POLITENESS AND REQUEST STRATEGIES IN LIBYAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' E-MAILS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed primarily to explore the politeness phenomenon in e-mail requests written by international Post Graduate students from Libya as a means of communicating with their lecturers in four selected Malaysian universities; namely Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and University of Malaya. The data consisted of 109 e-mails written to their lecturers by 20 Libyan PG students who were studying in Malaysia. To fulfill the objectives of this study, the e-mails were analysed by adopting politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) which acted as the main framework for identifying the politeness strategies. Additionally, Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework, known as Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) was used to identify the directness level of request head acts. The internal/external modifications that were evident in the e-mails were also analysed by using the CCSARP framework. The research method and design used in this study was essentially qualitative approach. The findings of the current study revealed that the Libyan PG students applied mostly negative politeness sub-strategies more than the other politeness sub-strategies. Direct strategies also appeared more frequently than conventionally indirect strategies. These students in Malaysian universities were seen to resort to external modifications in greater frequency possibly to minimize the force of their request imposition. The most used internal modification was the politeness marker 'please'. This study argues that e-mails which lacked internal modifications, and featuring a high level of directness, displayed a fundamental inadequacy in the use of politeness strategies, thus creating potentially a higher chance of pragmatic failure

ABSTRAK

Secara khususnya, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji fenomena kesopanan dalam permintaan-permintaan e-mel yang ditulis oleh pelajar-pelajar pascasiswazah dari Libya sebagai medium komunikasi bersama para pensyarah mereka dalam 4 universiti Malaysia yang terpilih, iaitu Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia dan Universiti Malaya. Maklumat-maklumat terdiri daripada 109 e-mel yang ditulis oleh 20 orang pelajar pascasiswazah yang mengikuti pengajian di Malaysia kepada pensyarah-pensyarah mereka. Untuk mencapai objektif-objektif kajian ini, semua e-emel tersebut telah dianalisis menggunakan teori kesopanan Brown dan Levinson (1987) yang berperanan sebagai kerangka utama untuk mengenalpasti strategi-strategi. Selain itu, kerangka Economidou-Kogetsifis (2011), yang dikenali sebagai "Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP)" telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti tahap keterusan permintaan. Modifikasi-modifikasi dalaman dan luaran yang lahiriah dalam e-mel-e-mel itu telah dianalisis menggunakaan kerangka CCSARP tersebut. Kaedah dan bentuk kajian ini secara amnya menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Dapatan-dapatan kajian dalam kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar pascasiswazah dari Libya kebanyakannya menggunakan strategi-strategi kesopanan positif berbanding strategi-strategi kesopanan yang lain. Strategi-strategi langsung juga lebih kerap dilihat berbanding strategi-strategi tidak langsung yang konvensional. Pelajar-pelajar tersebut dilihat telah menggunakan modifikasi-modifikasi luaran secara lebih kerap, dan semua ini berkemungkinan besar bertujuan untuk melembutkan permintaan mereka. Modifikasi-modifikasi dalaman yang paling sering digunakan merupakan tanda kesopanan 'tolong'. Kajian ini menghujahkan bahawa e-mel-e-mel yang kekurangan modifikasi-modifikasi dalaman, dan mengandungi tahap kelangsungan yang tinggi, merupakan bukti tindakan kepala, memaparkan kekurangan asas dalam penggunaan

strategi-strategi kesopanan, lantas berpotensi untuk mencipta peluang yang tinggi untuk kegagalan pragmatik.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

PG	:	Post Graduate
E-mail	:	Electronic mail
CCSARP	:	Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns
FTA	:	Face Threatening Act
NS	:	Native Speaker
NNS	:	Non Native Speaker
EFL	:	English as Lingua Franca

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter introduces the study background and the problem statement, followed by the research objectives and the research questions. The significance of the study is also highlighted. The scope of the research is first discussed with particular emphasis on the terms used in the study: electronic mail (e-mail), politeness, request, head act, request strategy, and request modifications.

1.2 Background of the Study

In any type of communication, human beings need to pay attention to politeness to ensure successful and smooth interaction while communicating with others. Interlocutors communicate together in specific contexts with knowledge gained from previous experience, in terms of "what forms of social behavior are appropriate/ inappropriate" in the specific context (Muchiri, 2014, p.8). Similarly, people involved in e-mail interactions need to be aware of politeness norms and linguistic realizations when composing appropriate e-mail messages.

Language refers to the basic medium utilized by people to communicate in daily life. There are many ways communication with other people can be carried out, including through non-verbal, written, and oral means. Among these channels of communication, the written form includes memos, reports, e-mails and letters, all of which can form permanent records. These records are used for various purposes, and can be ranged on a continuum of level of formality. One of the fastest growing forms of communication in popular use is e-mail, which is now accepted as an official method of communication in public and private institutions. For reasons of technological advancement and convenience, e-mail is now used extensively both within and outside an organization. Within an organization, such as a university, such communication is carried out between

lecturers, lecturers and administration, lecturers and students, and between students. Thus, it is not uncommon these days for lecturers to communicate with students via e-mail for a range of academic purposes, in addition to face-to-face communication. This interaction via e-mail enables students to reach lecturers more easily and swiftly, and to obtain feedback, even during weekends or public holidays. The linguistic style of e-mail includes features of both spoken and written communication. Libyan students and lecturers at Malaysian universities use English as a *lingua franca* to communicate: members of both groups are non-native speakers (NNS) of English. English as a *lingua franca* is characterized by variety or diversity of the cultural principles attached with language and the proficiency level among interlocutors. This can pose challenges to the students when framing their communications. Malaysia in its endeavor to become an international hub for education, has a reasonably well-developed Information and communication technology (ICT) system, and this is an attraction for international students who would evaluate their choice of an overseas education program based on criteria such as tuition fee, and quality of life (which would include ICT facilities). In this regard, Malaysia has attracted a considerable number of international students (Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012), including students from Libya.

As part of the facilitative means of communication, university students, both local and international, have resorted heavily to the use of e-mail for a variety of purposes. In the communicative event, they are engaged in many different speech acts, like requests, complaints, and apologies.

Requesting speech acts are one of the students' main communicative purposes for using e-mail as they go about their academic business, to obtain feedback, to make appointments, to ask for extensions of time for assignment submission, etc. A request can be defined as a direct speech act in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action

or provide information that is for the limited interest of the speaker (Trosborg, 1995). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a request is one of the most face-threatening forms of speech act, especially in a student-lecturer context. This is because students who are in a low-power position are forced to make impositions on lecturers who have the power of control (Brown & Gilman, 1960). Not all requests, however, have the same level of imposition. For example, asking for an appointment is a request with a low level of imposition, while asking for an extension of an assignment submission date is a request with a high level of imposition. As a result of these levels of imposition, students must mitigate their requests in the appropriate, acceptable manner in order not to threaten the face of lecturers. Students may use internal or external mitigation to soften the level of an imposition in their efforts to be perceived as polite. The presence or absence of mitigation devices plays an important role in the directness level of such e-mails which in turn affects the level of politeness of the communication.

In order to make an appropriate e-mail request, students need to refine their pragmatic competence, which means they need to develop the necessary skills on how to use language appropriately, depending on the context of use. Requesting situations that involve asymmetrical power require complex pragmatic skills. If the speech is produced with inappropriate linguistic structures and modifications, it might cause pragmatic failure between interlocutors, such as that between students and lecturers. This study focuses on the politeness strategies, request strategies, and internal/external modifications that are employed in the requests of a particular group of foreign students in Malaysia, Libyan postgraduate (PG) students.

1.3 Research Problem

The use of e-mail in an academic setting is widespread and broadly encouraged. E-mails have effectively reduced face-to-face hourly meetings between students and

lecturers, and have taken on the label of "cyber consultations" (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, p.81). These cyber consultations provide students with rapid feedback, clarification, and information. However, students receive little instruction on how to write e-mails in an academic context. To date, guidelines regarding the use of appropriate language and style of writing, like e-mails are limited. Consequently, students often write their e-mail requests using the same format and linguistic features as they would use to write e-mail to their peers (Crystal, 2003). This leads students to encounter problems in communication, because lecturers may either fail to understand their requests, or deem them to be impolite and therefore not worthy of action. Lecturers have been known to complain about students, both native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) of English, sending inconsiderate requests, using impolite style, inappropriate salutations, unsuitable level of formality, misspelt words, inaccurate grammar and insufficient explanations on the use of abbreviations (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). As such, students have to know the appropriate way to compose e-mail requests to their lecturers, and be mindful of how they affect the lecturers' impression of them (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012; Danielewicz, 2013; Jessmer & Anderson, 2001).

In the use of e-mail as a modern medium of communication in academic settings, challenges are especially evident for NNS of English with regard to politeness strategies, directness level, and the use of appropriate mitigation devices (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006). E-mails should be linguistically polite in order to facilitate interaction; being polite reduces the likelihood of conflict and prevents pragmatic failure. Libyan students represent a case in point as they have different cultural and language backgrounds to those of their lecturers at Malaysian universities. While e-mail is a written mode of communication it, nonetheless, includes both spoken and written features. Thus the use of e-mail between Libyan students and lecturers at Malaysian universities who use English as the *lingua franca* can pose multiple challenges in their manner of

communicating. English as the medium of communication is governed by conventions of written language use, while at the same time, it is influenced by other factors, such as social factors (e.g. power distance, cultural norms) and pragmatic considerations and expectations (such as politeness).

In this study, the construct investigated is the e-mail of request. Making a request is a speech act that is considered to be a Face Threatening Act (FTA). An FTA is an act that threatens the face of the speaker or the hearer by acting against the face desire and wants of the other interlocutor in an exchange (Brown & Levinson, 1978). An ill-formed request can threaten and impose more heavily on a lecturer's face. As a result, there is usually a need for requesters to mitigate their message. To mitigate successfully, students have to use different politeness strategies types (positive, negative, bald on record, and off record) to reach their communicative goal. These strategies are also associated with the level of directness, as well as the extent and form of modifications (closely identified with the request head act), that impact the pragmatic 'weight' of an utterance.

Many scholars (Al-Marrani & Sazalie, 2010; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Danielewicz-Betz, 2013; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2011; Felix-Bradsdefer, 2007, 2012; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016) have investigated and compared quite extensively the difficulties that NNS students face in their use of the request speech act. However, an extensive search of the literature reveals that some gaps still persist regarding the speech act of requesting. Firstly, studies on how NNS students express their requests using e-mails as a medium of communication from a pragmatic perspective are scarce. Secondly, despite a rich literature on politeness, research on student-lecturers communication is still in its infancy (Al-Shalawi, 2001; Najeeb et al., 2012; Chejnova, 2014; Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016). Finally, the gap is more acute when the issue is

related to specific writing communities such as Libyan PG students who need to write e-mail requests to their lecturers while are taking courses of their studies.

Through time, cultures have flourished and developed their own norms of 'appropriate' of linguistic behavior, especially in regard to politeness features. Watts (2003) remarks that "politeness has a 'chameleon-like nature'" and interlocutors need to choose an appropriate linguistic behaviour to suit the context of the needs of distinct languages and cultures (p. 24). Thus, in the context of English used as a *lingua franca*, people who come from a variety of cultural and language backgrounds need to adapt their native linguistic behaviour to meet different specific cultural expectations in order to avoid any pragmatic failure. More specifically, if students have knowledge about the pragmatic differences of other cultures, they are better prepared to adopt more appropriate ways of constructing speech acts in other languages. This will reduce the possibility of misunderstanding occurring between interlocutors.

1.4 Research Objectives

Thus, the current study seeks to fill a research gap in the analysis of speech acts related to politeness, request strategies, and modifications used in e-mail requests, specifically those made by Libyan PG students to their lecturers at selected Malaysian universities. The research adopts a predominantly pragmatic perspective: using the theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) as the underlying framework, e-mail requests are analysed to identify politeness strategies. They study also seeks to analyze request strategies, and the extent to which internal/external modifications are used in tandem with other strategies.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on these objectives, the study endeavors to answer the following research questions:

1. What politeness strategies occur in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests to their Malaysian lecturers?

2. What request strategies are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?

3. What internal/external modifications are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Politeness is a field of research which has received much attention in the last two decades. This research presents a pragmatic analysis of e-mail requests produced by a particular community, that is, Libyan PG students in a NNS English speaking context. The request speech act has been targeted because of its direct relation to politeness theory. In addition, the participants of this study are students who can be expected to perform a high frequency of requests than other speech acts such as thanking, complaining, or apologising. This frequency of use warrants a study of such discourse as it impinges on communication efficacy. While there are some studies studied on e-mail and the politeness of NNS students in academic settings, it needs to be reiterated that there have been no studies on the politeness of English e-mail requests from Libyan PG students. This suggests a research gap which obviously needs to be bridged, and also has implications for other cultural groups.

Further, the study strives to add to the knowledge of request strategies and, in association, the dimension of politeness in e-mail communication. As the number of

Libyan PG students who are pursuing higher education in Malaysia has increased, investigating the students' speech acts has social implications. Foreign students need to adjust to their new social and cultural surroundings, and communicating effectively entails pragmatic awareness of appropriate speech practices, especially when communicating with lecturers, who are important gatekeepers in the students' quest for academic success. Thus, it is imperative for students to show deference and respect towards lecturers through appropriate linguistic behavior, because of their dependent status in an academic setting. This study has implications for the students, as well as for lecturers, decision makers, and educational syllabus designers, to avoid pragmatic failure from occurring, and to facilitate effective communication across cultures.

The present study contributes to the growing body of politeness research in e-mail requests in academic settings, especially in the area of Arab pragmatic linguistics. It deals with Libyan students in Malaysia, who encounter different cultural, language and communication challenges, especially in terms of e-mail writing, during their studies at Malaysian universities.

Research on pedagogical intervention has constantly concentrated on the significance of instruction to students, essentially English NNS students, across different domains. In conjunction with different studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012, 2015, Lazarescu, 2013), the current study places emphasis on the need to increase the awareness of NNS of varying levels of proficiency in the English language about the use of appropriate politeness strategies, request strategies, and internal and external modifications, when they compose e-mail requests to their lecturers. Furthermore, this kind of instruction needs English teachers to be constantly aware of this gap to effectively help their students create their e-mails politely on the basis of the pragmatics associated with the target language (Krulatz, 2012).

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is primarily qualitative in nature. A descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the items under study: politeness strategies, request strategies and internal and external modifications, and frequency counts were made of all identified items. The definitions of key terms are presented in chapter 3. With regards to data collection, only a relatively small number of e-mails (109) was collected, since large-scale harvesting of e-mails was not possible due to ethical concerns. The data collection was conducted among Libyan PG students from four major Malaysian universities, namely: Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

1.8 Organisation of this Study

This work is divided into five chapters. Firstly, this introductory chapter provides an overview of the study: the background of the study, the research problem, research objectives, and the questions the study was designed to answer. The significance and scope of the research have also been highlighted. Chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework, and a review of relevant theoretical and empirical studies. It includes politeness theory, requests as FTAs, politeness and requests, as well as politeness and indirectness to establish the theoretical framework. It also reviews related studies on politeness, and the work that has been done on e-mail requests, in particular. Chapter three describes the research design and the methods used in the study. The chapter presents the conceptual framework, research design, participants, data collection and approach to analysis of the data. Chapter four presents the results of the data analysis and discusses the major findings. Finally, the last chapter concludes the study, with implications, and suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for designing the current study and analyzing data collected, reviews the findings of previous related studies, as well as the research methods they used, and identifies the gap in previous research that provides the context for the current research.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Firstly, there is a need to identify and explain the key concepts of the current study. They include: politeness strategies, request head act, directness level, modifications, and e-mail. These concepts construct the theoretical framework of the present study. Figure 2.1 below illustrates how the politeness strategies and Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) framework are integrated, and presents a coherent representation of how these concepts are interrelated.

2.3 Defining Politeness

Politeness makes an important impression on how people interact. Politeness conventions are important to be observed when people communicate with each other in order to display deference and respect, to minimize imposition, and to save face. The study of politeness is interdisciplinary. Universally, it can be exercised in verbal or non-verbal manners. However, politeness conventions can differ from one language to another, as well as from one culture to another. Speakers may depend on the norms of their own culture; i.e. soci-culturally, and individually created knowledge in the shape of 'frames' (House, 2012). Participants usually acquire the frames in early socialization through language used in a specific culture. When inappropriate frames are activated and used, pragmatic failure in communication may result.

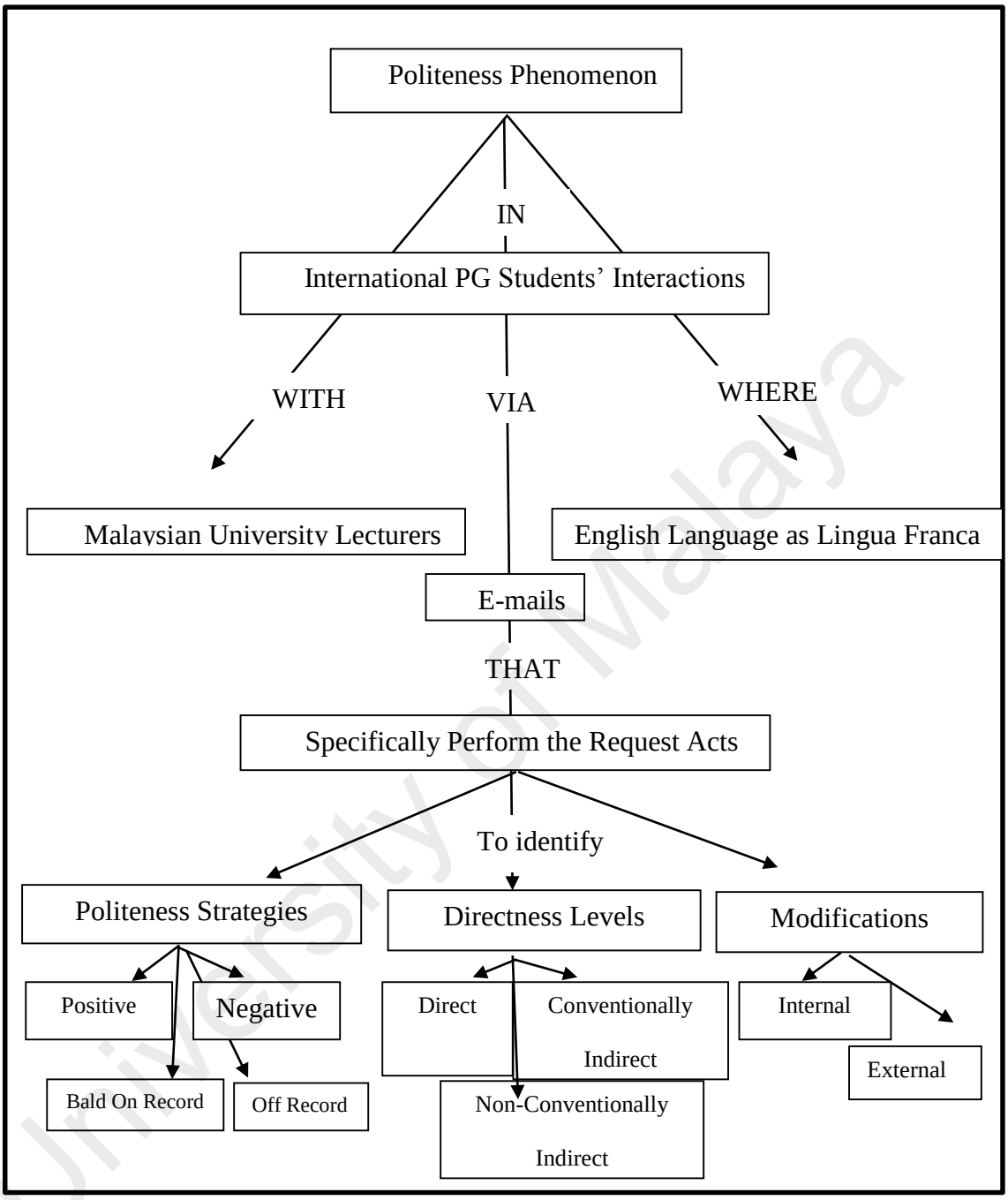

Figure 2.1: Key Concepts Representation

Negative Politeness is an important feature in daily life interaction and interlocutors constantly evaluate whether the linguistic forms used are polite or impolite. Watts (2003) characterized utterances performed by a speaker towards the receiver as a kind of social act. Over the years, scholars have researched the construct of politeness (for example, Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983, Mills, 2003; Spencer Oatey, 2008). Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness is considered to be one of the

most productive and effective works in the field thus far. Their politeness theory emphasizes the concepts of face, face-threatening act, and modifications. The theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a very systematic model of politeness and its concepts and terms have been continually applied even in more recent versions of politeness theories. In brief, politeness refers to a "redressive action taken to counterbalance the disruptive effect of face threatening acts" (Kasper, 1990, p.194).

2.4 Politeness Theories

In linguistic studies, speech act theory is usually attached to politeness theory, with the two theories constituting important components in pragmatic studies. Speech act theory has to do with the function and use of language. Speech acts can be defined as all the acts that we perform in an interaction and the actions people perform when they speak or write. The meaning of those acts can be interpreted by hearers even if they are produced indirectly. It is a hearers' job to understand and interpret the acts which are performed by the speaker even if they are an indirect form. This interpretation could be correct or incorrect, or misinterpretation might occur.

Grice (1975) observed that usually speakers and hearers cooperate with each other so that their communicative interaction can succeed and achieve its aims. He postulated the existence of a Cooperative Principle (CP) which embraces a range of conversational maxims to be used when interacting in order to make the interaction effective. The CP is: "Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 45). In four main maxims, this principle was fleshed out. The quantity maxim means to be as informative as required; the quality maxim means not to articulate something for which you do not have evidence; the relevance maxim means to be relevant; and the maxim of manner means to be specific, brief and orderly, and avoid ambiguity. The maxims are

unspoken rules that guide speakers on what to do in order to communicate in a rational and cooperative way.

However, speakers do not always follow these maxims when interacting; for example, they might not be honest in their speech because not all the information is expected to be favourable for either the speaker or the hearer. This is known as a violation of a maxim, in this case the maxim of quality. However, the violation of a maxim does not necessarily mean the speakers are insincere; it can be a way to maintain and smoothen the established relationship, as well as save face (Goffman, 1959). This violation is very much related to indirectness, which is associated with politeness (Grice, 1975; Searle, 1975).

A theory proposed by Lakoff (1975) has some bearing upon Grice's (1975) CP and conversational maxims. Lakoff's principle consists of two overarching rules: (1) be clear, and (2) be polite. The 'be clear' rule is considered to be a Gricean CP, while 'be polite' refers to politeness rules of which she specified three: do not impose; give options; and be friendly. Although Lakoff (1975) did not define politeness explicitly, from the principles, she seems to be suggesting that politeness means a participant in an interaction should think what is beneficial for others in the interaction and avoid doing things which could harm the other parties in some way.

Leech (1983), like Lakoff, has proposed the politeness principle based on Grice's CP. Politeness in his view means how people indirectly maintain politeness in a conversational exchange. His theory can be characterised as goal-oriented speech because he emphasised the speaker's communication goal in the interaction. Leech's (1983) politeness maxims are: "(1) tact, (2) generosity, (3) approbation, (4) modesty, (5) agreement, and (6) sympathy" (p.125). Leech (1983) claims that the speaker should always act in a way that interests the hearer and minimise the chance that his speech actions are not in the hearer's interest. Leech (1983) also explains how his maxims

interact with Grice's maxims: he points out that while CP and conversational maxims help explain *how* an utterance may express a speaker's indirect meaning, his (Leech's) maxims are concerned with understanding the reason of being indirect.

