Politeness in Intercultural Email Communication:

Australian and Korean Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper presents initial results from analysis of data collected on the topic of politeness in intercultural email communication from a large cohort of Australian academic and general staff at an established metropolitan university. We were interested in the language used by these staff members while they conducted their initial email communication with their contacts overseas. The contacts overseas were, for example, fellow professional colleagues, representatives from educational institutions and foreign students. The staff members did not know personally their overseas email partners in the sense that they had not previously met face-to-face. In particular, we were interested in if and how the staff members incorporated politeness indicators in their email language and how they interpreted politeness, or lack thereof, in their incoming emails. The paper also describes and analyses the politeness strategies in intercultural emails used by a smaller cohort of Korean academics at seven universities in Korea. Results show differences in politeness, both in expectations and use, between Australian and Korean academics.

Keywords: intercultural e-mail communication, Australian university staff, Korean academics, unkown overseas e-mail partners, politeness strategies, qualitative data analysis.

Themes and conceptual developments were identified in the primary data-gathering instrument, the questionnaire, using qualitative data analysis. The software package *Leximancer* was used for text analysis (Smith 2002). The software analysis confirms and strengthens our own qualitative analysis. Results show aspects such as formality in language and use of correct titles are important politeness considerations in intercultural email communication. These politeness considerations however, vary according to culture and results show many discrepancies on these and other aspects between the Australian and Korean data. Figures showing ranked themes display these results visually.

1. BACKGROUND

There is initial research to suggest that there is an altering or reduction in the normal conventions of politeness in email discourse compared with more established written forms of communication (Bunz & Cambell 2002; Ma 1996; Simmons 1994). Many factors may lead users to alter, reduce or omit certain politeness indicators in their email discourse. Such factors are the direct transactional nature of the message, the relative anonymity of email discourse, the use of uninhibited or 'carefree' language behaviour, a tendency for self-disclosure and self-orientation, as well as the brevity of some email texts (Baron 2001; Ma 1996; Moran & Hawisher 1998; Ross 2001; Walther 1992, 1997). A potential consequence of diminished politeness in email discourse may result in diminished regard for face risk management (Goffman 1967).

Face may be defined as 'the positive social value a person claims for him/herself' (Goffman 1967:5). Face risk management strategies are defensive and protective linguistic measures designed to save and support one's own face and the face of the other. Such linguistic measures include general politeness strategies used in any verbal interaction (Brown & Levinson 1987; Watts 2003). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two types of politeness strategies, positive and negative. Positive politeness

strategies appeal to one's positive face or the desire to be liked, appreciated and understood. Some examples of positive politeness strategies include sharing similar opinions, showing approval and appreciation of other and so on.

Negative politeness strategies, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), appeal to one's negative face or the desire to be unimpeded and not to be imposed upon. Examples of negative politeness strategies include apologies for interfering, linguistic deference, hedges, being vague, understating, hinting, impersonalising mechanisms such as the passive voice and any other softening mechanisms that give the other person a face-saving line of escape (Brown & Levinson 1987). Negative politeness strategies may not suit the nature of email discourse due in part to the apparent direct style of communication and the lack of social context cues.

The lack of social context cues such as certain body language messages, apparent in face-to-face communication, may pose a barrier in email communication (Garton & Wellman 1994; Holmes 1994). In face-to-face contact people have immediate feedback, through body language cues, word choice and voice intonation and so on, to adjust strategies for any necessary face-saving or face-building work during the course of the interaction. Via email however, the writer cannot adjust immediately to the necessary and expected politeness levels in the interaction, due to the lack of shared contexts of communication and a difficulty in clarifying or repairing breakdowns in communication (Baron 1998). The decontextualised nature of email moreover, may hinder the writer in knowing how to express politeness in the message, especially if the communicating partner is unknown and culturally different. It is often not apparent what forms of social etiquette are appropriate at any given time in intercultural email communication (Ma 1996).

There is also evidence to suggest that, due to the decontextualised nature of email and the brevity of many email messages, politeness indicators are reduced or omitted (Bunz & Cambell 2002; Ma 1996; Simmons 1994; Walther 1992, 1997). When this happens email may be seen as an information transaction medium, rather than an interaction based communication system supporting interpersonal relations. In other words, email may be used by some people to transmit information only to the receiver rather than trying to establish social relationships, by the addition of politeness indicators. Our research is attempting to ascertain how people see the medium as contributing to interpersonal relations through the use of politeness indicators and how acceptable those levels of politeness are, to culturally different others.

