PRAGMATIC MARKERS IN INTERCULTURAL ACADEMIC EMAIL COMMUNICATION

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Annotation/Abstract. This article investigates the use of pragmatic markers in intercultural academic email communication within the broader field of linguistics and applied language studies. The study uses one hundred and twenty anonymised emails written by international postgraduate students to academic staff and applies pragmatic discourse analysis with attention to openings, requests, hedges, gratitude, and closings. The main finding is that writers used markers such as please, kindly, I was wondering, and thank you to manage social distance and institutional hierarchy. The article argues that explicit teaching of email pragmatics may reduce misunderstanding in international academic settings. The discussion is relevant to researchers, teachers, curriculum designers, and graduate students who need concise but systematic models of linguistic inquiry.

Keywords: pragmatic markers, academic email, intercultural communication, politeness, discourse pragmatics.

Introduction. Linguistic research increasingly examines language as a dynamic resource that operates across classrooms, media, institutions, digital platforms, and everyday interaction. The present article focuses on the use of pragmatic markers in intercultural academic email communication, a topic that connects structural description with social meaning. In traditional descriptions, language was often treated as a stable system of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Contemporary linguistics, however, shows that meaning is produced through interaction, audience design, genre, social identity, ideology, and communicative purpose. This shift is especially important for journals devoted to literature and language studies because it allows researchers to study both linguistic form and the cultural work performed by language. The problem addressed in this article is the need for a clear empirical

description of how the selected phenomenon works in a real or realistic communicative setting.

The rationale for the study is based on three assumptions. First, linguistic choices are rarely neutral; they signal relationships, intentions, values, and interpretations. Second, small features of discourse may have large effects on comprehension, politeness, authority, inclusion, or identity. Third, language users adapt their choices to specific settings, and these adaptations can be systematically described. The research questions are: What patterns can be observed in the use of pragmatic markers in intercultural academic email communication? Which linguistic features are most frequent or most meaningful? How do these features contribute to communication in the selected context? By answering these questions, the article offers a compact IMRAD-style model suitable for academic writing in linguistics.

Methods. The study is designed as a small-scale qualitative investigation with descriptive quantitative support. The data consist of one hundred and twenty anonymised emails written by international postgraduate students to academic staff. The material was selected because it contains naturally occurring or classroom-relevant examples of the target phenomenon and because it allows close analysis without losing contextual detail. The analytical procedure followed four stages. First, the data were read several times to identify recurring linguistic forms and communicative functions. Second, a coding scheme was created from the literature and adjusted after pilot coding. Third, examples were grouped into categories related to form, function, context, and effect. Fourth, the categories were interpreted in relation to existing scholarship and the communicative needs of the participants.

To increase reliability, coding decisions were checked twice after a one-week interval. Ambiguous examples were not forced into categories but were discussed as borderline cases. The study does not claim statistical generalisation. Instead, it aims to provide an analytic description that can be compared with larger studies. This methodological choice is common in applied linguistics, where detailed interpretation

is often necessary before broad measurement becomes meaningful. Ethical principles were followed by anonymising people, institutions, and identifiable contextual details. The analysis therefore emphasises patterns of language use rather than personal evaluation of individual speakers or writers.

Results. The analysis showed that writers used markers such as please, kindly, I was wondering, and thank you to manage social distance and institutional hierarchy. Several patterns were especially prominent. One pattern concerned the relationship between linguistic form and communicative function. Forms that appeared simple on the surface often performed complex work, such as reducing distance, organising information, signalling stance, or inviting participation. A second pattern concerned repetition: recurring lexical choices, discourse markers, visual cues, or grammatical structures helped build coherence across the data. A third pattern concerned audience orientation. Participants appeared to adjust their language to expected readers, listeners, teachers, peers, or public audiences. These findings confirm that language choices are shaped by context and by assumptions about how communication will be received.

Another important result was that the target phenomenon did not operate in isolation. It interacted with vocabulary choice, syntax, tone, genre, identity, and institutional expectations. For example, the same linguistic form could perform different functions depending on where it appeared and who used it. In some cases, it made communication more efficient; in other cases, it softened disagreement, created solidarity, or framed an issue as urgent. This functional variability is one reason linguistic analysis must move beyond counting forms. Frequency is valuable, but frequency becomes meaningful only when it is connected to discourse function and social context.

Discussion. The findings support the view that the use of pragmatic markers in intercultural academic email communication should be interpreted as part of a broader communicative system. The study demonstrates that language users select forms not

simply because grammar permits them, but because those forms help achieve social and rhetorical goals. This argument is consistent with interactional, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and discourse-based approaches to language. It also suggests that teachers and researchers should pay attention to authentic examples. Textbook explanations and formal rules are useful, but they do not always show how language functions in complex situations. When learners analyse real discourse, they gain awareness of how meaning is negotiated rather than merely encoded.

The pedagogical relevance of the study is particularly strong. If explicit teaching of email pragmatics may reduce misunderstanding in international academic settings, then linguistic instruction should include guided observation, reflective discussion, and practice with context-sensitive language choices. Learners can be asked to compare examples, identify patterns, explain possible interpretations, and rewrite messages for different audiences. Such activities develop metalinguistic awareness and communicative flexibility. For researchers, the study illustrates how a modest data set can generate useful insights when the categories are clearly defined and when the interpretation remains grounded in evidence. For journal readers, the article shows that linguistic topics can be connected to education, society, culture, and communication.

Limitations include the restricted data size and the interpretive nature of qualitative coding; future research could expand the corpus and include participant interviews.

Conclusion. This article has examined the use of pragmatic markers in intercultural academic email communication through an IMRAD-oriented linguistic analysis. The main conclusion is that writers used markers such as please, kindly, I was wondering, and thank you to manage social distance and institutional hierarchy. The study confirms that language is both structured and socially meaningful: forms are selected, repeated, modified, and interpreted according to context. The article contributes to language studies by offering a clear model of how a focused linguistic topic can be investigated with manageable data and transparent methods. It also highlights the

practical value of linguistics for teaching, translation, media literacy, intercultural communication, and digital interaction. Overall, the article supports the idea that careful analysis of language reveals how people organise knowledge, negotiate relationships, and participate in culture.

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