Overall, Lakoff and Leech have expanded Grice's maxims to develop their politeness principles and rules. Following is a summary of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, which proposed a very systematic model of politeness, and its concepts and terms have been incorporated into new versions of politeness. Brown and Levinson defined politeness as a redressive action taken to "counterbalance" the disruptive effect of face threatening acts (FTAs), and show concern for people's face (1987, p. 38). The politeness theory by Brown and Levinson presented and discussed in section 2.4.1.

2.4.1 Brown and Levinson's "Politeness" Theory

Politeness has essentially linked to the function of remedial action. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), speech act performance is ruled by universal principles of politeness. Therefore, politeness involves people demonstrating an awareness of the face wants of others. The 'face' can be described as "a public self-image" which one desires to claim for oneself. Two face wants are recognized: the negative face is wanting to be unimpeded in speaker's/hearer's behavior, while the positive face is wanting to be approved of. In order to save the hearer's face, a number of politeness strategies are exploited by the speaker to "counteract the potential face damage of the FTA" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp.129 - 131). In this study, the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) will be considered as the underlying theory that is used to explain the construct of politeness and its various manifestations from a pragmatic point of view. It is adopted to analyse request speech act in e-mails written by Libyan students to their Malaysian lecturers, because it is considered to be one of the most productive, effective, and definitive works on linguistic politeness (Haugh, 2013). The politeness theory of Brown

and Levinson emphasizes the concepts of face, face-threatening act, modifications, and continues to form the framework even for newer versions of politeness theories.

The model of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is based upon the concept of "face", influenced by the term 'face' as used by Goffman (1967). Each of us has 'face' which is "the public self-image" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). This face needs to be maintained, in the form of both positive face and negative face. The former is affected when a person feels that he is liked or respected, while the latter arises when a person feels that he is forced into doing something against his will or when he feels there is disrespect. In every culture, people have similar face needs, and interlocutors in a successful communication will often consciously choose to respect each other's face so as not cause any unnecessary disharmony in a relationship.

In the work of Brown and Levinson (1987), the second underpinning notion is the assumption that "certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face" (p. 65). Their suggestion is that a relationship may be jeopardised if a speech act is perceived as a FTA. The interaction involves the use of FTAs "that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p.65). The face of the speaker and hearer can be threatened by FTAs. These acts can obstruct either the hearer/speaker's aspects of either negative or positive faces.

Negative FTAs obstruct the freedom of the speaker and the hearer of action and from the imposition. These acts can threaten the hearer when the act put pressure on the hearer to perform or not to perform an action such as requests, warning, and suggestions. These acts can be threatening also when they express a strong negative feeling or opinion by a speaker about the hearer such as anger and compliment. The hearer can be threatened when the speaker indicates positive future action towards the hearer which force the hearer to accept or reject the action such as offer and promise. On the other hand, there

are some acts that threatening the speaker's negative face. These can threaten the speaker when they cause an offence to the speaker's face such as thanking, accept one's apology.

Positive FTAs imposes damage to speaker's or hearer's positive face by indicating the interactants' deficiency in appreciation or approval for someone's desires, feelings. FTAs threaten the hearer's face when speakers express negative evaluation of the one's positive face such as disagreement and complaint. It also threatens hearer's positive face when the hearer's positive face is misused such as misuse of honorifics and mention of taboo topics. On the other hand, the acts which denote that one has made a violation or lost control over a situation threaten the speaker's positive face such as acceptance of compliment and apology.

On the whole, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that people tend to avoid FTAs. If there is a perceived FTA in an interaction, interlocutors will activate their repertoire of politeness skills to mitigate the impact of the FTA on the hearer. These forms of mitigation are referred to politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The investigation of this study is based on the theoretical perspectives of politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The strategies provide a framework for an analysis of the communicative acts between interlocutors. As Leech (2007) commented, the theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) "has remained the most seminal and influential starting point for studying cross-cultural and inter-linguistic politeness" (p.1). In general, the theory of Brown and Levinson tries to address the question 'why do people, when communicating and interacting, not speak in direct and the clearest way?. People are seen to be motivated to behave in a certain manner due to face, politeness strategies, and FTAs.

Different types of politeness strategies can be employed to decrease the risk of the speech act. Brown and Levinson (1987) outlined five strategic choices that speakers can select from to perform a speech act that is appropriate and satisfies each specific context. The politeness strategies consist of: bald on record without redressive action, on record with redressive action (positive politeness and/or negative politeness), off record, and not to do the FTA at all (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In figure 2.2, The politeness strategies illustrate.

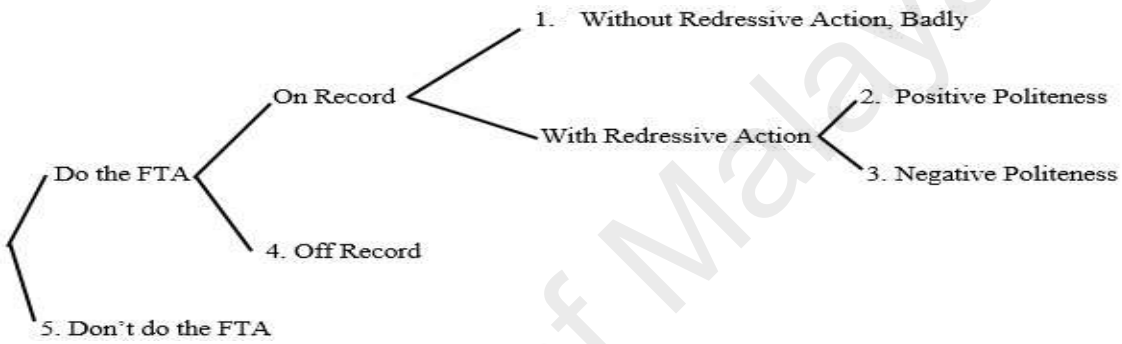

Figure 2.2: Politeness Strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987)

Redressive action using either a positive or a negative strategy are the second and third types of strategy that can be used, respectively. Positive politeness strategies are utilized between interlocutors to minimise distance, and this can be done by being friendly or by maintaining a good relationship. There are fifteen sub-strategies listed under this strategy, which are: "notice, attend to hearer (H) (his interests, wants, needs, goods), exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H), intensify interest in H, use in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground, joke, assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, offer, promise, be optimistic, include both S and H in the activity , give (or ask for) reasons, assume or assert reciprocity (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation) and give gifts to H" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 102) (see Table 2.1 for further details).

The last strategy is to not do the FTA. In this strategy, the hearer chooses not performing the act so that the hearer's face is saved. This strategy is beyond the scope of this study, which deals with acts that are performed, in writing.

Table 2.1: Brown and Levinson's Positive on Record Politeness Strategies (1987)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Notice, attend to H	"This output suggests that S should take notice of aspects of H's condition" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 103)	"You must be hungry" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 103)
Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)	"This is often done with exaggerated intonation, stress, and other aspects of prosodic, as well as with intensifying modifiers" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 104)	"What a fantastic garden you have!" " (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 104)
Intensify interest to H	S desires to share his/her interest to H because a way of S's donating in the speech "by making a good story" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 106)	"I come down the stairs, and what do you think I see? – a huge mess all over the place, the phone's off the hook and clothes are scattered all over…"(Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 106)
Use in-group identity markers	"By using any of the innumerable ways to convey in group membership, Scan implicitly claim the common ground with H that is carried by that definition of the group." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 107)	"Honey" "Johnny" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 108)
Seek agreement	This can be expressed by safe topics and repetition. "The raising of safe topics allows S to stress his agreement with H and therefore to satisfy H's desire to be right or to be corroborated in his opinions" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p.112) "Agreement may also be stressed by repeating part or all of what the preceding S has in the conversation" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 112)	"Isn't your new car a beautiful colour" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 112). "A: John went to London this weekend! B: To London." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 113).
Avoid disagreement	It can be expressed by four features: token agreement, pseudo-agreement, white lies, and hedging opinions. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"A: Can you hear me? B: Barely." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 114) "So when are you coming to see us? " (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 115) "Oh I can't. The batteries are dead" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 116) "I really sort of think" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 116)
Presuppose, raise, assert common ground	S can presuppose, raise, assert common ground by gossip or small talk, point of	"I had a really hard time learning to drive, didn't I."

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
	view operations, and presupposition manipulations. Small talk can "give rise to the strategy of redressing an FTA by talking for a while about unrelated topics" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 117) Point of view operations is that S might claim common ground by using cooperation point of view. (Brown & Levinson, 1987) Presupposition manipulations "S presupposes something when he presupposes that it is mutually taken for granted" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 122)	(Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 119) "Wouldn't you like a drink?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: p. 122)
Jokes	Jokes can be used to stress the fact that there must be some mutual background knowledge and values that S and H share. Jokes are used to diminish the social distance between interlocutors. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"OK if I tackle those cookies now?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:124)
Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants	It is a way to indicate that "S and H are cooperators, and thus potentially to put pressure on H to cooperate with S, is to assert or imply knowledge of H's wants and willingness to fit one's own wants in with them" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:125)	"Look, I know you want the car back by 5.0, so should (n't) I go to town now?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:125)
Offer, promises	S and H are good cooperators in that they share some goals or S may claim that "whatever H wants, S wants for him and will help to obtain" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:125)	"I'll go there sometimes" (Wijaya, 2016)
Be optimistic	This is a way to make "S to assume that H wants S's wants for S (or for S and H) and will help to obtain them." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 126)	"You'll lend me your lawnmower for the weekend" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:126)
Include both H & S in the activity	S may choose to include an inclusive 'we' form "when S really means 'you' or 'me', he can call upon the cooperative assumptions and thereby redress FTAs." (Brown & Levinson, 1987:127)	"Give us a break." (Brown & Levinson, 1987:127)
Give or ask for reasons	By giving reasons why S wants what he wants, S can include the H in the activity. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"Why not lend me your cottage for the weekend?"
Assume or assert reciprocity	S may claim the existence of cooperation with the H by "giving evidence of reciprocal rights or obligations obtaining between S and H" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:129)	"I'll do X for you if you do Y for me." (Brown & Levinson, 1987:129)
Give gifts to H sympathy.	"S may satisfy H's positive face want (that S want H's wants, to some degree) by actually satisfying some of H's wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:129)	"I'm sorry to hear that."(Wijaya, 2016)

Negative strategies of politeness are used to preserve the face of the hearers. This is the most elaborated and conventionalised form of strategy use (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Indirectness is mainly associated with negative politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson list ten sub-strategies of negative strategy: "be conventionally indirect, question, hedge, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, give deference, apologize, impersonalize S and H, state the FTA as a general rule, nominalize, and go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H" (1987, p. 131) (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Brown and Levinson's Negative on Record Politeness Strategies (1987)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Be conventionally indirect	S uses conventional indirectness (i.e. phrases and sentences which have contextually unambiguous meanings … that are different from their literal meanings) (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"Can you please pass the salt?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:133)
Question, hedge	S may choose not to presume and not impose what he wants. S does not "assume H is able/willing to do A (and, to some extent, he wants to make minimal assumptions about S's wants.)" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:146)	"I guess that Harry is coming" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:145) "Close the window, if you can." (Brown & Levinson, 1987:162)
Be pessimistic	S may redress to H's negative face by expressing doubt which the conditions for the suitability of S's speech act obtain. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"I don't imagine there'd be any chance of you…"(Brown & Levinson, 1987:174)
Minimise the imposition	S can coerce H when asking H to do something. S may choose this way to defuse the FTA (i.e. the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"I just want to ask you if I can borrow a single sheet of paper" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 177)
Give deference	S can treat the H as superior (i.e. "H is of higher social status than S") by raising the H or humbling the S himself. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 178)	"Excuse me, sir, but would you mind if I close the window?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 183)
Apologize	It is a way that can be used to partially omit an impingement between S and H. S can express apology in several ways: "admit the impingement, indicate reluctance, give overwhelming reasons and beg forgiveness" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 188,189)	"I'm sure you must be very busy, but..." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 188) "I don't want to bother you, but" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 188) "I'm absolutely lost…"(Brown & Levinson, 1987: 189) "Excuse me, but" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 189)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Impersonalize S and H	This avoids use of the pronouns "I" and "you". S can hide who is the S and the H to show politeness. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"Do this for me" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 190)
State the FTA as a general rule	S may state the FTA speech act to the H in a general way "an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 206)	"Passengers will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 206)
Nominalize	This is a way to show formality. S may choose to make his utterances in a form of nominal phrases to show degree of negative politeness. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"an urgent request is made for your cooperation" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 208)
Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H.	"S can redress an FTA by explicitly claiming his indebtedness to H, or by disclaiming any indebtedness of H, by means of expressions" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 210)	"I could easily do it for you" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 210)

To go on-record without redressive an action is a bald-on-record strategy that is used to perform a very direct speech act performance; it does not give much attention to social niceties and it is often realized through the use of imperatives. It is used often in emergencies or when there is a small risk on the face of hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It can also be used when the speaker has control over the hearer, for example in a relationship between lecturer and student.

Table 2.3: Brown and Levinson's Bald on record Politeness Strategies (1987)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Direct imperatives	"S wants to do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than he wants to satisfy H's face." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 95)	"Give me the money" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 96)

The off record strategy involves the indirect use of language to remove the speaker from the possibility that the hearer will feel imposed upon. Brown and Levinson (1987) express 15 off record politeness strategies: "give hints, give association clues, presuppose, understate, overstate, use tautologies, use contradictions, be ironic, use metaphor, use rhetorical questions, be ambiguous, be vague, overgeneralize, displace and be incomplete by use ellipsis." (p. 214) (see Table 2.4 for further details).

Table 2.4: Brown and Levinson's Off Record Politeness Strategies (1987)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Give hints	S may say something in an implicit way to invite the H to make interpretations of the possible relevant meaning. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"It's cold in here." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 215)
Give association clues	S can mention something related with the act asked from H by "precedent in S-H's experience or by mutual knowledge irrespective of their interactional experience." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 215)	"Are you going to market tomorrow?...There's a market tomorrow, I suppose." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 216)
Presuppose	"An utterance can be almost wholly relevant in context, and yet violate the Relevance Maxim just at the level of its presupposition"	"I washed the car again today." ." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 217)
Understate	This is a way to generating implicatures by saying less than is required. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"A: What do you think of Harry? B: Nothing wrong with him." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 218)
Overstate	"If S says more than is necessary, thus violating the Quantity Maxim in another way, he may also convey implicatures" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 219)	"Why are you always smoking?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 220)
Use tautologies	S can generate inferences by uttering "patent and necessary truths." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 220)	"Boys will be boys" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 220)
Use contradictions	S may convey a criticism or complaint by violating the quality maxim. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 221)	"A: Are you upset about that? B: Well, I am and I'm not." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 221)
Be ironic	By violating the quality maxim, S can say the opposite of what he intents. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 221)	"Lovely neighborhood, eh?" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 222)
Use metaphor	"Metaphors may be marked with hedging particles that make their metaphorical status explicit" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 223)	"Harry's a real fish." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 222)
Use rhetorical questions	"Questions that leave their answers hanging in the air" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 223)	"How many times do I have to tell you…?"(Brown & Levinson, 1987: 223)
Be ambiguous	This strategy can be expressed by using metaphors. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 225)	"John's a pretty sharp cookie" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 225)
Be vague	S can be vague about what the offence is or who the object of the FTA is. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"Perhaps someone did something naughty." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 226)
Over-generalize	S may use general proverbs or rules. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"He who laughs last laughs longest."
Displace H	S may go off record as to whom the target for the FTA is. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	Free gifts. (Wijaya, 2016)

Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Be incomplete by use of ellipsis.	S may leave the meaning hanging in the air by using elliptical utterances. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)	"Well, I didn't see you…" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 227)

The current study investigates the politeness phenomenon in Libyan post-graduate (PG) students' e-mail requests to lecturers in a Malaysian tertiary context. This investigation rests on the detailed analysis of the request speech act and is guided by an examination of politeness strategies, request strategies, and internal/ external modifications made by the students.

2.4.2 Indirectness and Politeness

The notion of politeness is often associated with indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It has been claimed that the indirect request is firmly identified with politeness (Searle, 1975; Leech, 1983). Therefore, using indirectness in making requests helps to minimize the risk of imposing on the hearer's face by diminishing the illocutionary force of request.

Yule (1996) explains linguistic politeness as a means to show deference to face wants and needs between conversational partners. By using a more indirect utterance, the speaker can increase the level of politeness. The practice of directness and indirectness, however, is very much dependent on the cultural group in which the interaction occurs, and its social norms. Language use is very closely related to culture; what is perceived as a direct/indirect polite expression in one culture may not be seen to be so in another. Blum-Kulka (1987) and House (2012) emphasized that the relationship between politeness and indirectness can be affected by the culture and context. Politeness in the East Asian context, for example, is said to be characterized by indirectness which is embedded in implicit rather than explicit utterances (Kadar & Mills, 2011). This claim supports Goa's (1998) and Miike's (2006) contentions that Asian communication is characterized by being indirect and implicit as well.

Even though the politeness strategies can be positioned on a continuum of increased indirectness, politeness and indirectness cannot be presented as being correlated: increasing indirectness is not the only means to show more politeness. Speakers of various cultures and languages can be said to perceive conventionally indirect requests as the most polite forms (e.g. Malaysian culture, according to Khalib & Tayeh, 2014). Amongst the different degrees of directness, conventionally indirect strategies indicate more politeness as compared to direct strategies, or even to non-conventionally indirect strategies. This study explores politeness in e-mail requests by identifying Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies in Libyan PG students' emails. The study also aims to determine the request strategies and to identify modifications Libyan PG students used in interactions with their lecturers at Malaysian universities.

2.5 Development of the Cross Cultural Speech Act Project (CCSARP)

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) collaborated on developing the theoretical and methodological framework for the Cross Cultural Speech Act Project (CCSARP), which was designed to answer the question "To what extent is it possible to specify the particular pragmatic rules of use for a given language, rules which second language learners will have to acquire in order to attain successful communication in the target language?" (p.196). The project set out to find out the speech acts' realization patterns (requests and apologies) by native speakers in 8 languages: (Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Russian).

The coding scheme was categorized into utterance or sequence of utterance. This sequence was then divided into: address form, head act, and adjunct to head act. The head act is the essential part that can be realized independently of the other segments. Different choices in terms of 'directness' can be made for realization of request head act. The researchers expected that three levels of directness could be found in all could be found

in all the languages: a very direct, explicit level, a conventionally indirect level, and a non-conventional indirect level. These three levels were then divided into nine sub-levels which the researchers termed as 'strategy types', which included: "mood derivable, explicit performative, hedged performative, locution derivable, scope stating, language specific suggestory formula, reference to preparatory conditions, strong hints and mild hints" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p.202). In making a request, the speaker inherently confronts the hearer's claim to freedom from imposition and freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1978). To mitigate the requests imposition, speakers can activate the scale of directness and select from a range of verbal means to modify the degree of imposition involved. These modifications have been categorized as internal modifications and external modifications by Faerch and Kasper (1989). Internal modifications are divided into syntactic downgraders (interrogative, negation, past tense, and embedded 'if' clause) and other downgraders (consultative devices, understaters, hedges and downtoners), and upgraders (intensifiers, and expletives). Adjuncts to the head act represent the external modifications (for example, checking on availability, getting a precommitment, grounder, sweetener, disarmer, and cost minimizer).

Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) constructed a test (the Discourse Completion Test or DCT) to elicit realization patterns of request and apology using CCSARP to code the data in dialog form. In coding their data, they stated that the sub-categories should be "supplemented, refined, conflated, or left out according to the structure of the language and culture under study" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.275). This later work, categories were classified as alerters, head acts and supportive moves. The head act can be realized using one of the request strategies that have been presented according to the level of directness, from the most direct to the least direct. They remain the same as in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) except for adding 'want statement' and omitting 'scope stating'.

The internal modifications are divided into syntactic downgraders, lexical/phrasal downgraders, and upgrader. Three new syntactic modifiers were added in the later work: conditional, aspect, and combination of all syntactic modifications. The category of 'embedded if clause' was changed to 'conditional clause'. Five lexical/phrasal modifications were added: politeness marker, subjectivizer, cajoler, appealer, and combination of the lexical/phrasal downgrader. Several new modifiers were as upgraders: commitment indicator, empathic addition, time intensifier, lexical uptoner, determination marker, repetition of request, pejorative determiner, and orthographic/suprasegmental emphasis.

The external modifications identified by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) were termed 'supportive moves' instead of 'Adjuncts to the head act' (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 204). The first modifier 'checking on availability' was re-labelled as 'preparator'; and a new modifier called 'promise of reward' was identified. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p.288) also added new category of external modification called aggravating moves: these moves, consisting of 'threat, moralizing, and insult' usually increase the level of imposition on the hearer.

This framework was initially developed for and used to analyse speech and oral data. However, Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) encountered problems coding the e-mails which were the data she used in her study. The framework required an update to suit analysis of e-mail data. In the new version of CCSARP by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006), the researcher classified 'want statements' (e.g. "I want/I would like to…") and "'need statements' (e.g. I need"…) which were considered direct request strategies in the original framework, as an indirect strategy and as hints, respectively.

In her study, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) limited her analysis to the head acts. The analysis revealed challenges in coding some linguistic productions that had not been identified before in the CCSARP. Examples include an assurance getter ("I wanted to

make sure that I'm on the right track") and gratitude ("I appreciate your taking a book") (p. 60). Some strategies that had been found in the original CCSARP oral data, were not found in the e-mail data e.g. suggestory formulae such as "how about giving me feedback?" and obligation statements like "you must give me an extension" (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, p.66). Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) found that the most direct request strategies were divided into 7 strategies, namely: "imperative, elliptic constructions, performatives, direct questions, want statements, need statements, and expectation" (p.67). The syntactic modifications identified in Biesenbach-Lucas's (2007) study were 'past tense, progressive aspect, and embedding'. Lexical modifications included: 'please', downtoner, understater, subjectivizer, consultative device, and hedge. The study did not include any analysis of external modification.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) developed the CCSARP framework when she analyzed the request strategies and the internal/external modifications that appeared in e-mail requests she studied. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) added three request sub-strategies to the level of the most direct, namely: direct questions, reminder requests and pre-decided requests. The same lexical/phrasal modifications identified in the study by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) were found in Economidou-Kogetsidis's categories, but she added the appealer which classified in the framework of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Three lexical/phrasal upgraders were identified in her data (intensifier, time intensifier and overstater), but syntactic modifications were outside the scope of her analysis. The classifications used to identify external modifications were based mainly on Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) classification of external modifications also drew upon the work of scholars such as (Blum-Kulka, 1985; Trosbong, 1995; Barron, 2006; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). The most noticeable change is that alerters were integrated with supportive moves to become one of the external modification moves. The following

categories are the supportive moves that were identified in the natural data: greeting/opening, self-introduction, apology, orientation move, pre-closing/thanks and e-mail closing. The aggravating moves identified in her data were complaint/criticism and emphasis on urgency/positive outcome.

The present study relies heavily Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework for the analysis of directness level and modifications because her taxonomies were used for internal and external modifications based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Further, the data used in her study were authentic e-mails which are the same data used in the present study.

2.6 Requests as FTA

Among the various categories of speech act, requests are speech acts that are frequently used by people on a daily basis. By its very nature, a request is a directive speech act: the usual goal of making a request is to ask for something from the hearer with benefit to the speaker (Searle, 1969). The speaker is usually imposing on the hearer when the speaker makes a request, although different levels of imposition are involved in the request. Request is FTA because it challenges the face wants of the hearer. Moreover, the power relation and social distance between interlocutors greatly affect the selection of request sub-strategies.