Politeness indicators have diverse and far-reaching implications when they are used for culturally different others. All cultures possess ways of conveying politeness both linguistically and non-linguistically (Brown & Levinson 1987). However, politeness strategies may vary between cultures. Linguistic strategies of politeness are influenced by three culturally bound factors namely, the power difference between sender/receiver, the social distance between sender/receiver and the weight of the request being asked (Brown & Levinson 1987; Ting-Toomey 1988, 1994, 2005; Scollon & Scollon 1995). Each culture interprets these factors differently and therefore the language may be shaped differently (Holtgraves & Yang 1990). These three factors determine the type and level of politeness strategies to be used, if any are used at all (Scollon & Scollon 1995).

The sum of these three factors also assesses the level of threat to face (Brown & Levinson 1987). As cultures assess each factor differently, the assessments of face threat in any communication may also differ, requiring different politeness strategies sensitive to each cultural interpretation. Many cultures, for example, differ in the way they perceive power imbalances amongst and between individuals and this will have a corresponding affect on the face strategies used within the interactions. Moreover, in many cultures in Asia deferential strategies are common (Saville-Troike 2003:176). In other cultures where an individual orientation is evident, as in Australia for example, much emphasis is given to tact (Hofstede 1997; Leech 1983). Tact, which has been described as the most important kind of politeness in English speaking cultures, is evidence of the importance of individual rights and wants in these cultures (Leech 1983:107). Other cultures consider the use of indirectness in speech strategies as offering greater politeness, such as in the use of passive voice, impersonal pronouns and metaphors (Fraser 1990:221; Saville-Troike 2003:29).

It is in misunderstanding cultural assessments of social distance, impositions and relative power rights that lead to differences in assessments of face. These differences, in turn, lead to the use of corresponding politeness strategies which may be at odds with personal and cultural expectations. Intercultural miscommunications, or worse, offences may result (Thomas 1983). Unless the sender has an understanding of such factors, successful intercultural email communication cannot be assured. The aim of this research is to throw light on such issues as face and politeness within email communication. Greater knowledge and understanding of these complex issues can only assist email writers in developing better strategies for more successful intercultural email communication.

2. METHOD

The first set of data was gathered from a total of 122 full time academic and general staff at a large Australian metropolitan university. These participants responded to a questionnaire entitled 'Intercultural Email Communication'. The sample was random and taken from the university as a whole, across all campuses and faculties. This larger study used three instruments (questionnaire, interview and email text analysis) for data triangulation in order to give breadth and depth to the overall analyses (Denzin 1997; Murphy 2006). For the purposes of this paper, only the section on 'Politeness' from the primary data-gathering instrument, the questionnaire, is included.

A second set of data was collected from a smaller cohort of 16 Korean academics working at seven universities in South Korea. All had a good command of the English language in that they had near-native proficiency. Most of the Korean academics taught at least part of their academic courses in English. They all used email to communicate for work purposes with English speakers overseas.

The original questionnaire, used for the Australian participants, was altered slightly to provide clearer instructions for use for the Korean participants. Though the actual content of the questionnaire remained the same, simpler language was used for the instructions to assist the Korean participants whose first language was not English. These minor changes were implemented by the principal researcher with the help of two native speaking Korean academics, one working in Seoul and the other currently working at the Australian university.

The Australian and Korean questionnaires elicited both quantitative and qualitative data from each section. In the 'Politeness' section, the participants were asked to comment on their perceptions of politeness and how it affected the way they went about writing their emails to overseas people whom they did not know. The three questions in this section were:

> 1: In general, do you think you express politeness differently in your email communications with unknown receivers overseas compared to your email communications with people you know in Australia? (Korea)? Yes/No
>
> If YES, how do you express politeness differently?
>
> 2: In your opinion, do you ever perceive a lack of politeness in the emails you receive from overseas? Yes/No
>
> If YES, in what way?
>
> 3: In general, how do you show politeness in your overseas email communications?

As researchers, we were interested in looking at how the participants used politeness with unknown overseas receivers compared to the way they used politeness with known colleagues in Australia (Korea). The participants were also asked to comment on how politeness perceptions influenced the way they interpreted their incoming emails from overseas. In particular, we were interested in obtaining insight into how the concepts of face and politeness were embedded within the email language.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The Australian results

The demographic results show that the mean age of the Australian participants was 45 years. The participants have worked at their university for an average of 10 years and 83.6% of them were native speakers of English. 80.3% received part or all of their education in Australia. Most of the participants have been using email as part of their work practices for 8 years or less. 63.6% said that they had communicated with people overseas by email in the last 12 months for such things as conference participation, joint writing of academic papers, forging professional links, expanding foreign student intake and so on.

