study, but I will try to explain how important their data are to my study as well as the significance of the study, and to emphasize why I need these kinds of information.

5.3 Explain how you will care for any participants in ‘special groups’ (i.e. those in a dependent relationship, vulnerable or lacking in mental capacity) (if applicable)?

-

5.4 Please give details of any payments or incentives being used to recruit participants (if applicable)?

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5.5 i) How will participant anonymity and/or data anonymity be maintained (if applicable)?

Two definitions of anonymity exist:

i) Unlinked anonymity - Complete anonymity can only be promised if questionnaires or other requests for information are not targeted to, or received from, individuals using their name or address or any other identifiable characteristics. For example if questionnaires are sent out with no possible identifiers when returned, or if they are picked up by respondents in a public place, then anonymity can be claimed. Research methods using interviews cannot usually claim anonymity – unless using telephone interviews when participants dial in.

ii) Linked anonymity - Using this method, complete anonymity cannot be promised because participants can be identified; their data may be coded so that participants are not identified by researchers, but the information provided to participants should indicate that they could be linked to their data.

Linked anonymity is used in this study since there are interviews and a corpus of emails from the participants considered the data collected.

5.5 ii) How will participant confidentiality be maintained (if applicable)?

Confidentiality is defined as the non-disclosure of research information except to another authorised person. Confidential information can be shared with those who are already party to it, and may also be disclosed where the person providing the information provides explicit consent.

All participants will be anonymised in presentations of the data and the institution that they work for.

5.6 (M*) How will personal data and study results be stored securely during and after the study? *Researchers should be aware of, and compliant with, the Data Protection policy of the University. You must be able to demonstrate this in respect of handling, storage and retention of data.*

All the data will be kept by the researcher in her laptop and the online storage with a specific security password. Personal information will not be given out.

5.7 (M*) Who will have access to these data?

The persons who can see the data and results are the researcher and the supervisor.

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