Brown and Levinson (1987) mentioned that FTAs such as requests or suggestions have the potential to threaten the hearer's face because they possibly inhibit the hearer's freedom of response. After creating a request, Brown and Levinson (1987) state that the speaker can threaten negative face of the hearer by impeding the hearer's freedom to act (p.65), as well as risking loss to their own face, since the hearer can reject the request. The FTA nature of requests means- that various strategies of politeness are required to achieve the communicative end successfully.

Speech act theory is intimately attached to politeness theory in linguistic studies, and form an important unified component in pragmatic studies. Speech act theory plays a role in language function and use. Consequently, speech acts can be defined as all the acts that are performed in an interaction and the actions people perform when they speak or write. The meaning of those acts can be interpreted by hearers, even if they are produced indirectly. It is the hearers' job to understand and interpret the acts performed, even if they are in an indirect form, and this interpretation may not necessarily mirror the speaker's intended meaning.

2.6.1 Requests and Politeness Strategies

Practical research encourages the distinction among the three primary directness levels identified by Brown and Levinson (1987). Requests have attracted the attention of applied linguistics ever since the initial study that compared requests and apologies across languages (CCSARP) that was conducted by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). As mentioned, Blum-Kulka's framework has been modified by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) to suit e-mail data. The present study adapted this latter framework which identified three main dimensions: directness of head acts, internal modifications, and external modifications. A head act is the minimal unit needed to indicate a request is being made, independent of the presence of any other components. Internal modifications are syntactic and lexical choices within the head act to soften and mitigate its imposition. External modifications alter the head acts externally by decreasing the face threatening intensity of the request. This categorization has been to be suitable for classifying the empirical data in the present study. Superficially, it seems to be different from the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). However, a closer examination of these two models (Brown and Levinson's 1987 politeness framework, and Economidou-Kogetsidis's 2011 CCSARP framework) demonstrates that in fact they are interrelated, and overlaps between them exist.

The first dimension is the level of directness, reflecting that "the speaker's illocutionary intention is visible from the locution" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1987, p.278). There are three levels of directness, ranging from the most direct level to the most indirect level, as demonstrated in Table (2.2).

Table 2.5: Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) Request Sub-Strategies

Directness Levels	Request Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
Most Direct	Direct questions	"A direct question (e.g. 'Do you fly to Nice?') is the most direct way of all to ask for information" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013: p.27)	"Did you get my project?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
	Elliptical requests	They "have been treated as direct strategy, and more specifically they have been classified in the imperative/mood derivable request sub-strategy" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3195)	"Any news?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
	Imperatives/ Mood derivable	"The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force as a request" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984: p.202).	"Please note what changes should be made" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
	Performatives	"Utterances in which the illocutionary force of the act is explicitly named" (Pan, 2012: p. 131)	"I have to ask for an extension for a week." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
	Want statements	"Utterances which state the speaker's desire, or needs that the event denoted in the proposition come about" (Pan, 2012: p. 131)	"I want to have an extension" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
	Need statements	"Utterances which include expression of the need for an action towards the addressee" (Hallajian, 2014: p. 50)	"I will need to know. . . ." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
	Expectation Statements	"An expected action by the hearer in regards to unperformed duties and obligations" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)	"I hope you'll give me the weekend to finish typing my work." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)

Directness Levels	Request Sub-Strategies	Explanation	Example
	Reminder requests	They "cover utterances which serve to remind the hearer about an expected or a prohibited action." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)	"I would like to remind you of my reference letter" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
	Pre-decided statements	They are "an optimistic way of performing a face threatening act where the speaker chooses to skip the requestive illocution altogether and simply checks whether his/her decision about the course of action he/she will take is acceptable to the hearer" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)	"I will hand my assignment in tomorrow" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
Conventionally indirect	Query preparatory (ability, willingness, permission)	They are "utterances contain reference to preparatory conditions (e.g. ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized I any specific language" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984: p.202).	"Can/ Could…Would you mind …?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)
Non-Conventionally indirect	Hints	"An utterance containing partial reference to the object needed for carrying out the act." (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012: p.98)	"Attached is a draft of my work." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3210)

The example "Please note what changes should be made", is an imperative that syntactically determine the request. There is no redress, and the request is performed in the most direct manner in imperative form. This form is termed 'bald-on-record' in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terminology. The example: "I want to have an extension", is direct with redressive action, in this case a 'want statement', which indicates positive politeness. The 'want' statement is considered to be the most indirect type among the direct levels. Although literally the examples "Can/ could…Would you mind …?" do not directly convey the illocutionary force, they have been fully conventionalized in English so that it would be well understood by all interlocutors as a request. This indicates negative oriented politeness. The example "Attached is a draft of my work." is a hint, which is a form of off-record politeness strategy, since more than one interpretation is available.

2.6.2 Modifications and Politeness

The second dimension, internal modification, can be realized lexically and syntactically to decrease the intensity of a particular head act (refer to Table 2.3). The majority of these modifications function as a "softening mechanism which provides the receiver with an 'out'… allowing him to believe that his reply has not been coerced," (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.70). Internal modifications can be divided into lexical and phrasal/syntactic downgraders; these modifications represent negative oriented politeness. However, upgraders such as intensifiers, time intensifiers and overstaters increase the impact of an utterance on the hearer. In the example "I *truly/really* need this extension". "S considers H to be in important respects 'the same' as S himself, with in-group rights and duties and expectations" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.70), and use of the expression 'really' indicates it is a positive oriented strategy. Tables 2.6 to 2.8 list the various internal modifications identified by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), with explanations and examples.

Table 2.6: Internal Modifications (Syntactic Downgraders) Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)

Name	Explanation	Example
Negation of a preparatory condition	A negative structure of the utterance that "the two most common conditions on request compliance are that the addressee can comply, and that he or she is willing to carry out the requested act" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.281)	"You couldn't give me a lift, could you?" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)
Conditional	A verb has a conditional mood form and "it has to be replaceable by an indicative form" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)	"I would suggest you leave now." (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)
Aspect	Different types of aspects can be counted as modifying "only if it can be replaced by a simple form" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)	"I am wondering if I could get a lift home with you." (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)
Past tense	A verb in a past tense used with a present tense reference. (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)	"I wanted to ask you to present your paper a week earlier." (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.282)
Conditional clause	It may create a certain distance from reality, so it downgrades the impact of the request.(Trosborg, 1995)	"It would fit in much better if you could give your paper a week earlier." (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.283)
Combination of syntactic downgraders	A combination of these modifications. (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)	"I was wondering if I couldn't get a lift home with you." Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.283)

Table 2.7: Internal Modifications (Lexical/Phrasal Downgraders) Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011)

Name	Explanation	Example
Marker 'please'	"An optional element added to a request to bid for cooperative behaviour" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.283).	"please" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Consultative devices	"Expressions by means of which the speaker seeks to involve the hearer directly bidding for cooperation" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.283).	"Would you mind', 'do you think', 'would it be all right if" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Downtoners	"Modifiers which are used by a speaker in order to modulate the impact his or her request is likely to have on the hearer" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.284).	"possibly', 'perhaps', 'just', 'rather', 'maybe', 'by any chance', 'at all" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Understaters/hedges	"Adverbial modifiers by means of which the speaker underrepresents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.283).	"a bit', 'a little', 'sort of', 'a kind of'" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Subjectivisers	"Elements in which the speaker explicitly expresses his or her subjective opinion vis-a`-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of the	"I'm afraid', 'I wonder', 'I think /suppose" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)

Name	Explanation	Example
	request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.284).	
Cajolers	"Conventionalized, addressee -oriented modifiers whose function is to make things clearer for the addressee and invite him/her to metaphorically participate in the speech act" (Sifianou, 1992: p.180).	"You know", "You see…" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Appealers	"Addressee-oriented elements occurring in a syntactically final position. They may signal turn-availability and are used by the speaker whenever he or she wishes to appeal to his or her hearer's benevolent understanding" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.285).	"Clean the table dear, will you?....ok/right?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)

Table 2.8: Internal Modifications (Lexical/Phrasal Upgraders) Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011)

Name	Explanation	Example
Intensifier	"Adverbial modifier that stresses specific elements of the request" (Schauer, 2009: p.91)	"I *truly/really* need this extension." "I had *such a* high fever" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Time intensifier	"Employed to emphasize the temporal aspect of the speaker's request" (Schauer, 2009: p.91)	"as soon as possible', 'urgently', 'right now" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Overstater	''Exaggerated utterances that form part of the request and are employed by the speaker to communicate their need of the request being met'' (Schauer, 2009: p.91)	"I'm in *desperate* need of material for my essay." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)"

The third dimension, the external modification dimension, is typically referred to as supportive moves (see Table 2.9). These modifications are either negatively-oriented to demonstrate deference as well as freedom to the receiver, or positively oriented to stress a level of commonality with the receiver as a member of a shared group. The modifications that show negative politeness strategies are apology, imposition minimizer, preparator, and disarmer; while grounder, compliment/sweetener, promise, and greeting/opening are oriented to positive politeness. Grounders for example, are modifiers that indicate positive politeness when common ground and reasons are provided with the intention to make the hearer comply with request (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Table 2.9: External Modifications (Supportive Moves) Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011)

Name	Explanation	Example
Greeting/opening	"The writer opens the e-mail with a greeting" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)	'Hi/Hello/Good morning', "How are you?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Self-introduction	"The writer introduces himself/herself" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)	"I'm Maria K. from your LALI-141 class" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Grounder	"A clause which can either precede or follow a request and allows the speaker to give reasons, explanations, or justifications for his or her request." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)	"I would like an assignment extension because I could not deal the typing time." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Disarmer	"A phrase with which 'the speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.287)	"I know that this assignment is important but could you. . . .?" "I hope you understand my situation. . ." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3211)
Preparator	"The speaker prepares the hearer for the ensuing request" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)	"I really need a favor . . . ." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Getting a precommitment	"The speaker checks on a potential refusal before performing the request by trying to get the hearer to commit." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)	"Could you do me a favor?" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Promise	"The speaker makes a promise to be fulfilled upon completion of the requested act." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)	"Could you give me an extension? I promise I'll have it ready by tomorrow." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Imposition minimizer	"The speaker tries to reduce the imposition placed on the hearer by his request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.288).	"I would like to ask for an extension. Just for a few days." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Apology	"The speaker apologises for posing the request and/or for the imposition incurred." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)	"I'm very sorry but I need an extension on this project." (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Orientation move	"Opening discourse moves which serve an orientation function but do not necessarily mitigate or aggravate the request in any way". (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p.3212)	"You know the seminar paper I'm supposed to be giving on the 29th . . . ." "I have a question about the essay. . . " (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
Compliment /sweetener	"Employed to flatter the interlocutor and to put them into a positive mood" (Schauer, 2009: p.92)	"Your opinion counts", "I hope you feel better" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)

Name	Explanation	Example
Pre-closings /thanks	"To show gratitude towards the addressee in advance for the anticipated help." (Hallajian, 2014: p.56)	"Thanks for your time" "I look forward to hearing from you" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)
E-mail closing	"To end messages politely, 'Closing' is used at the end of e-mails." (Hallajian, 2014: p.56)	"Best, Sincerely" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011: p. 3212)

The above discussion has shown how strategies of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) and CCSARP (2011) are interrelated. The present study constructed its theoretical framework from these two main sources to enable the analysis of politeness strategies in the head acts of e-mail requests written by Libyan PG students in Malaysia to their lecturers. The request strategies on scale of directness level were identified. The modifications used to modify and mitigate the force of requests were also investigated and discussed in relation to politeness strategies.

2.7 Politeness in Request within E-Mail

E-mail which is an abbreviation of electronic mail, can be defined as "the use of computer systems to transfer messages between users" (Crystal, 2003, p. 10), or even by using smartphones in this digital era. E-mail is characterised by written and oral language features since e-mail carries a dynamic, ephemeral and interactive character, at the same time, e-mail cannot be labelled entirely as an oral communication types, because the interlocutors do not hear nor see one another (Collot & Belmore, 1996). Since e-mails' conventions are not absolutely specified, and its nature is still ambiguous, e-mail is a mode of communication that can pose particular challenges for both NS and NNS students.

This study selected e-mail to be studied because e-mail is a natural data that represent the actual language students' use. Second, it is a hybrid nature of oral and written communication styles so it is a unique type of message. Lastly, in institutional settings

such as universities, e-mail is heavily used as an interpersonal commutation medium to request different academic purposes.

To sum, e-mail is a new relatively form of interaction that is one type of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). Pickering and King (1995) state that it refers to "person to person communication … over computer networks" (p. 479). E-mail does not have specified linguistic conventions, this makes it a challengeable means for performing polite communication for NS and NNS students alike. Libyan PG students and lecturers at Malaysian universities who use English as Lingua franca are cases to study politeness in e-mail request.

2.7.1 Politeness Strategies in E-mail

Politeness strategies in e-mail have been investigated in various contexts including: business (Goudarzi, Ghonsooly &Taghipour, 2015), workplace (Leontaridou, 2015) and educational settings (Chejnova, 2014). However, only a few studies have attempted to address the use of politeness strategies in e-mail at academic settings. This section provides a review of the studies that have investigated politeness strategies using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework in e-mail, which are mostly based on the analysis of written text.

Investigators understand that politeness strategies are used differently by people from different cultures (Al-Shalawi, 2001; Najeeb, et al., 2012; Chejnova, 2014). Linguistic realizations differ from culture to culture and are used differently in different societies (Sifianou, 1992). For example, cultures such as that of Arabs, whose politeness structured by two concepts: religious faith and social conventions (Samarah, 2015), operate using negative and positive politeness strategies as a continuum rather than a dichotomous concept (Al-Shalawi, 2001; Najeeb, et al., 2012). Similarly, Greek students preferred a range of negative and positive politeness strategies (Chejnova, 2014).

Al-Shalawi (2001) conducted a study attempted to explore the politeness strategies utilized to reduce the Saudi ESL students' English disagreements within e-mails. The study also aimed to assess the usefulness of the framework by Brown and Levinson (1987). The data were natural e-mails collected for a period of three months. The findings revealed that strategies of positive and negative politeness were both used. The research proposed that these two strategies should be treated not as dichotomous concepts, but as a continuum between positive and negative strategies.

A study conducted by Bulut and Rababah (2007) investigated authentic e-mails written in English by Saudi females to their male professors. A total of 99 e-mails with different speech act performances were sent by 9 female Arab Saudi students to their NS speaker teachers. The results revealed that positive politeness was the preferred strategy, which was not suitable in the status-unequal context, and could lead to pragmatic failure. In addition, they oriented toward negative politeness in their form of address.

Another study by Najeeb et al. (2012) analysed Arab PG students' politeness strategies in their e-mails while they were pursuing higher education in Malaysia. The study revealed that direct strategies were preferred. Eighteen e-mails were sent by six Arab student participants from three different universities. The results showed that Arab students used various politeness strategies, including both negative and positive strategies. In particular, they tended to be more direct in making requests.

In Chejnova's (2014) study of e-mails written by Czech students, the researcher explored verbal politeness makers in the forms of address and the frequency of internal or external modifications. Choice of politeness behaviors, following Brown and Levinson (1987), was the primary concern. The data (e-mail messages sent to the author) were collected from students who were majoring in the Czech language or teaching at primary level schools. A total of 260 e-mails was analysed. Regarding the dimension of directness

level, the CCSARP framework was adapted from the work of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Blum-Kulka et al., (1989), and Biesenbach-Lucas (2007). Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categorization of internal and external mitigations was used to analyse the data. In addition, the researcher drew upon the work of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) and Schauer (2009). Similar to findings from previous studies, Chejnova found that lexical modifiers were used less frequently. Moreover, syntactic modification was employed as a negative strategy to minimise the imposition of the request

These studies have revealed similarities in using negative and positive politeness strategies with the implication that culture-specific differences might present challenges for students faced with interacting in cross-cultural communications. From the different politeness strategies, only the on record politeness (positive and negative strategies) were studied. Thus, the present study extended the analysis to incorporate four strategies of politeness (negative, positive, bald on record, and off record) based on the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). Additionally, most of the studies conducted in the context of NS and NNS speakers of English. However, this study investigated politeness strategies where both students and lecturers were NNS speakers of English who use English as a *lingua franca*. As an addition to the limited research that has been carried out on politeness in e-mail requests within an academic context, this study investigated politeness strategies in e-mail requests written by Libyan PG students to their lecturers at selected Malaysian universities.

2.8 Previous Studies on Requests

This section discusses several studies on the request speech act in a range of different contexts. Empirical studies that have been conducted in different contexts using different media of production are summarized and discussed. Studies that have been carried out in the context of student-lecturers interactions are presented to highlight the research gap

that this study is designed to fill. Contrastive studies that compare the e-mail request production of NSs and NNSs are also highlighted. Finally, a small number of interlanguage pragmatic studies are reviewed to build a more complete picture of what has been discussed in the literature. These studies are presented and discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections.

2.8.1 Empirical Studies on Requests

Studies on requests reported in the literature tend to have used different methods of data collection, including discourse completion tests (DCT) (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008), role play (Felix-Brasdefer, 2007), text book (Mahdavian & Shahrokhi, 2014), SMS messages (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016), and conversations in TV series (Yazdanfar & Bonyadi, 2016). In this section, a few studies are reviewed to build an overview of the empirical studies that have been conducted in relation to request speech acts in different contexts and cultures.

Felix-Brasdefer (2007) investigated the development of request use and form in three groups of Spanish students (i.e. beginner, intermediate and advanced). Seven request situations were used to collect data via role play in face to face interactions. Three dimensions of CCSARP by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as modified by Reiter (2000) to fit Spanish data were analyzed: directness of requests, modifications, and request perspectives. The beginner group realized their request directly, which the researcher attributed to their lack of competence in situational variation. Intermediate and advanced learners used conventionally indirect requests with high frequency. The beginners preferred to use grounders, while preparators were used more by advanced learners. For internal modifications, conditional forms were used frequently among the advanced group, while the intermediate group them infrequently, and the beginner group did not use them at all.

A study conducted by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008) concentrated on the modification role of internal and external mitigation. The study examined Greek learners who modified their English requests and focused on the extent to which they deviated from NS norms, particularly British speakers, in the use internal/external modification. Situations used in the study were power asymmetrical, i.e. situations where the recipient has high power than the writer. Data were collected using DCT and semi-structured interviews. The subjects of the data were 100 learners and 92 NSs of British English. The Greek learners underused lexical/phrasal modification, while they tended to overuse disarmers and preparators, which represent external modification.

Another study that used DCT as the data collection method was that of Al-Marrani and Sazalie (2010). They attempted to study request strategies in Yemeni Arabic by male speakers. The situations consisted of two contexts: one involved male-to-male interaction, and the other was male-to-female interaction. The data were collected from 168 male and 168 female students at Sana'a University. Six situations were presented which varied according to power, distance and imposition of the request. The stage of data analysis in the CCSARP developed by Blum-Kulka was used to code the linguistic data. The results found out that Yemeni Arabic speakers tended to use a high level of directness in male-to-male interaction. This indicated closeness and solidarity between interlocutors. On the other hand, indirectness was preferred in male-to-female interaction, which the researchers attributed to religious and cultural values.

In a comparative study by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013), she compared naturally occurring requests in telephone interactions and written DCT (WDCT). More specifically, the study compared request strategies, internal modification, and request perspective in requests made by British NSs. The natural data containing 110 requests were collected in a period of 5 months, while elicited data comprised 87 requests collected in written form. The participants were university students from the UK. Blum-Kulka et

al.'s (1989) model was used to analyze the degree of directness and modification. For coding and analyzing the internal modifications, Economidou-Kogetsidis adopted classifications from several sources (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Edmondson, 1981; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). The study revealed that more direct strategies were used in requests in the WDCT than in naturally occurring data. In the natural data, the conventional indirect strategy was used with a higher frequency than in the WDCT elicited data. In particular, 'please' markers were more frequent in the data elicited from the WDTC, while downtoners were used more extensively in the natural data. Moreover, there was greater use of syntactic modification in the naturally occurring data. In the elicited data, participants tended to adopt a speaker perspective, while a hearer perspective was preferred in the natural data. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) observed that the data collected by these two methods showed significant differences in the frequencies with which strategies and modifications were employed; however, a similar trend was found in directness and modifications. She concluded that the WDCT requests represented an approximation of the naturally occurring requests in this specific situation.

In Mahdavian and Shahrokhi's (2014) study, the researchers aimed to compare the use of request speech act strategies as they appeared in school English text books (i.e. *Top Notch* series 1&2, 1A and B, and Iranian high school text books). The study endeavored to identify the request strategies based on the framework of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and taxonomies reported by Shahrokhi (2012). The request head acts that were analyzed in the study were request speech acts that occurred in conversational sections in the Top Notch series and in language function sections of each lesson of Iranian high school English text books. All three types of request strategies were present in the data, with a preference for direct strategies. The findings also revealed that the Top Notch series paid attention to the communicative nature of language.

Yazdanfar and Bonyadi (2016) attempted to compare requests in English and Persian. Their work focused on the daily use of request strategies in interactions of English and Persian speakers, as well as the modifications used to mitigate the requests. The data were obtained from TV series in American English and Persian. A corpora of 300 requests were collected from conversations in each TV series. The data were analyzed according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's developed model (1984) to categorize the directness degree and the use of internal/external modifications. Both groups of speakers tended to use 'imperatives' as the most direct request strategy. English speakers used more internal modifications than external modifications.

A recent study on politeness i SMS messages is Eshghinejad and Moini's (2016) study. They studied the politeness strategies employed by female and male message senders to determine if any difference exists between these two groups of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners when transmitting SMS messages to their superiors, taking into account that the social distance and the asymmetric power relationship existed among interlocutors. A dataset of 300 L2 (i.e. English) and L1 (i.e. Persian) letters was gathered. From data analysis, the study showed that there was no significant difference between male and female groups in the use of positive and negative politeness

2.8.2 Requests in Students-Lecturers' E-Mail Communication

Studies on e-mail requests in academic settings include studies on e-mail request production by NS and NNS speakers of English. The production studies use speech errors to learn about the language realization. They examine the linguistic features of e-mail requests produced by NS and NNS students. In general, these studies have concluded that NS and NNS students compose e-mails in different ways in terms of linguistic realization, forms, and modification. Studies on pragmatic research have focused on the examination of speakers' choice with regard to interlocutors' performance of speech acts, choice of

speakers' strategies, and linguistic patterns utilised to convey an "illocutionary meaning and politeness" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3195). In most of the request studies, the data have been based on Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) (such as Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010) or on role play (such as Felix-Brasdefer, 2007), because it is easier to elicit larger amounts of simulated data than it is to obtain natural and authentic data. As a result, scrutiny of authentic e-mail data has not yet received as much attention as it deserves because of the difficulties involved in collecting authentic speech act performances. Even studies which use authentic data have usually used a relatively small number of e-mails addressed to the researcher himself because of ethical issues and privacy restrictions (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Chejnova, 2014; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

Research studies have looked at the e-mail communication of students to their lecturers to investigate how e-mails vary from spoken discourse in a second language (Chapman, 1997; Duthler, 2006). Other research has concentrated on the way in which e-mail communication among NS and NNS or between NNS students of various linguistic backgrounds can aid in the process of second language learning (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). However, only a relatively limited amount of research has investigated the way second language students use requests in e-mails from the linguistic variations which are socially acceptable given the power asymmetry between participants of such unequal ranks in the interactions and a pragmatic viewpoint (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; Danielewicz-Betz, 2013; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). These studies are relevant to the current work because they have investigated e-mail interactions between learners and lecturers, and the manner in which learners employ e-mail to interact with authoritative superiors in an academic context.