In the following results for the three questions, the figures given for each question are the valid percentages. These percentages are calculated from the number of those participants who answered the question only. The non-responding percentages for the three questions were generally low, varying between 0% and 10% and thus were not considered for comment.

In Q1, there was a roughly equal division of people who expressed politeness differently with known receivers in Australia to unknown receivers overseas. 53.8% of participants said that they *did* express politeness differently while 46.2% said that they did not. From the data it appeared that as far as the sender of an email was concerned, whether the receiver was known or unknown did not affect politeness. There was no data to suggest, however, that the receiver agreed that the email sent was, in fact, polite. There remained the possibility that even though the sender may have thought he/she was sending a polite email, the receiver might not have agreed.

The overwhelming response to how participants expressed politeness differently was in the formality of their writing. In other words, participants said that they expressed politeness in their overseas communications through the level of formality. Other ways of expressing politeness included 'using proper titles', 'showing more attention to clarity', 'using formal greetings and goodbyes', 'avoiding colloquialisms' and 'giving attention to please and thank-you'.

In Q2, 72.5% of participants replied that they did *not* perceive a lack of politeness in the emails that they received from overseas while 27.5% said that they did. Those who indicated that they did perceive a lack of politeness cited reasons such as 'short and abrupt language', 'direct and assertive language', 'poor English', 'arrogant tone', 'lack of formality', 'incorrect use of titles' and 'inappropriate register'.

In Q3, the answers to the question seemed to compound the personal and subjective nature of linguistic politeness. What one person considers polite does not necessarily mean that others share that opinion. There was a widespread range of responses and many themes were identified (52 themes) with 22 of the themes identified having only one response. This indicated a definite lack of consensus among the Australian participants. Email writers, it seems, have personal ways of expressing and interpreting politeness which would make formulating potential standardised protocols difficult. Some of the main ways politeness was shown in overseas email communication according to the participants were 'showing formality', 'use of correct titles', 'greater use of please and thank-you', 'use of formal greetings and closings', 'offering assistance for further queries', 'offering friendly greetings generally', 'use of careful wording' and 'use of respectful endings, e.g., kindest regards and yours sincerely'.

The following trends were identified from an overall analysis of the three questions:

- Politeness in email according to the Australian participants was incorporated in many elements of writing such as orthography, text structure, punctuation and clarity.
- Formality, including formal greetings and closings, was an important way of showing politeness in overseas email communication.
- Correct titles were important also.
- Omission of certain written elements, for example, colloquialisms, jargon, and/or humour, could indicate politeness according to the participants.

3.2 The Korean results

The demographic results of the Korean cohort showed a similar mean age to the Australian group (45 years). All were native Korean speakers with English as their second language and all worked in an academic capacity at universities in South Korea. Most of them were educated in both Korea and overseas (America cited as the most common other place for education attainment). The average time

that the Korean participants had been writing emails to contacts overseas was 9.5 years and the purpose of their email communications was similar to the Australian participants.

In Q1, 53.3% of participants said that they *did* express politeness differently to unknown receivers overseas while 46.7% said that they did not. This was a very similar result to the Australian cohort and may suggest that the desire to express politeness differently to unknown receivers overseas does not depend on one's cultural background. However, the ways that the politeness is expressed differs from culture to culture, according to this study. The ways that the Korean participants expressed politeness differently included 'using formality', 'using formal titles', 'using polite closing remarks' and 'using conventional letter protocol'. One participant, however, felt freer in addressing non-Korean people by their first names and writing more informally generally, compared to writing to Korean people, which demanded more formality, according to this participant.

In Q2, 60.0% of participants said that they did *not* perceive a lack of politeness in incoming emails while 40.0% said that they did. This last figure (40%) is considerably higher than the number of Australian participants (27.5%) who perceived a lack of politeness in their incoming emails. *Nearly one half of all the Korean participants felt that the emails they received from overseas were impolite*. Importantly, this data suggests there is room for improvement in email writing in general and the value of including politeness indicators in particular. It may also caution people from Australia who write emails to Korean academics to be particularly aware of the importance of politeness indicators in their language. Those Korean participants who indicated that they did perceive a lack of politeness cited reasons such as 'no formal titles' or 'no titles at all', 'addressing by first name only on the first email contact', 'not enough face-saving expressions used', 'too business-like', 'no opening and closing of message' and 'lack of interest in communication partner'.

In answer to Q3 concerning the ways that they showed politeness in their emails to non-Korean speaking people, the Korean answers ranged from 'using formal titles', 'making requests indirect', 'avoidance of jargon and colloquialisms', 'using polite structures including modals e.g., *would you... I would appreciate*...etc'.