In reviewing the research conducted by scholars on e-mail requests, it can be seen that the studies are divided into two main aspects: those that follow the framework of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and those that use the CCSARP framework. The former focuses on the way a speech act makes a polite or impolite request from a face perspective, while the latter examines the speech act and the features of politeness. The analysis of requests in studies using CCSARP initiated by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) have received more attention compared to those following the framework of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). However, the current study has combined both models. Various studies that relate to the above-mentioned issues and are relevant to the present study include the following: Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Burgucu-Tazegul, Han, & Engin, 2016; Chejnova, 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Zarei & Mohammadi, 2012; Zhu, 2012.

2.8.3 Contrastive Studies of E-mail Requests

Among the earlier research conducted in a student-lecturer context was a work by Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996). The study concentrated primarily on an evaluation of the positive and negative effect of students' requests. Other features of the e-mail request were investigated, such as the level of imposition, the formality of e-mails, and use of downgraders. In terms of the positive effect of requests and the linguistic forms used, the study found no significant differences between NS and NNS. However, the findings showed that pragmatic failure occurred during interactions between NNS students and their lecturers because they used inappropriate and insufficient mitigation, gave unreasonable time frames, and students focus on their own personal needs. The authors concluded that students overestimated the level of lecturers' obligation to respond to their requests. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, (1996, p. 67) further concluded that "Requests that do not use suitable mitigation or that do not address that unwarranted

balance of the faculty as an organization, against the faculty as other people, risk negative evaluations".

Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) conducted a study designed to fulfill three aims: to discover the level of directness, to compare lexical and syntactic politeness devices, and to determine the realisation pattern of requests in e-mails of two groups: American NSs and NNS students with Asian backgrounds. A relatively large number of naturally occurring messages were analysed in the study (382 NS e-mails, and 151 NNS e-mails). The findings contributed to the literature, because a hint strategy was detected in the data, which had not occurred in previous studies that relied on the elicitation method of DCT. Both groups used direct strategies in low imposition situations, while a conventionally indirect strategy was used in high imposition situations with a few hints in NNS data. Regarding politeness devices, both groups used syntactic modification, but in different degrees. Furthermore, NS students modified their speech act more lexically than NNS students did. On the dimension of request perspective, NNS students were more inclined to a reader perspective than NS students were.

In a study by Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010), they analysed internal and external modifications and request perspective of two groups, NS and NNS. A written discourse completion test was the instrument used to collect the data from 176 respondents, and the CCSARP framework was used to code the data. The findings indicated that NNS students tended to use zero marking (i.e. non modified requests) within changing the requests and limiting use of consultative devices, lexical politeness markers, as well as cajolers. Both groups used a grounder strategy, but NNS included more details. The authors recommended that NNS should be taught pragmatics when they study abroad.

Zhu's (2012) research investigated the directness level as well as the mitigation features in learners' e-mail requests, and lexical and phrasal modifiers of Chinese-English in e-mail request strategies, by comparing two NNS groups with different levels of English proficiency: non-English majors (NEM) and English majors (EM). A mixed method study used DCT to collect data, and supplemented it with a questionnaire to rate the level of the imposition of each e-mail. The researcher adopted CCSARP as modified by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) to code the request strategies. The main finding was that both groups suffered from a low level of pragmatic linguistic competence and low proficiency in English, which caused a low level of socio-pragmatic competence, according to the correlation analysis.

Tytar (2015) set out to determine the linguistic features of e-mail requests produced by NS and NNS students of English. The study focused on the linguistic features such as head act, supportive moves, and textual features. The subjects were 12 NNS and 15 NS university students from different majors. Chen's (2001) model was used to analyze the linguistic and textual features of the e-mails. The findings indicated difference between the two groups in the use of opening and closing features. Both groups preferred conventionally indirect strategies, and the most frequently used external modification was a grounder.

Recently, a study by Deveci and Hamida (2017) aimed to investigate the structure, request strategies, and modifications used in student e-mails, and to evaluate whether students obtained any benefit from instruction how to improve their request speech act use in e-mails. The study used DCT to collect the data from 105 Arab students who represented the first group at UAE University; the second group consisted of 21 British NSs. The researchers used Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) framework. The study revealed that Arab participants tended to use indirect strategies. Moreover, although hints

were also used to express requests, they were used with much lower frequency compared to conventionally indirect requests. The Arab students tended to use few intensifiers in their requests compared to NSs who used them frequently (67% for NSs vs. 4% for the Arab students). Imperatives were common in the data from the Arab students, which suggests that the Arab students were influenced by their first language: the imperative is commonly used in requesting in the Arabic language, with expressions used to reduce the force like 'excuse me and please'. Instruction in the composing of e-mail requests in English did increase the students' awareness of politeness strategies.

2.8.4 Studies on Inter-Language Pragmatics of E-mail Requests

Interlanguage research on pragmatic e-mail was carried out by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). Authentic English e-mail messages from Greek students were sent out to the researcher in order to investigate the directness level and modifications (internal/external one) employed in those e-mails. Unlike the aforementioned studies, this study attempted to understand NS lecturers' perceptions about unmodified and direct e-mails. E-mail data were collected from 11 lecturers which were sent by a total of 200 Cypriot learners from the English language department. Regarding the directness level, CCSARP by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) modified to suit e-mail data by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) was adopted for the analysis. For the extent of modifications, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework was used. The outcomes showed that, in general, the e-mails were characterised by directness, with an underuse of internal modification, and deletion of closings and greetings. A pragmatic analysis of the e-mails gave the impression that lecturers had no option but to obey the requests, and students failed to realize the extent of the imposition that was involved, a situation which often leads to a pragmatic failure.

Zarei and Mohammadi (2012) conducted a study to investigate the features of politeness in English e-mail request of Iranian PG students to their lecturers by analysing

the directness level of request strategies, internal and external modification, and forms of address. In addition, the perception of Iranian lecturers was evaluated. The study used a mixed method approach, as the researcher used descriptive and inferential analysis to count the frequency occurrence of the strategies and modifications, as well as the forms of address. The researchers then explained and illustrated the findings with a qualitative approach from different perspective, i.e. social and cultural aspects. The findings of the study were in line with some results from previous studies, such as those of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). The primary result was that indirect strategies were used in the requests for information. The politeness marker 'please' was employed with direct strategies to mitigate the directness level. Regarding internal modifications, students did not employ them regularly. One of the significant results of the study was that all the participants used external modifications, because such mitigations were explicit and require no complex pragmatic competence.

The purpose of Tseng's (2016) study was to investigate the request head and politeness features of Taiwanese's students e-mail requests. Two groups of students, with high English language proficiency and low English language proficiency, respectively, participated. All 60 students also answered a questionnaire about the level of imposition, linguistic proficiency, pragmatic transfer, and difficulties in composing e-mail requests. The results revealed that there were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of directness level used: students of both levels of language proficiency adopted more direct strategies as main request head acts, for clarity. They also used the most number of supportive moves prior to the high level of imposition request. In the highest imposition request, the high-intermediate proficiency group displayed more varieties of internal and external modifiers in their requests than their less proficient counterparts.

In another recent study, Burhucu-Tazegul, Han and Engin (2016) focused on Turkish NNS learners. They investigated the extent to which directness and lexical modifications were used by Turkish learners in their English e-mails to their NNS lecturers. The data were 34 authentic e-mail requests from the learners. The study used mixed methods of analysis, in that the request strategies were counted, while the modifications were analyzed qualitatively to find out how Turkish learners of English modify their requests. The study revealed that Turkish learners tended to use the most direct strategies (direct questions and want statement). Although previous findings found that learners of English tended to use the imperative strategy, these Turkish learners avoided use of imperative forms in their e-mails.

2.9 Concluding Remarks

Studies on e-mail politeness using the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987) have shown the way students' pragmatic awareness of politeness is expressed in their e-mails. This framework could present a clear picture on how e-mail can be used and exploited by students when interacting with their lecturers to compose more effective requests using politeness strategies. The review of relevant previous studies (above) enriches the background of the current study, and helps to highlight the gap that exists in the literature, which is that integration of the politeness strategy framework and CCSARP to investigate e-mail requests has seldom been addressed. All the studies presented above are important in the field of NNS students' e-mail request to their lecturers. However, there are a number of limitations in these studies.

First, most of the previous studies are mainly quantitative in nature. However, the present study is mainly a qualitative study; the descriptive approach was used as supplementary approach. Thus, content analysis has been applied to incorporate a list of

strategies and linguistic devices, and then simply counting the number of times each strategy occurs in each e-mail.

Second, many researchers compared NS with NNS student groups. This is problematic due to cultural differences between different NNS of English, since the studies tend to treat the NNS interlocutors as a homogenous group, which is often not the case. Furthermore, NNS of English often use the language as a *lingua franca* (i.e. a common language between the NNS group and other NNS speakers, such as the Libyan PG students and their Malaysian lecturers). House (as cited in Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2015, pp.1-2) stated that "In English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) communication, the situation might be somewhat different. *Lingua franca* English usually involves participants from different linguistic and national backgrounds and it tends to be characterised by possible variations in the cultural norms that need to be applied during interaction".

Thirdly, investigations of authentic e-mail communication between NNS of English (i.e. students and lecturers) has not received the consideration it deserves, since a large number of studies have relied on DCT to elicit data (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; Tytar, 2015; Zhu, 2012). To overcome the limitations of data collection of this method, the corpora of this study relies on authentic e-mails to demonstrate how Libyan PG students perform requests in actual situations. Further, in a number of previous studies, data (e-mails) were sent only to the author in the student-lecturer context, and the students' backgrounds in some studies vary to the extent that it may affect the results (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Chejnova, 2014; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). Students from different cultures might have different perceptions of politeness norms and this could affect the general result of the studies. This study, therefore, included only Libyan PG students who sent e-mails to their lecturers in various field of studies.

Finally, although e-mail interactions among students and lecturers has been scrutinised by a number of different researchers (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; Bloch, 2002; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig 1996; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012), to date, there have been no studies made using a sample of Libyan PG students. These students, who come from Libya where communicating by e-mail between students and lecturers is rare, are faced with the challenge of composing polite e-mails, in English, to their lecturers in a new cultural environment (i.e. Malaysian universities). Since using e-mail in Malaysian universities is accepted channel to consult with lecturers and to make requests regarding a wide variety of academic matters, the Libyan PG students who are probably unfamiliar with the language conventions that should be used when addressing their lecturers, may unwittingly deviate from the accepted norms.

In conclusion, politeness plays an important role in interactions between interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds. However, misunderstanding and deviation from social conventions in its use can be expected. In students-lecturers communication context, politeness is an important issue, particularly in the context in which the current research is framed, because the interlocutors come from different cultures in situations where the use of English language as the *lingua franca*. For this reason, students need to be aware of politeness norms so that they can compose appropriate e-mails. Students should know how to compose an appropriate e-mail in order to accomplish their goals and also to be aware of the impact of their e-mails upon their lecturers. To gain a better understanding of potential issues and the possibility of pragmatic failure in the student-lecturer exchanges, the current study seeks to identify the Libyan students' politeness strategies, directness level, and the modifications they use to clarify their requests. In the following chapter, the conceptual framework, data collection procedures, and the approach to data analysis employed are presented.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, it describes and justifies the procedures of data collection and the approach to data analysis employed. It is divided into ten sections: conceptual framework, research design, selection of participants and e-mail corpora, data collection, analytical framework, analytical procedure, ethical considerations, and a conclusion).

3.2 Conceptual Framework

E-mail is a type of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). In an academic setting, it is used by students to communicate with lecturers, who are in a position of power and authority over them. In this type of communication dynamic, students need to follow "high pragmatic competence, and awareness of the politeness conventions and e-mail etiquette" (Chen, Rau & Rau, 2016, p. 233) in order to show deference and respect to their lecturers The conventions and linguistic devices which facilitate interaction between students and lecturers need to be investigated. Requests are a socially delicate speech act because the requester imposes an imposition of varying weightiness on the recipient. For this reason, request is one of most studied speech acts, in both oral and written contexts. In the past few years, students have increasingly been making requests for various academic purposes in the hybrid medium of e-mail.

To perform a request, students usually use request strategies with different levels of directness. These request sub-strategies involve different levels of imposition on the face of lecturers, so students need to employ modification either internally or externally or both to minimize the level of imposition. The amount of modification, or if there is zero modification, may influence evaluations of politeness as well as the level of directness. This, in turn, would influence whether the speech act is considered to be polite or

impolite. It should also be noted that evaluations of politeness are culture specific. Thus, focusing on politeness and studying its strategies is crucial for foreign students in an unfamiliar cultural environment.

In research on politeness, Brown and Levinson's (1987) model is the most influential work, and it provided the underlying theoretical framework of the present study. The e-mails of Libyan PG students studying at selected Malaysian universities are the principal focus of investigation. The analysis centred on the different politeness strategies and request strategies used by the students in their e-mail requests to lecturers. The purpose of the study is to identify areas of pragmatic inappropriacy so that students can be made aware of the appropriate and inappropriate strategies that should be used when interacting with their lecturers so as to avoid pragmatic failures and negative outcomes.

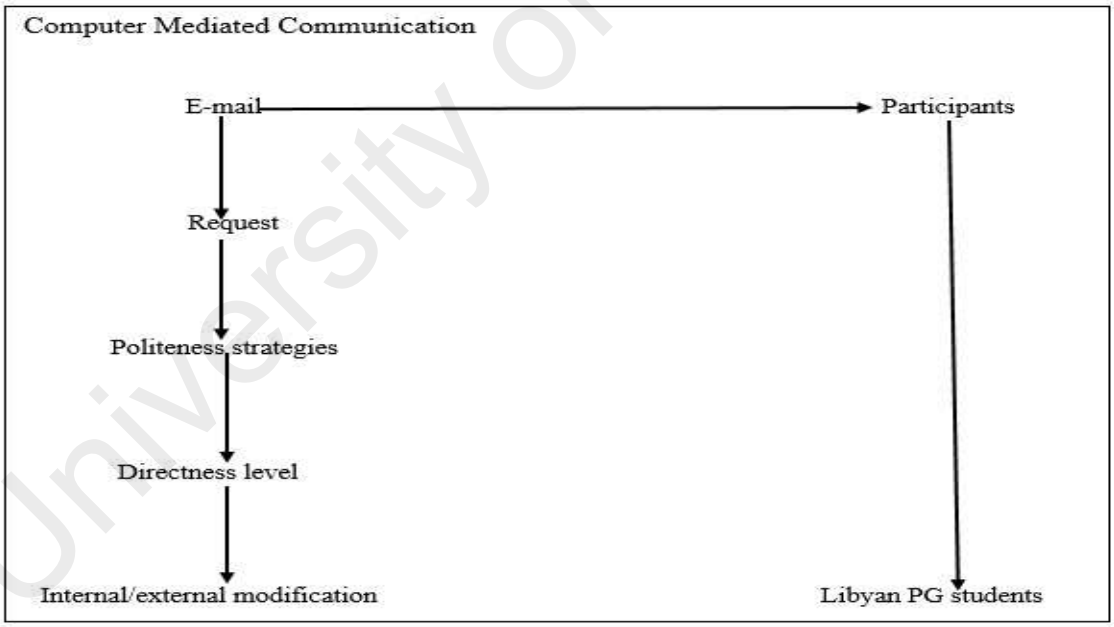

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

3.3 Research Design

Applying a qualitative method, the present work attempts to explore the politeness phenomenon in the context of e-mail requests. Beginning with a wide angled approach to classify the politeness strategies that occur in e-mails, the analysis investigates the

directness level of the request acts, and moves on to identify the manner in which internal/external modifications are realized. To analyze data qualitatively, content analysis usually focuses on the frequency with which the feature of interest occurs in texts (Carley, 1993), so this technique was used to investigate the various politeness strategies and request sub-strategies in the e-mail requests of Libyan PG students. For descriptive analysis, an Excel sheet was used to tabulate the occurrence of the politeness strategies (positive, negative, bald on record, or off the record), the request strategies on the directness level (direct, conventional indirect, and non-conventional indirect sub-strategies), internal mitigations (lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders, syntactic downgraders) and external mitigations (supportive moves and aggravating moves).

3.4 Participants

The participants in this study were 20 Libyan PG students residing temporarily in Malaysia, pursuing various fields of studies other than linguistics, considering that linguistic students ought to have pragmatic awareness regarding politeness. The students who participated in the study are a self-selected sample: they volunteered to participate. In the first stage, the students were requested to complete a questionnaire about their background, which included demographic information, former English language experience including various levels of English proficiency of participants, number of years learning English, and exposure to English. Table 3.1 sets out the background information in more detail.

Table 3.1: Background Information of Participants

Current Program	Master Students	12
	PhD	8
Gender	Male	9
	Female	11
Faculty	Faculty of Science	4 (Applied Physics Department)
		3 (Analytical Chemistry Department)
	Faculty of Computer Sciences	4 (Information Technology Department)
	Faculty of Islamic Studies	2 (Islamic Architecture)
	Faculty of Environmental Studies	2 (Environmental Economics)
	Faculty of Economics and Administration	1 (Economics Department)
	Faculty of Agriculture	1 (Agricultural Economics)
	School of Business Management	1 (Accounting)
	Faculty of Engineering	1 (Chemical Engineering)
	Faculty of Art and Social Science	1 (Geography Department)
Language proficiency	IELTS band scores ranging from 5 to 7	7
	Passed English course administered by their respective universities	13
Have studied in an English-speaking countries	Never	13
	Yes	7
Frequency of writing e-mails in English	Seldom	12
	Frequently	8

Participants are post-graduate students, including Masters Students (n=12) and PhD students (n=8) students; seven were from UM, five from UKM, and four each from UPM and UUM. Four are PG students of applied physics (Faculty of Science), four are studying Information Technology (Computer Science), three are studying analytical chemistry (Faculty of Science), two are studying Islamic architecture (Islamic Studies), two are studying environmental economics (Environmental Studies), and one student each is studying economics (Faculty of Economics and Administration), agricultural economics (Faculty of Agriculture), accounting (School of Business Management), chemical engineering (Faculty of Engineering) and geography (Faculty of Arts and Social Science). Seven of the participants have IELTS certificates with an overall band scores ranging

from 5 to 7, while others have passed English courses as a requirement from their respective universities. Most of the participants started learning English at preparatory school (60%), while some (30%) had learned English after the preparatory level, and the remaining participants (10%) had learned English at primary school. Most of the students (13) have never studied in an English speaking country, while the remaining (7) had done so with a purpose of studying English language or doing their MA. Twelve of the participants reported that they seldom write English e-mails, while (8) stated that they frequently compose e-mails in English.

3.5 E-mail Corpora

The e-mail corpora used consisted of 109 English e-mails addressed to lecturers during the years 2015 to 2016. Language errors such as grammatical mistakes, contracted forms, and misspellings in the e-mails were not changed, so the exact way that Libyan PG participants expressed their e-mail requests was investigated. Both requests for action (e.g. assistance with submission of work, request for supervision feedback, signing a report, etc.) and requests for information (e.g. asking questions about assignment/exam results, class time table, course contents) were involved in the e-mail requests collected. Both higher and lower imposition requests such as requests for an assignment extension or appointment within lecturer are thus retained for this study. None of the e-mails are follow-up requests in a series of e-mails, so they can be considered as 'self-contained' requests.

The recipients of the e-mails were 48 lecturers who were doctorate holders and teaching at different faculties of the four universities selected as sites of the study (UM, UPM, UKM, UUM) where Libyan students studied. The lecturers' style of communication with their students could be characterized as formal but friendly. Interlocutors had a formal communication style with the students during office hour's consultations or lectures.

In order to collect data for this study, Libyan PG students from the four selected Malaysian universities (UM, UPM, UKM, UUM) were requested to forward up to ten e-mail requests that students had written to Malaysian lecturers in the past. An additional criterion for selection of e-mails was specified in the instructions to the students: that the e-mails should include a request element. Those who were willing to participate signed a consent form. They were assured that all identifying features, such as names and addresses, would be kept confidential. A total of 26 Libyan PG students agreed to participate, and each forwarded around 4 to 12 examples of e-mail requests to the researcher, which formed a corpus of a total of 109 e-mails. This can be considered a fair representation of the e-mail requests written by the selected participants. A similar sized corpus of e-mails is used in previous studies, such as those of Hallajian (2014) (128 e-mails); Lazarescu (2013) (84 e-mails); Zarei and Mohammadi, (2012) (60 e-mails); and Krish and Salman (2016) (50 e-mails). The data in some studies comprise e-mails sent to a single lecturer, who is the researcher him/herself (e.g. Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Chejnova, 2014; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). However, in this study, different lecturers in different fields of study were the recipients of the e-mails, and this contributes to the authenticity of the data.

3.6 Data Collection

The procedure used for collecting the corpora for the present study is similar to that used by Chen (2001). Libyan PG students attending courses in four selected Malaysian universities were requested to forward up to 10 request e-mails students had previously written and addressed to lecturers. In the early stages of the study, the researcher relied on a Facebook group called “Academic Affairs of the Libyan Students” to communicate with the students. Students who were willing to participate contacted the researcher and signed a consent form that assures them that all identifying features, such as names and addresses, would be kept confidential. Only 26 PG students from Libya who are attending

courses in which the English language as the medium of instruction agreed to participate. A large number of Libyan international students in Malaysia are studying using Arabic as the medium of instruction, so this affected participant recruitment for the study. A total of 160 e-mails contributed by the 26 Libyan PG students were received by the researcher.

However, only 109 e-mails (from a total of 20 students: 9 male and 11 female) are included in the corpora for this study. The e-mails of the other 6 students' did not fulfil the requirement, as they were written in Arabic transcript. Moreover, the rest of the e-mails (51 e-mails) which did not meet the criteria set for this study were also excluded.

Upon receiving the e-mails, the researcher first checked to determine whether they met the criteria set for the study: the e-mails messages were required to have at least 1 request head act and contain no confidential information. The e-mails that had no request act were also excluded. In the next stage, the all selected e-mails were anonymized, and a generic code such as S1 UKM E-mail 1, S2 UUM E-mail 6, was assigned to identify the writer and the university where it originated.

3.7 Analytical Framework

In the first chapter of this study, the research problem that provided the rationale for this study was discussed. The theoretical framework on which the study was constructed was reviewed. Next, the early works in which episodes of politeness and request strategies in e-mail request were classified and organized and producers of data collection were reviewed. The present study drew upon two frameworks: the politeness strategy framework (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Politeness is used to show awareness of others' face wants, and politeness strategies are used to minimise the threat force that the request speech act poses for the lecturer's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These strategies are performed on record with redressive action (i.e. positive and negative politeness) and

without redressive action (bald on record politeness). The fourth politeness strategy is off record. These strategies were identified in the head act of requests performed by Libyan PG students. Head acts are essential in any the request sequence is that "the minimal unit which can realize a request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.275). For the next step of analysis, the request strategies in the exact head act are analyzed on a directness scale, based on the CCSARP framework (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Request strategies are "the obligatory choice of the level of directness by which the request is realized" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.278). The head act can be performed alone or with supportive moves and elements to mitigate it; these elements are called modifications. Modifications are various linguistic elements (i.e. syntactic, lexical and phrasal devices) play role to soften the head act or the context where the head act is embedded (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). These modifications include both internal and external modifications. Internal modifications are optional additions to request head act which are non-essential for the realization of the head act (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). Internal modifications are the components employed before or after the head act to mitigate or intensify the request force impact (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The analysis of the data was carried out simultaneously on these two frameworks because they overlap and they are interrelated. This relationship is detailed in the following sections and in the discussion in Chapter 4.

3.8 Analytical Procedure

This section addresses the manner in which the data were analysed, following the frameworks adapted and described in the second chapter. Figure 3.2 (below) illustrates the complete analytical process of the present study. Since the study aimed to identify the politeness strategies, the request strategies on a scale of directness, and modifications, the following analytical procedure was used to achieve the study objectives. In the first phase, the general e-mail text features of opening and closing were isolated by distribution

analysis, which divided the emails into three sequential elements: opening, requesting and closing (Chen, 2001). Secondly, inter-textual analysis focused on the request head act to identify the type of politeness strategies written (on-record politeness strategies: positive, negative and bald-on-record; and off record strategy) in the Libyan students' e-mail requests. The framework of Brown and Levinson (1987) used to analyze the pragmatic choices and how deference and solidarity are expressed.

Figure 3.2: Analytical Procedure

In the second phase, the coding protocol of the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP) Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) was adopted for coding the request strategies and modifications. First, the exact sentence in each e-mail that contained the request head act was identified, and classified according to the purpose of the request: to make an appointment, to ask for an extension, to ask for supervision, to ask for feedback etc. These head acts identified were then classified into request sub-strategies with the dimension of directness level (i.e. the most direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect).

In the third phase, modifications which affect the illocutionary force of the requests were analyzed. Two types of modifications were considered: internal modifications and external modifications. First, internal modifications (lexical/phrasal downgraders and

upgraders and syntactic downgraders) were identified within each head act, because they modify the request impact on the lecturer internally, using specific lexical and syntactic devices. Then external modifications, which can indirectly modify the head act at points throughout the whole email, were located.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies focus on how the speaker can soften the request using specific strategies (positive, negative, off record and bald on record) while the CCSARP coding framework at the syntactic and lexical level shows more thorough analysis of politeness devices possible. The coding was used to analyze requests specifically for level of directness, and modifications realized through the use of lexical devices and syntactic choices.

The two frameworks (politeness strategies and CCSARP) used in the present study are not mutually exclusive; they interrelate with and overlap each other. The pragmatic choices can be analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework and to investigate the way solidarity and deference is expressed, while the CCSARP coding framework developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and revised by Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) focuses on request strategies and modifications that have an impact on whether the request is understood as polite or not by the lecturer. Further, these request strategies and modifications could negatively or positively affect politeness, and increase or lower the level of threat to the lecturer's face. This highlights the importance of using both of these frameworks to analyze the email requests. This overlap can emphasize some sub-strategies that are identified in modifications e.g. promise as a positive politeness strategy and is coded as a modification, too. Another example is that apology is a negative politeness strategy used to avoid an infringement between interlocutors, and is used as an external modification for posing requests. These similarities between the two frameworks are explored further in discussion on findings.

In order to ensure consistency in coding, the researcher invited two coders to take part in the data analysis procedure. The first coder is an Assistant Professor in the English Language and Literature Department, Letters Faculty, Kafkas University, Turkey. His main area of research is in the field of language learning, specifically in the roles of technology and EFL measurement and assessment issues. The second coder was a PhD student who was conducting her research on request speech act realizations. Using neutral raters aimed to avert rater bias on the part of the researcher, and reduce subjectivity in making judgments. In the next step, list of coding strategies and sub- strategies was generated from previous studies and from the data itself: Eshghinejad and Moini, 2016, Leontaridou, 2015, and Krish and Salman 2016 were referred to for politeness strategies; and Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, and Hallajian, 2014 were referred to for request strategies and modifications. Lastly, the emails were coded and the data were analysed. A review of the output of the three coders revealed minimal differences among them, so an inter-rater reliability test was considered to be unnecessary. In cases where a discrepancy occurred in the analysis, the researcher and the coders discussed the coding and arrived at an agreement.

3.8.1 Politeness Strategies

The first research question concerned the form of politeness used by Libyan PG students ('What politeness strategies occur in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests to their Malaysian lecturers?'). Politeness in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests was analysed and classified according to the four strategies of politeness (positive, negative, off record and bald-on-record) by Brown and Levinson (1987), as elaborated in the previous chapter. The findings are tabulated in tables. The findings are qualitatively explained and interpreted to investigate the strategies of politeness that occurred in the e-mail data.

The method used to identify the politeness strategies followed (Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016; Leontaridou, 2015; Krish & Salman 2016). For example, an utterance that expressed the reason for sending the e-mail and the use of the word 'because' were identified as 'give reason' sub-strategies. 'Being optimistic' was identified when the verb 'hope' was used in the utterance with the motivation of getting help from the lecturer. 'Promise' was identified in the case where 'will' in the future tense form was used and with an indication that the student and the lecturer share the same goal. Including both the student and the lecturers in the action was identified with the use of the pronoun 'we', which indicates both 'you' and 'I', and the request calls for cooperation. Examples and explanations are provided in Table 2.1.

The second politeness strategy is the negative strategy; this refers to using hedges or questions to minimize the imposition of the act. Utterances that were performed in the form of questioning about information or timetable time or meetings were identified as questions. Meanwhile, head acts that contained an 'if clause' were identified as belonging to the hedges sub-strategy. Be conventionally polite was identified by sentences and questions that queried about something e.g. fixing appointment which could be understood from the context, and the use of past forms of modal verbs (could) were classified as being indirect. In sentences where the student expressed gratitude to the lecturer and showed their indebtedness to the lecturer were identified as "Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the H" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.210). Minimizing the imposition sub-strategy was realized by words like 'just'. Examples are presented with explanations of these sub-strategies of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies (see Table 2.2).

Politeness without redressive action is bald on record. It refers to the most direct way of expressing a speech act and the use of imperatives. The use of imperative forms, which

syntactically show the imperative mood, were classified as bald-on-record strategy. Table (2.3) presents examples and illustrations.

Off-record was the last politeness strategy analysed in the present study. It refers to hinting or using ambiguous language to minimize the threat and provide deniability. Hints were identified in the case 'the attached file' phrase realized in the head act. Another off-record sub-strategy is to 'give clues of association', where the student mentions about some mutual knowledge shared with the lecturer and the exact request is hidden. Table (2.4) provides an explanation of this politeness strategy.

3.8.2 Request Strategies

To answer the second research question addressed in the study ('What request strategies are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?'), the CCSARP framework developed by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), based on Blum-Kulka, et al.'s (1989) earlier work, was utilized to analyse request strategies. Economidou-Kogetsidis revised the framework to suit e-mail data which contained requests. Following this revised taxonomy, requests in the current study were divided into three categories: the most direct which included "direct questions, elliptical requests, imperatives/mood derivable, performatives, want statements, need statements expectation statements, reminder statements and pre-decided statements"; conventionally indirect (query preparatory); and non-conventionally indirect (hints) (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, pp.3210,3211). In this analysis, the head act is the only compulsory component required in order that the message be interpreted as a request. The frequency of each sub-strategy was identified to determine the directness level of each head act. Some e-mails included more than one head act, and some requests were performed with more than one request sub-strategy. The main strategies and sub-strategies are presented and defined in Table (2.5), in Chapter 2.

3.8.3 Internal/External Modifications

In order to address the final research question ('What internal/external modifications are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?'), internal and external modifications within the e-mail requests were investigated. Internal modifications are achieved through lexical and phrasal/syntactic devices within the same head act. Downgraders soften the request illocutionary force while upgraders add more stress on the request. Syntactic downgraders represent syntactic choices that are used to modify the head act internally by modifying the impositive force of the request within the context in which the request is made (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Lexical/phrasal downgraders are categories that serve to soften the request impositive force through mitigating the head act internally by the use of particular lexical/phrasal means (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This study also examined lexical and phrasal upgraders which increase the request impact (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). External modifications may precede or follow the head act itself, modifying the head act indirectly, and thereby affecting the context in which it is employed (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

The coding of lexical/phrasal downgraders followed the work of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). The use of a politeness marker in front of, within, or after the head act was identified as an internal modification. Expressions like 'do not mind' were considered consultative devices used to realize modification that indicate cooperation between interlocutors. Downtoners were realized through the use of 'just' to modulate the impact of the request. How each modification was realized is exemplified in Table (2.6).

The study also examined lexical/phrasal upgraders: this type of modification was identified through three types of modifications: time intensifier, intensifier, and overstater. A time intensifier, for example, was realized by the expression 'as soon as possible'. More details and examples are shown in Table (2.8) in Chapter 2.

Part of the framework deals with internal syntactic modifications drawn from Blum Kulka et al. (1989), as any analysis of modification by syntactic downgraders was outside the scope of Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) study, and she recommended further investigation to build a full picture of the internal mitigation in e-mail requests by NNS students. In the present study, interrogative forms were not investigated as a type of syntactic modification; however, they were included as an element in the most direct request strategy, following Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). Sentences that included an 'if clause' were categorized as conditional clause. Meanwhile a conditional was classified when the modal verb had an optional function and could be replaced with indicative form e.g. (I ask about …). Examples and explanations are summarized in Table (2.8).

External modifications are the second category of modifications. They precede or follow the head act, and therefore modify the head act indirectly, so they affect the context in which it is employed. These modifications are realized by supportive moves. External modification coding scheme drew upon those of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). The taxonomy includes greeting/opening, grounder, self-introduction, disarmer, preparator, getting precommitment, promise, imposition minimizer, apology, orientation move, complement/sweetener, pre-closing/thanks, and e-mail closing. Data from the present study added salutation, attention getter, and appreciation statement. Some of these modifications indicate a positive politeness orientation (i.e. greeting/opening and grounder). However, some represent negative politeness, such as apology and imposition minimizer. Aggravating moves were excluded because they did not appear in the data corpus of the present study. These modifications are summarized with examples from the present corpus in Table (2.9).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Since the data consisted of personal e-mails, ethical issues had to be addressed. To this end, participants were asked to issue a consent letter by e-mail to the researcher, in which they consented to share their e-messages for the purpose of this study. After obtaining the students' agreement to share their e-mails, they were instructed how to forward their request e-mails that constituted the data for this study (See Appendix B). It was also mutually agreed between the researcher and the participants that any personal information contained in the e-mails would not be revealed, and all e-mails would be anonymized. Participants' anonymity was ensured by giving every participant an arbitrary identification number. The participants' e-mails were discarded from the data inbox once their e-mails were received, given an identification number, and saved in a secure file.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed and justified the research design adopted for the study. It has provided descriptive information about the subjects, and it has detailed the data collection procedures and the approach used for analysis. Finally, some ethical issues that arose in planning the data collection were discussed. In the next chapter, analyses of the three research questions are presented and interpreted. To answer the research questions more specifically, the chapter includes three sections: politeness strategies in e-mail requests from Libyan PG students; request strategies in e-mails; and modifications.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This study explores the phenomena of politeness evident in the e-mail requests written by Libyan International PG students to their lecturers in selected Malaysian universities. The data analyzed in this chapter were obtained from 20 Libyan PG students who sent requests via e-mails to different lecturers. From each student, five to six e-mails were collected. A totaling up 109 e-mails formed the corpora for analysis. The analysis presented here was guided primarily by politeness strategy model of Brown and Levinson (1987) to give insights into the occurrence of the different types of strategy used in the e-mail requests. This is complemented with Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework to investigate the request strategies in the e-mails; in particular, the types of modification used to express politeness in requests by the students were examined.

The organization of this chapter follows the order of the research questions. The first research question - What politeness strategies occur in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests to their Malaysian lecturers? Presents in section 4.2. Section 4.3 answers the second question, 'What request strategies are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?' Finally, Section 4.4 deals with the third research question, 'What internal/external modifications are used in e-mails from Libyan PG students to their Malaysian lecturers?' The findings were then discussed and where relevant, reference was made to previous studies reviewed in Chapter 2.

4.2 Politeness Strategies in Libyan PG Students' E-Mail Requests

In this section, extracts that specifically focused on requests (i.e. the communicative events that included the act of request) were analyzed to identify the different politeness strategies (on record with redressive –positive and negative strategies, without redressive

action - bald on record, and off record strategies) used by Libyan PG students. For ease of reference, Table 4.1 below reproduces the definitions for the various types of politeness strategies that guide the analysis in this study.

Table 4.1: Definitions of the Four Types of Politeness Strategies

On record	**Positive**	"characterized by the expression of approval and appreciation of the hearer's personality by making him or her to be part of a group."
	Negative	corresponds with avoidance and uses to convey respect and deference between interlocutors.
	Bald	indicates that speakers do not seek to minimize the threat toward the hearer.
Off record		refers to hints and indirect reference to the targeted goal of the speaker.

(Adapted from Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 95, 101, 129, 213)

For the first phase of the analysis, it was noteworthy that analysis of the 109 e-mails identified a total of 134 request strategies. The table below shows the frequency of politeness strategies per requests.

Table 4.2: Frequency of Politeness Strategies per Requests

Occurrence per E-Mail	Number of E-Mails	Requests	Politeness Strategy
1	88	88	89
2	17	34	37
3	4	12	12
Total	109	134	137

(There is co-occurrence of politeness strategy in 3 requests that is why there are 137 politeness strategies)

The data analysis showed 88 e-mails have only a single request, which was expressed by only one request strategy. Seventeen e-mails had 2 request strategies that expressed the same request type or two different request types, while 4 e-mails had 3 request strategies used to express two request types. The politeness strategies total number utilized to express the 134 requests was 137, because there is a co-occurrence of politeness strategies of three requests. This is evident in the following examples.

(student's name)
Good afternoon Prof. (FN)
"I know" you time is a precious (Presuppose/raise/assert common ground**) but I hope to see you the proposal** (Be optimistic) and what is your opinion on it.
yours faithfully,

(S9UPM E-mail49)

Dear: Dr
My name is (Student's name)…. , and I am a student in faculty of science ,UM, in department of chemistry,course work. I met you last Tuesday regarding to my project. Sorry for disturbing you , **I know you are very busy (**Presuppose/raise/assert common ground**) but can I know my project title** (Question) because you told me that you will choose suitable title for me .
With many thanks

(S15UM E-mail77)

From the analysis of on record politeness strategies (bald on record without redressive action, and positive and negative on record with redressive action) and off record strategies, the data showed that 113 number of on record politeness strategies performed the request in a direct and unambiguous way either with or without redressive action. This gives (82.48%) of occurrence in the data. However, only 24 requests were made least indirectly (off record strategy). This represents (17.52%) of the occurrence in the data.

Table 4.3: Frequency of Occurrence for On Record and Off Record Politeness Strategies

Politeness Strategies	Frequency	Percentage%
On record with redressive/without redressive	113/137	82.48
Off record	24/137	17.52
Total	137	100

On record politeness strategies made up of three sub-types (positive, negative and bald on record). Definitions of these politeness strategies are presented in table 4.1. These strategies identified 113 sub-strategies in Libyan PG students' e-mails. The table (4.4) below presents the frequency occurrence of on record politeness strategies.

Table 4.4: Frequency of On Record With Redressive/ Without Redressive

On record politeness	Frequency	Percentage%
Negative	70/113	61.95
Positive	26/113	23.01
Bald on record	17/113	15.04
Total	113	100

The analysis revealed that 70 negative politeness found out of a total number of 113, this represented in (61.95%) of occurrence in the data. This is the most frequently used on record politeness strategy to express an e-mail request by Libyan PG students. There

is 26 positive politeness strategy out of a total number of 113 on record politeness, this gives (23.01%) of occurrence in the data. Positive politeness strategy represented the second most frequent strategy. In the analysis, it found that only 17 number of the bald on record strategy, this gives (15.04%) which was the least frequently used of the three strategies.

The next subsections reports on the use analysis of sub-strategies for each of the four politeness strategies.

4.2.1 Negative Politeness Sub-Strategies

Overall, the total number of negative politeness appeared 70 times. This strategy representing the most prevalent politeness strategies used to express requests by Libyan PG students. Negative politeness was to be expected in e-mails from students to lecturers because these negative politeness sub-strategies were concerned with minimizing the particular force of the FTA. The Table 4.5 below illustrates the negative politeness sub-strategies.

Table 4.5: Frequency of Occurrence for Negative Politeness Sub-Strategies

Sub-Strategies	Frequency
Question and hedge	46
Be conventionally indirect	20
Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the Hearer	3
Minimize imposition	1
Total number of negative politeness strategy	70

The analysis showed that 4 negative politeness sub-strategies used repeatedly in the e-mails of the Libyan PG students: that is, be conventionally indirect, using questions and hedges, go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the Hearer, and minimizing the imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The sub-sections that followed provide a detailed discussion of the negative politeness sub-strategies that appeared in the e-mail requests.

4.2.1.1 Question, Hedge

This sub-strategy was used to convey uncertainty as to whether the hearer was able to perform the action requested. A question or hedge can be used (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.136) for such intention. In this sub-strategy, the students used mitigating expressions within the students-lecturers interactional constraints to lessen the impact of the request. The questions and hedges accounted for the highest use (46 occurrence) frequency of on record politeness strategies which represented (30) for questions and (16) for hedges, in all requests identified in the data. Questions which asserted an assumption that the lecturer was unlikely to perform the act or to show uncertainty on the part of the student about the lecturer's ability to perform the act, made up this category of negative politeness sub-strategies. Such questions appeared to be mitigated internally with modals like (have, can). The examples below illustrate this sub-strategy:

Salam dr
I hope you are well .
Can i meet you today or no dr.
Thanks

(S1UKM E-mail2)

Salam Doctor
?have you checked chapter 3

(S6UPM E-mail32)

Good evening Prof. (FN)
It's (Students' name)
This is a new topic (Project Title)
Is it good enough to be a topic for proposal If not,**Can I meet you tomorrow in your office?** What time?
Thank you

(S17 UUM E-mail90)

The students, in the three examples provided above, used the models (can, have) to show how such questions carried additional connotation that the lecturer had some idea of the answer (Brown & Levinson, 1987), since the lecturers who can make the decision about setting the time of appointment as requested.

Hedges were used in the form of 'modals', 'if clauses', and 'performatives' with words like ('if you don't mind'). Below examples of hedges are provided:

Salam prof
We hope you have nice fasting and all your family well
We are group of student taken AI course with you .our name.
(Students' names)
We want to ask you if you will be available in your officce tomorrow or no pleas let us know what time you will be there.
thanks so much.

(S17 UUM E-mail92)

Dear:Dr
My name is (Student's name)., and I am a student in faculty of science, UM, in department of chemistry. I am interested to do my project in Environment area. **I hope you don't mind my getting in touch and would very much appreciate it if I could meet you in person, or if convenient talk on the phone.** I understand you are a very busy person so I'd appreciate any time you could give me.
With many thanks

(S15 UM E-mail78)

In the examples (S17 UUM E-mail92), the participant performed his request in the form of quasi-paraphrases expressed with or without an 'if clause', which was a productive way in English. In this way, the student tried to show deference to the lecturer.

In the third sample, (S15 UM E-mail78) hedged the illocutionary force using adverbial clause hedges, specifically using the expression 'I hope you don't mind' and 'if I could meet you'. By doing so, the student presupposed that she had the permission of the lecturer to do the act (i.e. to register her project with this lecturer). These two sub-strategies were the standard way to perform an on record polite request (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that hedges and questions can enable "cooperation, informativeness, truthfulness, relevance and clarity which on many occasions need to be softened for reason of face" (p.146).

4.2.1.2 Be Conventionally Indirect

The speaker is faced with an opposing tension between "the desire to give H an 'out' by being indirect, and the desire to go on record" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.132). This means that the student performed the request by using certain conventional linguistic expressions that are unambiguous even if they are not be based on the literal meaning of the expression (Ruzickova, 2007).

Being conventionally indirect is an expected sub-strategy in student-lecturers' communication since it acknowledges the imposition of the request (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This sub-strategy registered 20 times of occurrence of on record politeness strategies total number employed by Libyan PG students. Being conventionally indirect inquired on the lecturer's possibility or ability to comply with the request by using the phrase 'could you', or 'I would'. The finding was consistent with Eshghinejad and Moini's (2016) findings, which investigated politeness strategies used among Persian speaking learners. They favoured the use of 'would' and 'could' in their text messages to their lecturers. This sub-strategy is exemplified below:

Salam .
Dear Dr. (Full N)
We apologizes from you, because we did not come at an appointment time. My friend (Student's name) came late, because the bus came late.
Could you please fix another appointment for us?
thank you
Yours faithfully ,
(students' name)

(S2UUM E-mail9)

alsalamaikom Dr
could you give me your feedback about the questionnaire.
thank you.

(S7UPM E-mail38)

Dear sir,
good day, I am (Student's name) , I hope take with you my project next semester, if you can. I prefer meet you, but someone tell me , you are not here. so, **could you tell me, When I can meet with you?**
thank you
yours sincerely,
(Student's name)

(S18UM 95)

In the above examples, the student used indirect speech with a degree of politeness to express the conventional indirect strategy 'could you' and politeness marker 'please' to make a request for an appointment and for feedback. The use of this sub-strategy would presumably minimise the imposition and encourage cooperation between student and lecturer. These requests were indirect because, for example, (S7UPM E-mail38) did not

meant to ask about the potentiality of giving feedback rather he asked indirectly by saying that that he needed to get feedback from his lecturer.

4.2.1.3 Go On Record as Incurring a Debt, or as Not Indebting H

By employing this sub-strategy, the S can take care of any FTAs in a way that claims his indebtedness explicitly to the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The speaker could also disclaim any indebtedness as a way of going on record. This sub-strategy appeared 3 times of the total number of on record politeness strategies found. The examples below illustrate this sub-strategy:

Dear
I am planning to submit the attached paper to Q1/Q2 journals.
I'd be very grateful for your comments and advice before I send it.
Thanks

(S10UKM E-mail53)

Salam alukom
i am your previous student i have done my master projact under your supervision, now i get scholarship from my university to do my PhD in Malaysia so i wish to do it under your supervision so i attach with this email copy of my proposal fainaly **i would be grateful if you accept my to do my PhD research under your supervision**

(S19UKM E-mail100)

The examples provided above indicated that the students expressed their gratitude in anticipation of the request. The analysis showed that the expressions like 'I'd appreciate' and 'I'd be grateful' used by the Libyan PG students to show their appreciation in the event that the lecturer did comply with the request.

4.2.1.4 Minimize the Imposition

This is a way to defuse the strength of the FTA by indicating that the imposition of the request is not great in itself, so this might pay deference to the H, indirectly (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This negative politeness sub-strategy revealed only one time of the total number of on record politeness strategies used in Libyan PG students' e-mail requests. The example below illustrates this sub-strategy.

Assalamualikum Dr
Thank you Dr for your reply. Actually i have not discussed chapter five with the other supervisors. Any time you are free i will come to discuss about it together, **just let me know the suitable time for you.**
Thank you

(S8UM E-mail40)

Minimizing imposition can be realized using certain words like 'just' to minimize the imposition; this illustrated in the example (S8UM E-mail40) where the student did to arrange an appointment.

4.2.1.5 Summary

Thus far, the present section found out the negative politeness sub-strategies appeared in the e-mail requests of the Libyan PG students. The most frequently used on record politeness strategy were negative politeness strategies. In order to safeguard the students' own positive face and their lecturers' negative face, the Libyan PG students resorted to a variety of negative sub-strategies, which included "question and hedges, be conventionally indirect, go on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting H, and minimize the imposition" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.131). Social distance between interlocutors appeared to be emphasized by means of the negative politeness strategy and sub-strategies. However, the integration of hedges, conventionally indirect strategies and questions could increase the politeness of such requests (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The most prevalent negative politeness sub-strategies were the use of hedges and questions. A possible explanation for the presence of such a high frequency of hedges could be that hedges used for this purpose are very much a part of the writers' schema for mitigating and reducing loss of face. This claim supported by Jensen (2009) who mentioned that hedges are rhetorical devices of modification. The use of hedges also expressed politeness and respect towards lecturers because they weaken the illocutionary force of an utterance (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The negative politeness sub-strategies identified in this data supported the findings in previous studies especially those that involved NNS students (Bulut & Rabaah, 2007; Chejonva, 2014, Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016). This present study showed that Libyan PG students performed various sub-strategies as mentioned above to achieve their purposes of a request and to save the lecturers' negative face. By performing requests with negative politeness sub-strategies, the students hoped that their requests would be fulfilled without the lecturer feeling that they were obliged to do so. In the context of interaction between students and lecturers, students were expected to perform requests politely and possibly this led them to soften the tone of their e-mails.

Positive sub-strategies minimise the negative impact on the hearer's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The next section presents data on the occurrence of the positive politeness sub-strategies.

4.2.2 Positive Politeness Sub-Strategies

The analysis revealed that the second most prevalent strategy used was positive politeness; it appeared 26 times of the total number on record politeness strategies. The 15 positive sub-strategies of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) were listed and described in Table 2.1 in chapter 2. The analysis of Libyan PG students' e-mail requests revealed that only 4 positive politeness strategies occurred. Data on these sub-strategies in the e-mail requests is presented in Table 4.6 below. This is followed by a discussion on their use.

Table 4.6: Frequency of Occurrence for Positive Politeness Sub-Strategies

Sub-Strategies	Frequency
Give (or ask for) reasons	14
Be optimistic	8
Promise	2
Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity	2
Total number of Positive Politeness strategy	26

4.2.2.1 Give (or Ask for) Reasons

By employing this sub-strategy, Speaker and Hearer are cooperatively involved in the activity by giving reasons as to why the request is made (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Thus, giving a lecturer (in the present context) a reason to form a request was seen as a positive move. The findings showed that the giving (or asking for) reasons sub-strategy was the most used positive sub-strategy in the data from Libyan PG students. It was used 14 times of the total number of on record politeness. The request was based on the notion that the lecturer would cooperate once he or she understood why the request was made. This sub-strategy is illustrated in the examples below:

Good morning, professor..
Sorry for the inconvenience… I am your student (student's name).. **I want to introduce you to the idea of my project.. The separation of the next academic.. if you're OK I will be the including such as the proposed**

(S4UUM E-mail19)

Hi Dr. (FN),
how are you? I hope you are very fine.
Sorry if I bother you but I have a question and I want to know from you if you don't mind.
I decided to travel to my country on June and I want to book a ticket from now so **I wish to know the date of the final exam for (course code) because I want to travel after the date of the exam immediately.**
Thanks to you and I am so happy to be one of your students.

(S5UPM E-mail26)

Assalmalikum Dr.
Good morning.
I want from you to sign in my application for add research paper. Do you have a time today?
Thank you

(S20UKM 109)

In the three examples, the students used 'want' and 'wish' to show the reason for issuing their requests. Further, words like 'because' and the preposition 'for' showed what help is needed from the lecturers. Brown and Levinson (1987) said the speaker can assume cooperation by giving reasons because this implies "you can help me" (p. 128). The lecturer would be implicated as he processed the reason.

4.2.2.2 Be Optimistic

Being optimistic is a way to make "S to assume that H wants S's wants for S (or for S and H) and will help to obtain them." (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 126). By applying this strategy, a student assumed that the lecturer was likely to have the desire to satisfy the student's wants. In other words, the lecturer's wants and the student's wants were assumed to be shared as they had mutual interest. The prime function of this cooperative strategy was to maintain a friendly stance. This politeness sub-strategy was used 8 times of the total number of on record politeness strategies. Examples are provided below:

Dear sir,
good day, I am (Student's name) , **I hope take with you my project next semester, if you can.** I prefer meet you, but someone tell me , you are not here. so, could you tell me, When I can meet with you?
thank you
yours sincerely,
(Student's name)

(S18UM 95)

Prof. (Full N)
How are u Prof. and how are your family?
I would like to tell u "I changed some things in Proposal. **I hope to see you it** and I would like to take your opinion at it.
yours sincerely,

(S9UPM E-mail48)

In the examples (S18UM 95) and (S9UPM E-mail48), participants of these e-mails expressed their requests using the optimistic expression 'I hope'. This expression worked by reducing the force of their request, which implied cooperation between students and lecturers and that the request can be taken for granted. Thus, the principal function of the 'be optimistic' sub-strategy was to capitalize on the perceived advantage that would be experienced by the lecturer and in the event would fulfill the student's request.

4.2.2.3 Promise

A promise can also be used to redress the potential threat of request as the speaker shows his good intention in satisfying the hearer's positive face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 125). This sub-strategy was utilized 2 times of the total number of on record politeness sub-strategies. Examples of this sub-strategy are presented below:

Assalamualikum Dr
Thank you Dr for your reply. Actually i have not discussed chapter five with the other supervisors. Any time you are free **i will come to discuss about it together**, just let me know the suitable time for you.
Thank you

(S8UM E-mail40)

Alsalamualicom
I apologize . This form has given me Dr. (FN+LN).
I will come to you on Tuesday morning to the application form Cartridge
Thank you very much
(Students' name)

(S13UM E-mail69)

In example (S8UM E-mail40), the student tried to redress the potential risk of his request by promising to discuss chapter 5 together. Meanwhile, in the second example, the student tried to show good intention in satisfying the lecturer's positive face want by intensifying what kind of form (the application form Cartridge) his lecturer needed to look at.

4.2.2.4 Include both Speaker and Hearer in the Activity

This sub-strategy is utilized while a speaker means either 'you' or 'me' when using the 'we' form. It calls upon the activation of cooperative assumptions so that a FTA will be redressed (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The occurrence of this sub-strategy use was used in only twice of the total number of positive politeness sub-strategies. The following example displays the use of this sub-strategy in the e-mail data:

Salam,
Dear Dr. (Full N),
Firstly, I told you about my case " maybe I'll give birth during the final exam ", and you said that is better if I'll do the exam earlier, so I asked Dr. (FN) to know what will happen, she said if Dr. (FN) agree no problem but I have to get letter from you.
Secondly, **We** need outline or template to complete project report, please upload it.
Thank you very much
Respectfully yours,

(S3UUM E-mail15)

Dear sir
I am a staff member teacher in (faculty). I got my master degree in 2008 (The title of thesis (Thesis Title). I have got a full scholarship from my government to do Ph.D. I would like to do it in air pollution (**We** will talk about proposal after correlation) .I am interested in doing my Ph.D. In your department. Please let me know if it possible for you as the supervision of my project.
Yours sincerely

(S10 UKM E-mail54)

The above examples illustrated clearly how the student had included the lecturer in the action with the inclusive "we", which actually meant 'I' in reference. This sub-strategy was evident when the request incorporated the student and the lecturer together.

4.2.2.5 Summary

The data discussed showed evidence of the occurrences of positive sub-strategies in the Libyan PG students e-mail requests. The positive sub-strategies recorded were 'be optimistic', 'include both S and H in the activity', 'give (or ask for) reasons' and 'promise' (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Among the positive politeness sub-strategies; the 'give reasons' strategy was the most used positive sub-strategy. This high level of preference could indicate that Libyan PG students believed that giving reasons had a logical appeal that would motivate the lecturer's cooperation. As Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) acknowledges, giving reasons was indeed a polite way to underlie a request. However, unless the reasons or explanations for the necessity of granting the requestee's request was clear, the lecturer may not wish to comply. Giving clear reasons encourages cooperation between interlocutors and increases the likelihood of the lecturer acting in a positive fashion. It was worth noting that giving reasons entailed an explicit explanation especially when the conjunction 'because' was used. E-mails that were based on positive politeness strategies thus enhance solidarity between interlocutors.

Bald-on-record strategies, however, serve to meet any FTAs head on so that the student's intentions are very clear. The following section discusses the occurrences of bald on record politeness sub-strategies in the e-mail requests made by Libyan PG students.

4.2.3 Bald on Record Politeness Sub-Strategies

The last occurring on record politeness strategy used by the Libyan PG students was bald on record politeness sub-strategies. This politeness strategy relied on the use of imperatives (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The strategy was used to alleviate the lecturer's anxiety by preemptively inviting him or her to impinge on the student's request. The imperative strategy was used 17 times out of the on-record-politeness strategies total number found in the e-mail requests.

Table 4.7: Frequency of Occurrence for Bald On Record Politeness Strategies

Sub-Strategies	Frequency
Imperative	17

This strategy was considered to threaten the lecturer's dignity and, as such, it was not expected to appear at all in student-lecturer communication (Chejnova, 2014). It was considered to be inappropriate for use in an interaction in an academic context. Nonetheless, this strategy could be softened with the use of hedges or the politeness marker 'please'. The presence of this strategy in the e-mails could indicate that the Libyan PG students were not aware of the force of their impositions on the lecturers. The way how Libyan PG students used 'bald on record' slightly different in their e-mails is illustrated in the two examples below:

How are you?
Give me your comments.about power point.
I think this is better
Thanks..

(S13UM E-mail68)

Salam Dr.
Dr (FN) ask me to send the abstract to you. **Please help me to submit to Symposium Organizing Committee.**
Attached file.
Thank you

(S19UKM E-mail103)

In the examples (S13UM E-mail68), imperative form was used baldly to explicitly express the request. This request was made without any redress. In the example (S19UKM E-mail103), the student used an imperative clause, 'help me', when asking for feedback.

However, the student used the politeness marker ‘please’ to reduce the negative impact. Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that request with imperative can be mitigated by a ‘please’ marker. Although these imperative constructions appeared with the conventional politeness marker ‘please’, they can still be regarded as inappropriate constructions in student-lecturers’ interaction (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

As mentioned, bald on record politeness strategies are inappropriate for the e-mails in a corpora consisting of communications between students and lecturers. As such, students should be cautioned that such strategies should not be used in their communication with lecturers. Rather, they can use more conventionally accepted strategies if they wish their message to be more cordial and acceptable.

The next section illustrates the occurrence of off record politeness strategies in the Libyan PGs students’ e-mail requests to their lecturers.

4.2.4 Off Record Politeness Sub-Strategies

Off record politeness sub-strategies appeared to be the third most frequently used strategy. This strategy occurred only a total of 24 times of the total number of politeness strategies. Of the sub-strategies used, hints were used 10 times of the total number of off record politeness sub-strategies, while giving clues of association was appeared 14 times of the total number of off politeness sub-strategies. The frequency of each sub-strategy of off record politeness is reported in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Frequency of Occurrence for Off Record Politeness Sub-Strategies

Sub-Strategies	Frequency
Hint	10
Give clues of association	14
Total	24

The non-conventional politeness strategy, which although it violated the norms of conversation because the maxim of manner was violated, was nevertheless able to imply a particular recommended course of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this case, the student left himself 'out' by allowing for plausible deniability, so that he was not held responsible for the negative interpretation of the act. In the present data, the off record politeness strategy was accomplished by two sub-strategies: giving hints, and clues of association. Below are examples to illustrate these two sub-strategies.

Hi doctor
good evening
first thing first , **for course notes i do not find it in the spectrum.**
secondly, i can not understand what we have to write about documentation in presentation project because everyone of my group understand it by different way . **for me i understand that documentation is talking about how we will save the document of our company**
I am waiting your answer
thank you
greatings

(S16UM E-mail86)

In the example (S16UM E-mail86), the hint sub-strategy illustrated, which consisted of an attempt to highlight the act in association with reasons for wanting to pursue the act. In this example, the student stated her request indirectly by commenting that he did not understand what was required to complete the project set by the lecturer. This implied that the lecturer should explain the requirement for the presentation project. As can be seen from example (S5UPM E-mail27) below, the purpose was to ask the lecturer indirectly for feedback about the student's work. However, the student had merely mentioned that he/she had attached the copy (of the assignment). The student also used the phrase 'for your kind consideration' as a hint to motivate a positive action from the lecturer.

Good evening Dr. how are you. Hope you are very fine and I wish you spent a pleasant trip. **This is my abstract for the final seminar** and I am waiting for your comments. Thank you so much.

(S5UPM E-mail 27)

Dear Dr. (Full N)
It's me (student's name).(matric number)
Here I attached the copy for your kind consideration.
Best regards,

(S11UM E-mail 60)

It was worth noting that off record sub-strategies can be used as a request for action, such as giving feedback and fixing an appointment. This is in line with Krish and Salman's (2016) study which reported that Arab students use the indirect strategy specifically for feedback. The Libyan PG students likely opted for the indirect strategy considering the level of imposition that would be actualized by a direct request, which could threaten the lecturer's negative face. Krish and Salman (2016) revealed that female students used hints which might refer to their attention to avoid direct confrontation with the recipients (i.e. teachers in their study). A student may even select to do or do not make the request speech act in order to prevent face loss. However, this opaque strategy might require more effort in interpretation on the lecturer's part to understand the illocutionary force of the request act. In brief, this sub-section had analyzed and discussed off record sub-strategies that appeared in the e-mail requests. Giving hints and clues of association are the two sub-strategies that occurred in the data under study.

4.2.5 Summary of Politeness Strategy

Overall, the analysis and discussion of the four politeness strategies types has identified the negative politeness strategy is the most considerably employed strategy in the context of the present study. Among the possible negative politeness sub-strategies, hedging appears to the most common sub-strategy used to downplay the imposition on the lecturer of the e-mail requests. Positive politeness strategy was the second most commonly occurring strategy. A small number of positive politeness sub-strategies were used to reduce the imposition of the FTAs. The table (4.9) below illustrate the whole findings for the types of politeness strategies and their sub-strategies.

Table 4.9: Frequency of the Whole Politeness Sub-Strategies

Politeness Strategy	Sub-Strategies	Frequency
Negative	Question and hedge	46
	Be conventionally indirect	20
	Go on record as incur debt/as not indebt Hearer	3
	Minimize imposition	1
Positive	Give (or ask for) reasons	14
	Be optimistic	8
	Promise	2
	Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity	2
Bald on record	Imperative	17
Off record	Give clues of association	14
	Hint	10
Total		137

Section 4.2 discussed the politeness strategies that are employed in the e-mail request head act. The next section focuses on the request strategies employed by the student e-mail writers to show politeness. The analysis centers to identify the request head act to obtain the relevant request strategies on scale of directness level.

4.3 Request Strategies Libyan PG students' E-Mail

The request strategies analyzes following the different levels of directness by identifying the sub-strategies used in the request head act. A request is considered to be an FTA by Brown and Levinson (1987). In order to preserve a student's positive face and mitigate the effect of an FTA on the lecturer's negative face, the student can use different politeness strategies, which were discussed in the previous section. The choice of politeness strategies influences the linguistic actualisations used by the students to compose a request. Such linguistic means can be studied using the (CCSARP) identified by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989). This project devised a coding manual which illustrates how a request can be analyzed linguistically in terms of Alerters, Head Act (which can be optionally modified by Downgraders or Upgraders) and Supportive Moves. The head act can be analyzed from the dimension of strategy type. The request sub-strategies are then analyzed to identify the request strategy (on a scale ranging from most direct, conventional indirect, to non-conventional indirect). These levels of directness are

categorized based on the evidence of the student's illocutionary intent from the locution which had been discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. These sub-strategies are analyzed to obtain data to answer the second research question. The framework devised by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) was used to investigate the request sub-strategies evident in the head act within the e-mail requests written by Libyan PG students.

The overall prevalence of request sub-strategies for the Libyan PG students in their requests can be seen in Table 4.10. It is noteworthy that out of 109 e-mails, the analysis revealed 134 request strategies. The data analysis finds out 88 e-mails have only 1 request which was expressed by only one request strategy. In the remaining the e-mails (i.e. 21 e-mails) with more than one request, multiple request strategies were used to express those requests. 17 e-mails contained two request strategies that expressed the same request type, while 4 emails had three request strategies expressing a single request type or two request type. The analysis showed that Libyan PG students had largely used 'most direct strategies' 86 times in their e-mail requests.

Table 4.10: Frequency of Request Sub-Strategies for Directness Level

Directness Level	Request Sub- Strategy	Frequency
Most Direct	Direct questions	35
	Imperatives/Mood derivable	17
	Want statements	14
	Expectation statements	9
	Performatives	5
	Pre-decided statements	3
	Need statements	2
	Elliptical requests	1
	Reminder requests	0
	Sub-total (of direct requests)	86
Conventional indirect	Query preparatory	24
Non-conventional indirect	Hints	24
Total		134

4.3.1.1 Direct Questions

Strikingly, the analysis showed that the most used direct strategies were 'direct questions', it appeared 35 times of the total number of request strategies. Using Yes/No questions or wh-questions, students framed 'direct questions' to address an action to be taken or to ask for information needed (Hassall, 2012). The extracts presented below clarify the appearance of 'direct questions' in the e-mail requests:

'When I can view the data for you?. '

(S7UPM Email35)

'can i sent the current title?'

(S12UKM E-mail 62)

'do you have watsApp number or viber ?'

(S14UUM E-mail71)

From the above examples, it can be seen that student in example (S7UPM E-mail 35) used a direct question to ask about presenting his data, specifically by using wh-words "when". This request sub-strategy was used to request information from the lecturer. It increased the negative face threatening manner because the student was looking for a direct answer which might lead to another question (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

4.3.1.2 Imperative/ Mood Derivable

The study revealed that the e-mail data from the Libyan PG students employed not only a high frequency of 'direct questions' but also the 'imperatives' appeared 17 times. Imperatives consisted of utterances that determined the illocutionary force by framing the syntactic mood of the verb (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Imperatives were usually used in situations where the social distance was low or when the sender would be in a high position and had more authority, such as a lecturer sending a message to students and not vice versa (Hallajian, 2014). Thus, this high frequency of use appeared to indicate an inappropriate choice of strategy by the Libyan PG students. The examples below provide evidence from the e-mail requests:

'please sign on the report in order to be possible for me to register for the current semester.'

(S6UPM E-mail 31)

‘Give Me Your Comments. About Power Point.’

(S13UM E-mail68)

‘please chick it’

(S19UKM E-mail101)

In the examples extracted above, the imperative construction has been used. This strategy was realized by syntactic marks in which the illocutionary force indicates a request (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In the example (S6UPM E-mail 31), the student tried to modify the imperative by using a ‘please’ marker and providing reasons for his request ‘to register for the current semester’. While the example (S19UKM E-mail101) used ‘please’ to make the utterance appear more like a request form rather than an imperative, but such a structure was not appropriate in student-lecturer interaction. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) claimed that using a ‘please’ marker alone in a request cannot mitigate the imposition of the imperative in student-lecturer communication.

4.3.1.3 Want Statements

‘Want statements’ were the third most occurring request sub-strategy used by Libyan PG students, they registered 14 occurrence. ‘Want statements’ were utterances that explicitly express the sender’s wishes and wants in requesting that the request be granted (Krulatz, 2012). Examples are provided below to illustrate this strategy:

‘I want to introduce you to the idea of my project..’

(S4UUM E-mail19)

‘I wish to know the date of the final exam for (course code)’

(S5UPM E-mail26)

‘I want to give you chapter 1 by this week’

(S14UUM E-mail72)

The examples showed how the students’ desire and wish in requesting their wants. The typical structure used to utter want statement in the present data ‘I want to …’.

4.3.1.4 Expectation Statements

Expectation statements used 9 times of request sub-strategies total number in the e-mail requests, making it the fourth most employed direct strategy. The statement refers to

an expected action that the lecturer would make to a yet-to-be performed obligation or duty (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The action was stated as expected within the perceived right of the student as it was seen as the lecturer's obligation as a lecturer to carry out the action. Here are some examples:

'It allowed the hope to meet you if you have free time…'

(S4UUM E-mail19)

'I hope take with you my project next semester…'

(S18UM E-mail95)

This sub-strategy states an expected action by the lecturer: example (S18UM E-mail95) used the verb 'hope' to indicate prior expectation of becoming the supervisee of the lecturer addressed.

4.3.1.5 Performative Statements

Only 5 appearance of the total number of requests in the corpora took the form of the 'performative statements' sub-strategy. Performatives are utterances that contain an illocutionary force that conveys the requestive intent (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The following are examples:

'I am writing to ask about the possibility if you have the time available to attend the dictation of the progress with my supervisor…'

(S10 UKM E-mail54)

'I request to allow me to study (Course code) with Dr. (FN) to this semester A161.'

(S17UUM E-mail94)

'We want to ask you if you will be available in your officce'

(S17UUM E-mail92)

The examples above showed the performative verb used to express the request. The students in the three examples stated explicitly their request using the verbs 'ask' and 'request' without any modals or past tense to mitigate the force of the imposition on the lecturers.

4.3.1.6 Pre-Decided Statements

The frequency of use of the sub-strategies 'pre-decided statements' amounted to 3 times of the total number of requests used by the Libyan PG students. Such utterances were performed in an optimistic way, whereby the student skipped the usual request illocution and moves straight to check if the request (e.g. to have an appointment) was acceptable to the lecturer (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Below are examples from the present data:

'i will come to discuss about it together'

(S8UM E-mail40)

'I will come to you on Tuesday morning to the application form Cartridge'

(S13UM E-mail69)

This sub-strategy presented an optimistic way of performing the request; the use of this sub-strategy minimized the size of the face threat the request imposes on the lecturer. Both examples (S8UM E-mail40) and (S8UM E-mail40) used 'will come' to check if their requests for an appointment have been accepted or not.

4.3.1.7 Need Statements

The analysis also indicated evidence of 'need statements', which amounted to 2 times of all requests. Need statements were the utterances that included expressions of the request need from the lecturer (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Example (S3UUM E-mail15) exemplifies this sub-strategy:

'We need outline or template to complete project report…'

(S3UUM E-mail15)

This sub-strategy was realized by including an expression that would encourage the lecturer to fulfill the need of the student. In this example (S3UUM E-mail15), the student used the verb 'need' to express his need for an outline template.

4.3.1.8 Elliptical Statements

The use of elliptical requests was the least frequent sub-strategy found in the data, it appeared only onetime in the total number of request sub-strategies. Elliptical statements were considered to be of a high level of directness since the student's intended meaning was expressed directly (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The example below exemplifies this sub-strategy:

'You have any comments about chapter three ?'

(S4UUM E-mail21)

In the above example, (S4UUM E-mail21) made the request by saying that she needed to get feedback. Although the request for feedback had a high imposition, the student used one of the most direct sub-strategies to express her demand.

4.3.2 Conventionally Indirect

The frequency of use of the conventional indirect request strategy was 24 times of the all request sub-strategies. The conventional indirect request strategy can be realized by utterances that refer to preparatory conditions (e.g. permission to perform the action, ability to perform the action, or willingness to act) conventionalized in specific language expressions (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Examples of this type of realizations are demonstrated below:

'I would like to know your opinion about it.'

(S3UUM E-mail2)

'Could you please send me the book by e-mail…'

(S6 UPM E-mail30)

'Could you give me your feedback about the questionnaire…?'

(S7UPM E-mail38)

'i would be grateful if you accept my to do my PhD research under your supervision'

(S19UKM E-mail100)

Students used conventionally indirect strategies by referring to the preparatory condition using ability and willingness to do the act. In the example (S7UPM E-mail38), the student asked the lecturer to provide feedback about his questionnaire. This strategy was realized with modals like 'could, would'. Example (S19UKM E-mail100) used the 'would' modal to enquire about the possibility of becoming one of the lecturer's

supervisees. Meanwhile, the examples (S6 UPM E-mail30) and (S7UPM E-mail38) asked about whether they could receive a book via e-mail. Importantly, this strategy allowed the lecturer to make the final decision about the request without any heavy imposition from the student.

4.3.3 Non-Conventionally Indirect

The non-conventionally indirect strategy is an indirect request sub-strategy that can be identified through hints which are provided by making partial reference to the act or by making the desired action without reference (Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). In this case, the lecturer was able to infer the request from the context. This request strategy was used 24 times of the total number of 134 requests identified in the corpora under study. Examples of this strategy are provided below:

'This is the update version.'

(S9UPM E-mail47)

'i attached my simple article you can see under your consideration.'

(S11UM E-mail55)

The two examples above indicated that these students used hints by indirectly referring to the illocutionary act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). This strategy was realized by partial reference to the object (i.e. in this case, submission of papers and assignments). The word 'attached' gave the lecturer the opportunity to recognize what the student was requesting. Hints were more likely to misinterpreted or not recognized as a request, especially if they contain no elements to refer to the actual request.

4.3.4 Summary

The direct strategy was the most straightforward and clearest way to convey a request, however, it may not be the best in making requests. Consideration has to be given to the power difference between the students and the lecturers. As a result, it would be prudent for students to opt for the indirect strategy and avoid the direct strategy. However, in the case of the Libyan PG students, the findings revealed that they had largely resorted to the

use of direct strategies as evident in the dominant presence of 'direct questions', 'imperatives' and 'want statements'. The higher percentage of direct strategies compared to conventional indirect strategies suggests that requests from Libyan PG students can be perceived as challenging recipients in positions of authority, and this could lead to misunderstandings with their lecturers. The lecturers could take offense at the way the request was made and ultimately refused to comply with their requests. This observation is in agreement with those of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), Felix-Brasdefer (2012), Zarei and Mohammadi (2012), and Burgucu-Tazegul, Han and Engin (2016). All of them found that NNS students tended to favour direct strategies. An excessive use of overtly direct strategies could increase the chance of pragmatic failure (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

Another explanation for the high use of direct strategies among NNS of English is that they might have used direct strategies rather than indirect strategies, especially the conventionally indirect strategies, in the mistaken belief that making a direct request marks greater urgency for to the action and thus will encourage the lecturers to comply with the request (Chen, 2001).

Constructions typically used by the students for requests for action include 'please + imperative'. The following examples are samples from the data which show how Libyan PG students use the typical construction of 'imperative + please' (S1 UKM E-mail3) 'please check it, I need ur comment dr' and (S17UUM E-mail93) 'please choose the time that suits you'. As argued by Bloch (2002), using imperatives has been demonstrated to be a highly inappropriate strategy in student-lecturers' communication, particularly with regard to the power relation between student and lecturers. Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) finding also confirmed this claim, adding that the use of please + imperative does not reduce the harshness of the wording. This view lends emphasis to contention of

Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) who conclude the 'please' marker is unable to modify or soften the imperatives force in an academic context, such as in a student-lecturer interaction. The researchers explained that: "Students do not have the institutional status to issue Directives to faculty, and the use of this form puts them seriously out-of-status. Such non-congruent acts in institutional talk require a fairly high level of mitigation" (p. 59). From the present analysis, it could be concluded that these e-mails by Libyan PG students did not reduce the imposition inherent in their requests. Pragmatic failure could also be related to students' misinterpretation of what constitutes students' rights and lecturers' obligations.

The use of performative statements by the Libyan PG students was similar to the Turkish students' e-mail requests for information investigated by Burgucu-Tazegul, Han and Engin (2016). To conclude, it is likely that the extensive use of direct strategies in the current study posed a threat to the lecturer's face and thereby could adversely affect cooperation between the interlocutors. Such a finding corroborates those of previous studies on the use of direct requests (Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012; Chejnova, 2014; Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016). In comparison, the Arab students' requests reflected a higher level of directness, which was possibly a reflection of the cultural background of Arabs who tended to be more directness-oriented while being polite (Krish & Salman, 2016).

It is necessary to highlight that English is a foreign language for the Libyan PG students and the data shows that they used only a few non-conventional indirect strategies in their e-mail requests to lecturers. This finding is consistent with previous studies where hints as request strategies were used minimally by NNSs (Felix- Brasdefer, 2007; Schauer, 2008). Hints may be considered less polite than conventional indirect strategies as they require more intellectual effort on the lecturer's part to process them (Chejnova,

2014). A study on Malaysian students' directness level in the communications with their lecturers revealed that Malaysian students did not employ hints at all and this was interpreted as a display of respect towards their lecturers (Khalib & Tayeh, 2014).

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, CCSARP can be used to analyze the data in terms of optional downgraders and upgraders and supportive moves in mitigating the effect of the FTA arising from the making of a request. The following section analyzes and discusses these internal features (syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders) and external modifications by using Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework for the analysis, while Blum-Kulka at el.s' (1989) model is used as a complement to address syntactic modification. The analysis will focus on a holistic analysis of the request as the modifications are not limited to specific elements or parts of the discourse.

4.4 Request Modifications

The present section presents an analysis of internal and external modifications guided by the CCSARP in order to determine what modifications are used to mitigate or to aggravate the e-mail requests made by the Libyan PG students. Internal modifications take the form of syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal expressions (downgraders and upgraders) that would help to soften the head act of the request. External modifications are seen as supportive or aggravating moves that are realized in front of or next to the head act, and they modify the illocutionary force indirectly.

It can be observed from the findings that the Libyan PG students tended to use external modifications (supportive moves) in the all the data under study. However, lexical/phrasal modifications are not used extensively since (61.19%) of requests are not modified by any lexical/phrasal or syntactic modifications.

Table 4.11: Modified Requests Internally vs. Not Modified Requests

Modification	Frequency	Percentage%
Modified request	52	38.81
Not modified request	82	61.19
Total	134	100

The depth analysis of internal modifications is presented in subsection 4.4.1 and the analysis of external modification is illustrated in 4.4.2. Discussion of the modifications used was integrated with points where an overlap existed between politeness strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987) and the modifications included in the CCSARP by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). Some of the examples in the following sub-sections evidence the use of politeness strategies to provide the context of how modifications were used to mitigate the FTAs of requests.

4.4.1 Internal Modifications

The tendency to use direct strategies in the students' e-mail requests could be caused by e-mail being a 'hybrid medium'. It possesses the characteristics of oral language associated with 'telephone conversation', and the written language of 'formal letters'. Consequently, students might feel that a small number of modification is adequate for making effective requests to their lecturers (Barron, 1998). Each request head act was analyzed to determine whether internal modifications (syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders or upgraders) were present.

4.4.1.1 Lexical/Phrasal Downgraders

The analysis of internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders) is presented in Table 4.12 below. This analysis revealed that 5 kinds of lexical/phrasal downgraders (politeness marker 'please', consultative devices, downtoners, appealers and subjectivisers) were used in the e-mails from Libyan PG students.

Table 4.12: Frequency of Internal Modification (Lexical/Phrasal Downgraders)

Modification	Frequency
Politeness marker 'please'	22
Consultative devices	13
Downtoners	3
Appealers	1
Subjectivisers	1
Total	40

(a) ***Politeness Marker 'Please'***

The most common internal modification (i.e. lexical/phrasal downgraders) was the marker of politeness 'please', which accounted for 22 times of the total number of lexical/phrasal downgraders used. This modifier has two functions; the first displays the illocutionary force and the second mitigates the request more explicitly. This finding appeared to be consistent with previous studies on the overuse of the politeness marker 'please' by NNS students (see Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009, 2011; Hallajian, 2014; Zarei & Mohammadi, 2012). A possible explanation for overusing the 'please' marker by Libyan PG students was that the students might have acquired it at an early stage in their process of learning English. This explanation can be supported by Scarcella and Brunak's (1981) conclusion from their analysis of Arab students' speech acts; the findings of their study revealed that the use of 'please' marker may be acquired at an early stage of learning a second language by adult learners. A second possible explanation for this prevalence is that the learners utilized the politeness marker for its double function, that of an illocutionary force indicator (could you please…) and as a transparent modification (can you please send me comments?) to show politeness (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). In this case, the pragmatic ambiguity that is found in the 'Can you' question is resolved by the use of 'please' so as to make the request clearer (Blum-Kulka, 1987).

In the present study it was found that the Libyan PG students used the 'please' marker with the 'imperative' in initial position of their e-mail requests e.g. (S6UPM E-mail29) '**Please** check your email**'.** More examples are provided at Appendix C. One possible

explanation for this might be that the Libyan PG students were influenced by their first language, since in Libyan culture, the politeness marker 'please' is used in initial position in imperatives. This was confirmed by Aubed (2012), Deveci and Hamida (2017) and Taha (2006) that Arab participants tended to use 'please' with imperative which showed their influence of an Arabic imperative utterances.

Quite importantly, it was observed that students in the present study combined the 'please' marker with the direct strategy of 'imperative' as well as with the conventionally indirect 'query preparatory' pertaining to request for action. The 'please' marker, however, was used only with 'query preparatory' in requests for information. Examples below are typical representations:

'I am sorry because time is late but if it is possible, could you **please** send me the book by e-mail.'

(S6UPM E-mail30)

'Could you **please** fix another appointment for us?'

(S2UUM E-mail9)

'this is the Organization of Report. **please** check it.'

(S13UM E-mail66)

'**pleas** let us know what time you will be there.'

(S17UUM E-maial92)

For NSs of English, the politeness marker was combined with 'query preparatory' strategy as a typical construction. Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, (2010) concluded that the use of the politeness marker 'please' was commonly constructed with conventionally indirect by NSs e.g. "could you do p?" (p.96). Shcherbakova (2010) also revealed this conclusion that NSs preferred query preparatory + please, for example 'could you please…?'. This is an interesting observation particularly because it suggested that the Libyan PG students were putting into practice what they had learned from instructions in their ESL textbooks.

(b) ***Consultative Devices***

Consultative devices were the second most frequent modifier used as internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders). They were used 13 times of the total number of lexical/phrasal downgraders. The students used this downgrader to moderate the request's illocutionary force by involving the lecturer through the offering of their cooperation (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The following examples display using of this modification:

'Also **if you don't mind** i need to fill up the form of the nomination of supervisory committee.'

(S17UUM E-mail93)

'Please let me know **if it possible for you** as the supervision of my project.'

(S10UKM E-mail52)

The examples (S17UUM E-mail93) and (S10UKM E-mail52) involved the lecturers directly seeking cooperation (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). This was realized by 'if you don't mind' and 'if it possible for you'; the use of the pronoun 'you', which referred to the lecturer, involved him in the activity.

(c) ***Downtoners***

Downtoners are modifiers used to diminish and modulate the effect of a speaker's request (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This modification were the third most frequently used form of internal modification accounting for3 occurrences in the data under study. As can be observed, the e-mails written by Libyan PG students showed an overuse of the 'please' marker and an underuse of 'downtoners'. This finding was similar to Barron's (2003), and Faerch and Kasper's (1989) findings, who also found that the learners had underused downtoners, while the politeness marker 'please' was overused. The only downtoner in the present study was the word 'just'. Example (40) illustrates this modification:

'I **just** want to know when is the next class because I came yesterday but the class has been cancelled…'

(S5UPM E-mail22)

In the above example, the student used the toner 'just' to reduce the impact of the request that might have threatened the lecturer's negative face.

(d) ***Appealers and Subjectivisers***

Appealers are linguistic devices positioned at the end of utterance with function to appeal to the hearer's good communication (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Whereas, Subjectivisers express explicitly the subjunctive opinion of the speaker (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). These two modifications were not as frequently used (see Table 4.10). Below are two examples to exemplify the use of the appealers and subjectivisers. 'Understaters' and 'cajolers' were not used at all in the data under study.

'sorry for interrupting you again, i want to discuss my proposal this semester. **is it ok?**'

(S7UPM E-mail39)

In the example (S7UPM E-mail39), the student added a tag question to appeal to the lecturer's agreement about the request of discussion proposal.

'How are you? Give me your comments. About power point. **I think this is better** (subjectivisers)'

(S13UM E-mail68)

By adding the expression 'I think' the student tried to minimize the impact of the request on the lecturer. By using this subjectiviser, strength of opinion about the proposition of the request was mitigated.

4.4.1.2 Lexical/Phrasal Upgraders

Using upgraders when addressing a lecturer could be regarded as an instance of initiating pragmatic failure because it could be indicative of an impolite tone in the e-mail (Hallajian, 2014; Lazarescu, 2013).

(a) ***Time intensifier***

Time intensifier are elements "employed to emphasize the temporal aspect of the speaker's request" (Schauer, 2009, p.91). Lexical/phrasal upgraders used only once of the total number of internal modifications in the e-mail requests, indicating that Libyan PG students made very limited use of intensifiers to emphasize the coerciveness and urgency of the requests in their e-mails. The Iranian postgraduate students in Hallajian's (2014)

study and the Spanish monolingual group in Lazarescu's (2013) study showed a greater use of upgraders. This could have caused the students to cross the boundary of exerting their rights as students over their lecturers which could then create an institutional conflict in the student-lecturer communication. Table 4.13 below presents the percentage occurrence of the internal modification (lexical/phrasal upgraders) used.

Table 4.13: Frequency of Internal Modification (Lexical/Phrasal Upgraders)

Modification	Frequency
Time intensifier	1

An example of a lexical/phrasal upgrader used by the Libyan PG students is presented in the below e-mail.

Dear Prof Dr.
I would like to meet you **as soon as possible**, because the chemistry department told me obtain the letter of consent from your supervisor and submit it before 26 feb 2016
Best Regards

(S15UM E-mail80)

In the example (S15UM E-mail80), the student used a time intensifier **as soon as possible** probably to emphasis the urgency involved in the request towards the lecturer. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2015) commented that this modification might give negative impact about the student because the student failed to consider lecturer's time and put pressure on him.

4.4.1.3 Syntactic Downgraders

In addition to lexical/phrasal downgraders and upgraders, syntactic downgraders were also analyzed in the present study. It should be mentioned that the syntactic downgraders used displayed a wide stylistic variation in the present findings (conditionals, past tense, and conditional clause categories). Table 4.14 illustrates the frequency of these modifications.

Table 4.14: Frequency of Internal Modification (Syntactic Downgraders)

Modification	Frequency
Conditional clause	20
Conditional	10

(a) ***Conditional clause***

Conditional clause may create a certain distance from reality, so it downgrades the impact of the request (Trosborg, 1995). The analysis of the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests indicated that the conditional clause used 20 times. It was the most frequently used form of internal modification (syntactic downgraders) of the e-mail requests. Below examples illustrates this modification.

'Please **if you have copy tell me**.'

(S3UUM E-mail16)

'**Could** i see u tomorrow after lunch if u free.'

(S12UPM E-mail61)

The use of such a syntactic structure (conditional clause) functions as mitigator to modify the request internally. The examples above (S3UUM E-mail16) and (S12UPM E-mail61) stated requests which can only be fulfilled if the certain condition is achieved. The appointment that the student asked for can be done if the lecturer have time.

(b) ***Conditionals***

Conditionals are syntactic elements expressed by modal verbs of different type like 'can', 'could', and 'would'. These forms make the request more polite because they mitigate the impositional pressure of the request head act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). This form of modification was used 10 times of internal modifications. Chejnova (2014) states that e-mail requests which are modified by syntactic downgraders have more effect on the lecturers' evaluation of a request than the level of directness of the head act itself. This view is in line with Hendriks' (2010) conclusion that e-mail requests constructed with a modal 'could' can be considered to include a high level of politeness. The examples below demonstrate using of conditionals in the e-mail requests from Libyan PG students.

'**Can** you see this website, Is this follow the government, **can** I ask them about the data of prices…'

(S14UUM E-mail74)

'I **would** like to ask about (Conditional) "Article No." in the project report template.'

(S2UUM E-mail6)

The two examples above confirm the use of conditionals to mitigate the request for feedback and seeking information on a specific topic. The use of these conditionals makes it easier for the lecturer not to comply to the request and thus reduces the imposition.

4.4.1.4 Summary

Analysis of the corpora has revealed that using internal modification is underused because (61.19%) requests had zero modification, while (38.81%) were modified internally. As has been noted, some e-mails had no lexical/phrasal modifications in terms of downgrading the impact of the requests. One possible explanation for the underuse of internal modification (syntactic downgraders, and lexical/phrasal downgraders or upgraders) is the students' level of language proficiency. Schauer's (2009) findings, for example, showed that such modifications might be developed at a later stage of learning the language. Therefore, it could be concluded that the Libyan PG students who participated in the current study lack of fluency and have problems with choosing appropriate vocabulary. This conclusion is supported by the presence of various syntactic, grammatical and vocabulary errors in some of their e-mails for example:

Dear Dr. (FN),
It's Me (student's name), I am student in Advanced International Trade. So, I would like to asking about final exam in terms of questions like how many questions will be come and how many questions **I can choose** it.
Best Regards,

(S11UM E-mail56)

assalamualikum..
excuse me dr i have recived an email from **tha faculity**.. this email about the title of my proposal.. she want to sent the title before next **monday.** can i sent the current title?

(S12UKM E-mail 62)

alsalamualikum
Dr. Are u free today or no?
Exuse me dr if u can help me to **chose** them because you know them better than me

(S12UPM E-mail64)

Salam prof
We hope you have nice fasting and all your family well
We are group of student taken AI course with you .our name.
(Students' names)
We want to ask you if you will be available in your **officce** tomorrow or no **pleas** let us know what time you will be there.
thanks so much.

(S17UUM E-mail92)

This finding was similar to those of the studies by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), Zarei and Mohammadi (2012), and Hallajian (2014) which revealed that NNS students in their samples underused internal modifications. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) explained that the underuse of lexical/phrasal modifications could lead to pragmatic failure because the tone could be perceived as being rude. Similarly, Zarei and Mohammadi (2012) believed that such unmitigated requests could affect the lecturers' evaluation of the-mail negatively. As a result, the possibility of finding pragmatic failure in the e-mail communications composed by Libyan PG students who use English as the language of communication at Malaysian universities is to be expected. Besides the internal modifications, external modifications have an important role in mitigating requests contextually. The following sub-section presents the analysis and findings of these modifications.

4.4.2 External Modifications (Supportive Moves)

External modifications do not affect the realization of the act itself, directly. This type of modification uses supportive moves that are found either before or after the head act (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009). The external modification framework developed by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) guides the analysis of the data in this sub-section. In the current data, the analysis revealed three new categories of external modification (salutation, appreciation statements, and attention getters). Among the identified external modifications, a greeting/opening was the most prevalent form found in the Libyan PG students' e-mails, it appeared 100 times in the total number of external modifications. Pre-closings appeared 66 times as the second most used external modification (supportive moves). Table 4.15 below shows the findings of these modifications in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests.

Table 4.15: Frequency of External Modifications (Supportive Moves)

Modifications	Frequency
Greeting/opening	100
Pre-closings/ giving thanks	66
Grounder	62
E-mail closing	45
Salutation	34
Self-introduction	20
Attention getter	15
Compliment/ sweetener	15
Apology	9
Appreciation statement	4
Disarmer	3
Orientation move	2
Total	375

4.4.2.1 Greetings/openings

Greetings/openings accounted for 100 times of the total number of external modifications (supportive moves) that the Libyan PG students used in their e-mail requests. The presence or absence of e-mail openings seem arise from the influence of specific cultures and particular contexts. Greetings are a feature of politeness and have different forms in different cultures (Gan, David & Dumanig, 2015).

The Libyan PG students were raised in a culture where the use of greetings is encouraged, especially the use of '*Salam*' as an opener in their conversations. This is in line with Elmianvari and Kheirabadi's (2013) work which found Iranian students to be inclined to use '*Salam*' as a greeting in 85% of their e-mail requests. These greetings are considered very important from the Islamic perspective and have been widely adopted as a practice among Iranians. As can be seen in the e-mails, a dominant pattern was the use of '*Salam*' + Title e.g. '*Salam* Dr.' or '*Aslam Alykm* Doctor.' ' السلام عليكم' (Peace upon you). This indicated that Islamic greetings were also considered very important in the Libyan culture. In fact, the first lesson in the first preparatory year of the Libyan textbook is on the use of such greetings of peace, and children are reminded constantly by their parents and relatives to use the '*Salam'* expression so as to be polite and to show deference

(Islamic education for first year preparatory book, 2016). This influences their attitude of using greetings when they become adults. The sample below provides an example of such a greeting within the context of a request e-mail, for more examples see appendix C.

'Good morning prof (*Greeting/opening*)
How are you today. (*Greeting/opening*)'

(S4UUM E-mail18)

'Assalamualikum Dr (*Greeting/opening*) How are you. (*Greeting/opening*)'

(S8UM E-mail 40)

The use of greeting/opening overlapped with small talk positive politeness strategy. Some students might start their request with a small talk which refers to asking about unrelated topics such as health or holiday. This indicated that the student did not come solely for the purpose of FTA, and it also was used as a softening strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that small talk used to present unrelated topic in order to show the hearer that the speaker not only came to make a request. This strategy had a crucial effect with important implications for ongoing and future interaction, as students prefer to maintain their relation with their lecturers. This strategy was performed in the form of asking about health and wellbeing.

4.4.2.2 Pre-Closing/Thanks

Pre-closing/thanks are elements used "to show gratitude towards the addressee in advance for the anticipated help." (Hallajian, 2014: p.56). Pre-closing/thanks was used 66 of the total number of external modifications in e-mail requests in the corpora. The second most frequently used form of external modification was pre-closing/thanks. The prevalence of pre-closing modification corresponded to positive politeness. The use of 'pre-closing/giving thanks' appears to be a routine e-mail closing device, often used without attention given to express the reason for giving 'thanks'. However, expressing thanks can increase the pressure on the lecturer to comply with request. The extensive use of this modification can lead to pragmatic failure between interlocutors because the

thanking expressions may give the impression that the request will be granted easily. Chejnova (2014) revealed in her study that students use thanking to anticipate a successful settlement of their requests, which as a result put pressure on the lecturers and could cause pragmatic failure. The examples below are samples of this supportive move from the data.

'Thank you' (pre-closing/thanks)

(S4UUM E-mail20)

'**With many thanks**' (*pre-closing/thanks*)

(S15UM E-mail77)

4.4.2.3 Grounders

Analysis of the Libyan PG students' e-mails revealed the use of grounders as supportive moves in 62 times of the total number of external modifications. This finding confirmed their intercultural use in NNSs requests because the previous studies revealed that the one of the most frequent supportive move in student's e-mail request was the grounders (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Chejnova, 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009, 2011; Hassall, 2001; Zarei & Mohammadi, 2012). Faerch and Kasper (1989) stated that a grounder is able to give "reasons, justifications, and explanations for an action (that) opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor's underlying motive(s)" (p. 239). As reported in Faerch and Kasper (1989), students frequently used grounders to present their request in clear way. In addition, the finding suggested that grounders were the most effective mitigator to modify the request so as to explain it and elaborate on why the student initiated a request to the lecturer. Some examples of grounders are presented in the samples below:

Assalamualikum Dr
How are you.
I have gone through the literature review to see what terms they are using more. Actually, most of them are using the term (generation more than quantity and composition more than characterization) (*grounder 'explanation of the request'*). Should i follow them or i better use different words. if you want us to meet on Monday to discuss about it , just let me know what time is suitable for you.
Thank you and my best regards

(S8UM E-mail44)

Dear: Dr
My name is (Student's name)…. , and I am a student in faculty of science ,UM, in department of chemistry,course work. I met you last Tuesday regarding to my project. Sorry for disturbing you , I know you are very busy but can I know my project title **because you told me that you will choose suitable title for me** (*grounder, providing reason of the e-mail requests*).
With many thanks

(S15UM E-mail77)

As the request is an FTA, students use reasons to explain why they carried out the act and to encourage the lecturers to comply with their request. Examples (S8UM E-mail 44 and S15UM E-mail 77) used reasons which preceded or followed the request to explain why they had performed those e-mails. This modification is one of Brown and Levinson's (1987) on record positive politeness, who argued that when a speaker gives a reason this will lead the hearer to see the reasonableness of making the act.

4.4.2.4 E-mail Closing

An e-mail closing is a modifier used to end the e-mail politely (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). It was utilized 45 occurrences of all external modifications used by the Libyan PG students in their e-mail requests. Some instances are:

'**Respectfully yours'**

(S2UUM E-mail7)

'**my best regards'**

(S8UM E-mail42)

'**regards'**

(S16UM E-mail88)

One interesting expression was the word 'greetings' that a student used to close his e-mail with. This is likely to be a reflection of pragmatic transfer from his first culture (i.e. Libyan culture) as it is common in Libyan culture to use the literal word 'greetings' as a closing marker in written forms.

Hi doctor (FN)
Good afternoon
Unfortunately I read the email late but in the schedule the class from 6:30 to 9:30 pm on tuesday and all the students know this time >
I hope if you let us know when we will take next class
thank you
Greatings

(S16UM E-mail85)

Hi doctor
good evening
first thing first , for course notes i do not find it in the spectrum.
secondly, i can not understand what we have to write about documentation in presentation project because everyone of my group understand it by different way .
for me i understand that documentation is talking about how we will save the document of our company
I am waiting your answer
thank you
greatings

(S16UM E-mail86)

The examples above showed the word 'greetings' is used to end the e-mail, the equivalent word in Arabic is '*Tahyat*'.

4.4.2.5 Salutation

Salutations are standard formula used at the beginning of an e-mail to address a person in a formal message (Johnston, 2014). Salutations were a category identified from the findings of the present study and added to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework of analysis. The form of this modifier was 'Dear + form of address'. The analysis indicated that the e-mail data from the Libyan PG students used a salutation in 34 times of the total number of supportive moves. Examples are provided below:

Dear: Dr (*salutation***)**

(S15UM E-mail78)

Dear Dr. (FN), **(***salutation***)**

(S11UM E-mail55)

4.4.2.6 Self-introduction

Self-introduction is a statement where "the writer introduces him/herself" (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p.3211). A self-introduction was used 20 times of the total number of external modifications (supportive moves) used by the Libyan PG students. It is typically used when the interlocutors do not know each other (Chen, 2001). The Libyan PG students used this supportive move to introduce themselves as newly admitted students, thus giving themselves a legitimate reason for making certain requests, such as asking about the timetable and location of classrooms. In addition, self-introduction was also used to remind the lecturer about the student's attachment as a

supervisee to the lecturer. As such, self-introduction would explicitly establish the student's non-native identity. From the student's point of view, this approach could emphasize the student's status as a newly enrolled student who could have been marginalized as a result of being 'new'. The self-introduction might help them to establish their presence and obtain more attention from the lecturer. In this way, the lecturer could possibly be more inclined to comply with their requests. E-mail examples below illustrate the self-introduction as an external modification.

'**I am your student** (student's name)' (*self-introduction)*

(S4UUM E-mail19)

'**My name is (student's name) and I am a student in faculty** (…). I am interested to do my project in Environment area' (*self-introduction*)

(S15UM E-mail77)

4.4.2.7 Compliments/sweeteners

Compliment/sweeteners are expressions that emphasize positive mood and flatter the interlocutors (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Compliments/sweeteners are external modifications that attract attention, similar in function to attention getters. The difference between these two modifications is that attention getters are used to convey formality, while compliments/sweeteners are used to establish a sense of commonality between students and lecturers. These strategies were used 15 times of the total number of external modifications. They help to soften the imposition involved in the request. Such modifications are oriented towards establishing solidarity (i.e. positive politeness) between the interlocutors. Examples of these external modifications are provided below:

Hi Dr. (FN), how are you?
I hope you had a good holiday and i am sorry if i bother you. I want to ask you about the final assignment because i choose a topic(title of the work) but i am still not sure about the sources so i will mention for you them and you told me if it is a good sources or not:
Refernces

(S5UPM E-mail23)

salam doctor
Please dr: This is assignment of this semester, **I hope you like it**
Thank you for your interest.

(S13UM E-mail70)

This modification was realized in linguistic expressions from students that flattered their lecturers. As observed in the example (S5UPM E-mail23), the student tried to flatter the lecturer by asking about the lecturer's holiday. This what Brown and Levinson (1987) called 'small talk' which refers to unrelated topics, such as showing interest in a recent holiday.

4.4.2.8 Attention Getter

The attention getter is another new modifier added to the framework of Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) as a result of the findings obtained. It refers to elements used, usually before the actual request, to alert the lecturer about the impending request. This modifier was used to intensify politeness and preserve distance with the recipient (the lecturer, in this case). The attention getter conveyed formality and expresses respect in deference to the lecturer's higher power level, and helped maintain social distance (El-Shafey, 1990). Attention getters appeared 15 times of the total number of external modifications used. The following are examples of this modifier.

'you fixed appointment with us to present our system today at 1 pm ,**excuse me (***attention getter***)** tell us where we have to come..'

(S2UUM E-mail7)

'Please **dr (***attention getter***):** This is assignment of this semester'

(S13UM E-mail70)

It can be seen from the two examples given that 'excuse me' and 'dr.' were used to alert the lecturer that their request will performed soon (i.e. in next sentence).

4.4.2.9 Apology

Giving an apology modifies the imposition of a request. Pan (2012) suggests that apologies are "supplementary strategies when learners felt the request act was not adequately modified to extend a level of politeness that they expected" (p.148). She also added that the modifier can convey a sense of consideration, deference and respect towards lecturers. An apology was employed 9 times of the total number of external modifications. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009) observed an underuse of apology

strategies by NNS learners of English as compared with NS students. Similarly, the NNS students in this study tended not to employ apology, thus confirming Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2009) statement. In the examples below, the way Libyan PG students expressed their apology is demonstrated:

'**Sorry for disturbing you** (*apology*),…'

(S15UM E-mail77)

'**Sorry for the inconvenience** (*apology*)'

(S4UUM E-mail19)

The apology used to acknowledge impositions on the lecturer's time by using the expression 'sorry', this revealed from the data of this study and presented in the examples (S15UM E-mail 77 and S4UUM E-mail 19). This considered one of proposed negative politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson (1987). Moreover, making apology would help to minimize the effect of an FTA.

4.4.2.10 Appreciation Statements

The use of appreciation statements is another approach that can be included in Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2011) framework. It is an expression of gratitude in advance to increase the value of complying with the request. This modifier manifests as an expression of thanks and gratitude to the lecturer to acknowledge the performance of a previous action (Hallajian, 2014). Quraishi (2009) claims that appreciation statements can help minimise any negativity associated with the impingement on the lecturer's time and effort. The polite context that is created enhances the environment, making it conducive for the compliance of the request. However, analysis of the present e-mail corpora indicated that this modification utilized only 4 times of external modifications (supportive moves) included appreciation statements. E-mail (52) contained an example of an appreciation statement.

'**I'd appreciate any time you** could give me (*appreciation statement*).'

(S15UM E-mail78)

4.4.2.11 Disarmers

Disarmer is another type of modifier that indicate the extent of awareness on the part of the speaker in using the language of the request. It is "a phrase with which the speaker tries to remove any potential objections the hearer might raise upon being confronted with the request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989: p.287). Using disarmer, students showed that they were conscious of making an imposition on the lecturer. Having this awareness and stating it increased the chance of getting compliance for the request (Hallajian, 2014). Disarmers were not widely used as they accounted for only 3 times of the total number of external modifications. Examples of disarmers can be found below:

'**I understand you are a very busy person** (*disarmer*)…'
(S15UM E-mail78)

'**I know you are very busy** (*disarmer*) but…'
(S15UM E-mail77)

The examples in this case showed that the student sought cooperation from the lecturer because he presupposed common ground and shared values in that he took into consideration the lecturer's time.

4.4.2.12 Orientation Moves

Orientation moves were found only twice of the total percentage of supportive moves. This move is an opening utterance to illustrate the direction of the request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). An expression like 'I have a question' is an example of such a modification. This modification was used by one student in the example (S5 UPM E-mail24/26) in two e-mails. Other external modifications such as 'getting a precommitment, promise, and imposition minimizer' were not used in the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests.

4.4.2.13 Summary

The present findings indicated that the Libyan PG students tended to overuse external modifications in their e-mail requests to lecturers because the analysis of 109 e-mail requests revealed using at least one external modification at each e-mail in the data under study. This finding concurs with those of with previous studies (Chejnova, 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Lazarescu, 2013) where e-mails from NNS students were found to use external modifications quite extensively. This phenomenon has been found in studies that used the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009; Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Hassall's (2001) study used interactive oral role-play and found the same results. These external modifications principally involve to the maxim of clarity by Grice (1975), where the expressions used were found to be unambiguous and explicit. Thus it could be said that the politeness embedded a very clear function of asking for compliance (Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Another possible explanation for the more extensive use of external modifications compared to internal modifications is that external modifications are less complicated in wording and they are quite easily mastered by a NNS. Thus, NNS students appeared to be more adept at using direct external modifications to mitigate their requests (Hassall, 2001).

A large number of external modifications used as positive politeness strategies like grounders and greetings were used in this study because there is an overlap between politeness strategies and modifications. These two modifications are termed positive politeness strategies to establish common ground which can be used to seek cooperation between interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In a sense, the use of positive politeness is an attempt to stabilize the asymmetrical relationship between the interlocutors. In other words, students evaluate the social distances between them and their lecturers. Positive politeness is also used in a communication event to reduce the power-distance index. However, positive politeness should not be regarded as being more

polite than negative politeness. Use of hedges in negative politeness also softens the face-threatening force of requests. Both are equally effective as mitigation devices if used well.

Three new categories have been added to Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2011) framework that formed the basis for the present study. The first is the use of a salutation which serves as a greeting or an opening and, in particular, the word '*Salam*' was commonly used. Appreciation statements was another category identified from the data in the corpora that were not included in the original framework. Attention getters, that appeared in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) framework but not in Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) framework, were found in Libyan PG students' e-mail requests. The Libyan PG students used expressions, such as 'excuse me' 'dr.' as attention getters which reflected the cultural impact of their L1 in relation to politeness.

This section has presented the findings related to the internal and external modifications used in e-mail requests of Libyan PG students. The findings indicated that most of the Libyan PG students' e-mail requests did not resort using of lexical/phrasal modifications to downgrade the impact of their requests; the analysis revealed that (61.19%) of request head acts were unmodified. Among the forms of internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders), the most frequently used was the politeness marker 'please'. In regard to external modifications, the analysis revealed that e-mail writers in the current study tended to prefer this type of modification, especially greeting/opening, pre-closing and grounders. The greater reliance on external modification compared to internal ones could be perceived as a propensity towards indirectness, according to Lazarescu (2013).

4.5 Conclusion

This study set out to analyze politeness strategies in e-mails written by Libyan PG university students domiciled in Malaysia for their period of study. The primary aim was to investigate the request strategies and the types of modifications realized in their e-mail requests to their lecturers. The analysis revealed that the Libyan PG students mostly used positive politeness strategy in their e-mail requests. The data leads to certain conclusions about the level of directness and explicitness in the e-mails. Firstly, the e-mail requests were written mainly with direct strategies, which accounted for (64.18%) of request strategies, with frequent use of 'direct questions' 'imperatives' and 'want statements'. Conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies were used with equal frequency. There appears to be a noticeable lack of knowledge or choice and ability in the use of indirectness strategies, and ineffective modifications. This could result in a higher chance of pragmatic failure as most students did not minimize the level of imposition of their requests upon the lecturers.

As mentioned, internal modifications were not used extensively. Moreover, lexical/phrasal downgrader modifications were carried out with a limited range of simple expressions and there was not much variety in their realizations. In both internal and external modifications, the Libyan PG students utilized more positive politeness strategies than negative politeness strategies. This is evidenced by the spread use of greetings and grounders, represented by giving reasons and including small talk in the politeness strategies. The findings suggest that Libyan PG students encounter problems in pragmatic-linguistic and socio-pragmatic use, and this is reflected in their repetitive and limited choice of internal modifications. The findings of Felix-Brasdefer (2012) support the validity of this suggestion: he claimed that students who mixed and combined lexical/phrasal and syntactic modifications possessed a relatively high level of sociolinguistic knowledge, resulting in sophisticated levels of politeness. The problem of

lexical/phrasal combination was most likely caused by the lack of authentic learning input, lack of direct exposure to the English language, and insufficient exposure to Malaysian culture, in particular. It is likely that the students had received only limited instruction on pragmatic knowledge and its appropriate utilization with regard to the English language. Chen (2006) claimed that exposure to the target culture could influence students' ability to produce appropriate requests.

It needs to be reiterated that effective communication between students and lecturers is an important dimension of university life; it could even be one factor influencing the successful outcome for the students. Foreign students, like those from Libya, would definitely benefit from more input about pragmatic skills in effective communication so that they can construct their messages more politely and achieve the desire outcome in their interaction with their lecturers via e-mails.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study aimed to investigate the politeness strategies used in e-mail requests written by Libyan postgraduate (PG) students to lecturers at selected Malaysians universities. In order to identify which politeness strategies were used in the students' e-mail requests, Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework was adopted to answer the first research question. In order to determine how politeness was expressed in terms of the directness of the request, determining the request sub-strategies used based on directness level was the second aim of the study. The study also attempted to identify the internal and external modifications that Libyan PG students used to mitigate and soften their request acts. A total of 109 e-mails sent by Libyan PG students formed the corpus to be investigated in this research. The e-mail data were analysed to find answers to the three research questions posed.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This chapter summarises and discusses the major findings pertaining to each of the research questions posed in the study. This is directed by explanation of the implications and limitations of the study, and some recommendations for further work. The conclusion of the chapter is presented at the end of this chapter.

5.2.1 Politeness Strategies

The first research question set out to identify the politeness strategies used to express requests. To study the politeness strategies, the framework of Brown and Levinson (1987) was used in the data analysis phase. The model lists four politeness strategies: positive, negative, bald-on-record, and off-record.

Analysis of the data revealed that negative politeness strategies were the most frequently used (identified 70 times) in the request head act of the present study. The second most commonly used strategy identified from the analysis was positive politeness, followed by the off-record, while the least occurrence in the data was the bald on record politeness strategy.

5.2.1.1 Positive Politeness Strategy

The second most frequently used politeness strategy was positive politeness in the study. Among 15 sub-strategies listed under positive politeness, only four sub-strategies were used; they were: give (or ask for) reasons, be optimistic, promise, include both S and H in the activity. The most frequently used sub-strategy was give (or ask for) reasons, which falls under the dimension of cooperatively involving both the speaker and the hearer in an activity. This sub-strategy was expressed either by using 'want' statements or by using 'because' to show why the request was issued by the student. Giving reason explained why the student made the request and why it was necessary to impose on the lecturer's face. In previous studies (Chejnova, 2014; Eshghinejad & Moini, 2016; Najeeb et al., 2012) positive politeness was the most frequently used one; lower ranking in this study maybe because the present study focused on politeness strategies only in the request head act.

5.2.1.2 Negative Politeness Strategy

The occurrence of negative politeness strategies was the most frequently used strategy in the corpus used. This strategy performed more lexically by 'if clause', 'modals' and 'performatives'. Among 10 politeness sub-strategies reported under this strategy, only four negative politeness sub-strategies appeared in the study; they were: question and hedges, be conventionally indirect, go on record as incurring a debt or as not to indebt the recipient, and minimize the imposition. Their function was mainly to redress the action,

and the recipient's desire to have freedom of action. This finding is in contrast to that of Eshghinejad and Moini (2016), who studied SMSs written by Iranian students to their lecturers and concluded that negative politeness occurred as the second most frequent strategy used, among politeness strategies.

5.2.1.3 Off Record Politeness Strategy

Off record strategy is the third most common politeness strategy identified in the data. Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that it is common among high social distance relationships; however, it is not a preferred strategy in some cultures like Malaysia, who do not use hints in their communication. This is supported by Khalib and Tayeh's (2014) study when Malaysian students avoided using hints either with their lecturers or their peers.

5.2.1.4 Bald On Record Politeness Strategy

This strategy was identified as the least used politeness strategy, according to the data. This strategy includes the imperative strategy which is inappropriate in academic settings where considerable power lies in the hands of lecturers. It was observed that the bald on record strategy was used more frequently in e-mail requests for action than in e-mail requests for information. This might show a lack of pragmatic awareness of Libyan PG students, since a request for action poses for face-threat to the recipient than a request for information. In his study, Lazarescu (2013) found that his participants used more imperatives with requests for information, which they might be assumed to be a legitimate request on the part of students in an educational setting, asking for information for academic purposes, and the level of imposition is low.

5.2.2 Request Strategies

The findings of this study indicated that Libyan PG students as NNS students used more direct request sub-strategies in their e-mails towards lecturers. This finding is similar to the findings of other researchers (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer 2012; Zaire & Mohammadi, 2012; Najeeb et al., 2012; Tazegul, Han & Engin, 2016), and participants in the present study followed the same trend while composing e-mail requests to lecturers.

Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) mentioned that in her study many of the e-mail requests were created with the use of direct strategies, and particularly direct questions. It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that, out of the eight direct strategies, 'direct questions' were the most widely used by Libyan PG students. Imperative was the second most used sub-strategy. This is also in line with previous studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). Ogiemann (2009) identified that imperatives were common among NNS students with a typical construction 'please + imperative'. This is consistent with Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011), Chejnova's (2014) and Tseng's (2016) findings. However, Hallajian (2014), found that students showed little use of 'imperative and want statements' in his study.

Being conventionally indirect is the most preferred sub-strategy by NS and NNS speakers like Malaysian speakers (Khalib & Tayeh, 2014). In the present study, Libyan students used this sub-strategy with the same frequency as the non-conventionally indirect. The importance of using conventionally indirect is that offers the lecturer the opportunity to make a decision about whether or not to fulfil the request without pressure of the imposition of students' requests. Non-conventional indirectness, however, requires more interpretation on the part of the recipient, and can cause pragmatic failure.

5.2.3 Modifications

The findings revealed that Libyan PG students tended to use many external modifications. This indicates that the senders are aware of the fact that e-mail requests sent to a person with higher power and status should be mitigated and softened explicitly. Moreover, the most prevalent use of external modifications were those that incorporated a positive politeness orientation (i.e. greeting/opening, thanks and grounder).

Greater dependence on external modifications than on internal modifications was revealed in the e-mail data. A similar trend has been observed in some other studies, such as those of Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Chejnova, 2014; Hallajian, 2014; Lazarescu, 2013; and Tseng, 2016. Among the internal modifications, the 'please' marker was the most commonly used in previous studies such as those by Hallajian (2014), Chejnova (2014), and Zaire and Mohammadi (2012). Libyan PG students showed the same trend. Other internal modifications (i.e. appealers, cajolers, and subjectivers) appeared with a very low frequency in the data. This in line with the work of other researchers (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Chejnova, 2014; Hallajian, 2014). Such modifications are considered to be significant interpersonal markers that are more common in speech interaction than written communication (i.e. e-mails) (Trosborg, 1995).

Tseng (2016) claimed that since some of the internal modifications were never used in his data, even by writers with higher language proficiency, this suggests that these modifiers may not be acquired by exposure alone; explicit teaching and instructing might be needed for students to learn these politeness features effectively.

The data of this study showed a tendency to use few internal modifications, which may imply a lack of knowledge regarding the use of certain pragmatic features to attain their intended meaning, and the need to inform pedagogy about possible focuses of instruction in the field of e-mail communication between students and their lecturers.

After data analysis, the findings demonstrated that each e-mail had minimally one external modification. This highlighted by Lazarescu (2013) as a tendency of indirectness. Both Biesenbach-Locus (2006) and Pan (2012) mentioned that NNS students tend to be aware of any external modifications because of their lack of confidence and hesitation, which may be due to their proficiency of language, or of their primary role as foreign students to be direct and explicit.

One of the most interesting findings from the present study was the three new categories of external modifications (salutation, appreciation statement, and attention getter) which were appended to the framework by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), because these modifications also appeared in the present corpora.

Regarding external modification, a greeting/opening was used 100 times, indicating that this modifier is the most popular in Libyan PG student's e-mails. This finding is contradictory to Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) work because the greeting/opening occurred in only 16.5% of external modifications she found in her sample. However, it is similar to the finding of Chejnova, (2014), who found that all e-mails in the sample studied contained a greeting/opening. Pre-closing (66 times) was recorded to be the second used modification in the present study, while grounder represented the third most commonly used modifier (62) in the total number of external modifications. This consistent with Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) and Felix-Brasdefer's (2012) conclusions that the use of a grounder was the one of the most used supportive moves in e-mail requests from students to lecturers. Overall, the findings of this work showed that Libyan PG students tended to use external modifications more than internal modifications. The study can say that positive politeness is being widely used when students addressed e-mails to lecturers. This is in line with Chejnova, (2014) who concluded that a great level of positive politeness was being used in her work.

5.3 Implication of the Study

The present work contributed to the growing body of politeness research in e-mail requests in academic settings, especially in the area of Arab pragmatic linguistics. It deals with Libyan students in Malaysia, who encounter a different culture, language and communication challenges, especially in terms of e-mail writing, during their studies at Malaysian universities.

This study has implications for the students, lecturers, decision makers, and educational syllabus designers to avoid pragmatic failure from occurring, and to facilitate effective communication across cultures. As Libyan students are stepping into a new culture when pursuing their higher education at Malaysian universities, they might benefit from learning how to interact with people from different cultures and with higher power and status.

Research on pedagogical intervention has concentrated on the significance of instruction to students, essentially English NNS students, across different domains. In conjunction with different studies (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer's 2011, 2015, Lazarescu, 2013), the current study places emphasis on the need for increasing awareness among language learners about the appropriate use of politeness strategies, request strategies, and internal and external modifications, when they compose e-mail requests to their lecturers. On the other hand, this kind of instruction needs teachers to be careful of this deficiency to effectively help their students create polite e-mails with association of the target language pragmatics (Krulatz, 2012).

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The limitations of this study raise some issues that might be resolved by further studies on e-mail interaction between students and lecturers:

First, the sample was limited to Libyan PG students at four Malaysian universities. Also, a comparison with NS or NNS Malaysian students was not carried out, hence, the conclusions drawn upon may have limited application. A cross-cultural comparison between local Malaysian PG students and the international PG students could be carried out to determine how politeness strategies vary between the two groups. This contrastive work allows for more precise findings on cross-cultural and inter-language pragmatic features of these e-mails.

Second, similar studies can be undertaken by taking into account some factors such as language proficiency, gender, and age of the participants, which would allow for broader generalizations regarding how language level, gender difference and age difference influence the linguistic and pragmatic elements of e-mail requests.

To date, although there are few books about e-mail communication for ESL learners (exceptions are Swales, 2000; Mackey 2005), these books tend to concentrate more on the general etiquette of e-mails than on specific speech act performance in specific contexts. They stress the role of instructions and suggest that it is necessary to carry out systematic instructions on pragmatic knowledge and improve the teaching content to include more information about politeness and speech act performance. The findings of this study may provide the baseline data for the design of textbooks on pragmatic knowledge.

Ultimately, this study concentrated on the politeness strategies used within request events and excluded the opening and closing moves of the e-mails. However, further studies are needed to also consider politeness in the opening and closing, as well as forms of address used by Libyan students, for the purpose of achieving a more complete picture of the politeness phenomenon. Indubitably, the politeness in e-mail communication area has much room for further studies. Since e-mail can provide an authentic valuable data

source, more work should be done on cross-cultural and inter-language pragmatic studies focusing on e-mails, to broaden the scope of NNS students' perceptions and production of speech acts in specific contexts.

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has presented a summary of findings of this study, which answered the three main research questions. The chapter highlighted some implications, limitations and recommendations for further studies. It is hoped that the findings from the inter-textual analysis of e-mail requests related to politeness strategies, directness levels of the request acts, and modifications, would contribute towards more effective student-lecturer communication.

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