The following trends, albeit from a much smaller sample, were identified from an overall analysis of the Korean data:

- Formal language was an important politeness consideration especially in terms of address at the beginning of an email. Conventional written protocol was often followed in Korean email texts. Some participants also said they saw a difference between levels of formality between Koreans writing to other Koreans and Koreans writing to non-Koreans. In other words, the formality was said to be high between Koreans and Koreans but not as high between Koreans and non-Koreans.
- Correct titles were important also.
- Face-saving language in email texts was considered important for politeness and the absence of it was seen as impolite.
- Brief email texts were seen as impolite.
- Indirect language for requests was considered polite. However, some participants said that they used direct language in email texts generally.
- Modal verbs were preferred by some of the Korean participants to indicate politeness e.g., *would, could, and might*.
- Interest in the way they do things in Korea by non-Koreans was also considered polite according to the participants.

3.3 Analysis by Leximancer

The software package, *Leximancer* (Smith 2002), was used for qualitative text analysis. *Leximancer* is a data-mining tool, which analyses the content of textual documents and computes the frequency of terms used in the documents. As such, it is free from researcher bias. This software generates a non-selective exploration of samples of text and computes the frequency with which each term is used, after discarding text items of no research relevance (such as 'a', 'the' and 'and'). The result is a bird's eye view of the material showing a ranked listing of the most iterated concepts extracted from the text and how they are related. In this study, all the qualitative data from the three questions in the section on Politeness was used for analysis by *Leximancer*. In other words, all comments and suggestions written by the

participants in the open-ended sections were gathered together and uploaded onto *Leximancer* to give an unbiased account of the most iterated concepts in that data. The Australian results are shown in Figure 1:

Concept	Absolute Count	Relative Count
formal	43	100%
language	32	74.4%
titles	26	60.4%
polite	19	44.1%
email	18	41.8%
English	13	30.2%
words	11	25.5%
careful	9	20.9%
people	9	20.9%
dear	7	16.2%
tend	5	11.6%
style	5	11.6%
correct	4	9.3%
think	4	9.3%
salutations	4	9.3%
unknown	3	6.9%
person	1	2.3%

Figure 1: Politeness in Email according to Australian participants

In Figure 1, the 'Absolute Count' refers to the actual frequency of occurrences of the concept extracted from the text while the 'Relative Count' refers to the percentage of each concept relative to the most frequent concept (in this case, 'formal'). This ranked list shows that from all the qualitative data given in the first section of the questionnaire on 'Politeness', these major concepts have surfaced. From this data it can be seen that 'formality' is the most important concept according to participants. Therefore, the optimal way, according to the Australian participants, to show politeness, is through formality in email communication. Titles are also an important concept in politeness. Care in writing intercultural emails is obviously a consideration for the Australian participants as evidenced by the concept 'careful'. Another prevalent concept 'dear' shows that it is important to begin intercultural email communication in this way.

In analysing the Korean data, the software did not produce such reliable results. This was due to the smaller number of participants, compared to the Australian cohort. However, the following result was obtained showing a ranked listing of the most iterated concepts and how they were related. Politeness in email according to Korean participants is shown in the following Figure 2:

Concept	Absolute Count	Relative Count
titles	11	100%
people	6	54.5%
English	5	45.4%
closing	5	45.4%
formal	5	45.4%
write	4	36.3%
addressing	4	36.3%
expressions	4	36.3%
email	4	36.3%
language	4	36.3%
Polite	3	27.2%

differently	3	27.2%
letter	3	27.2%

Figure 2: Politeness in Email according to Korean participants

Figure 2 shows that the use of titles in email communication is a very important politeness consideration for Korean participants. Moreover, the correct use of titles has much more importance for the Korean than the Australian participants. In Figure 2 above, the correct use of titles has a relative count of 100%, compared with the relative count of 60.4% in the Australian data. Formality in language is also a high priority for the Korean participants as is the choice of expressions used for closing the email message.

3.4 General analysis of results on Leximancer

Because the two samples are so different in size, it is not appropriate to compare the two sets of results. A general reflection on the two sets however, seems to converge on concepts of 'correct addressing' or 'titles' and 'formality of writing' as the overarching principles of polite email communication according to both Korean and Australian participants. The use of titles however, was clearly more important for Korean than Australia participants, as it was ranked in first place.

Importantly, the results from both Figures generated by *Leximancer* strengthen our original analyses as they highlight key concepts in a way that is inductive, systematic and rigorous. In providing a window on the data in this way, the software has confirmed our own coding and conceptual findings.

4. DISCUSSION

In this section, examples gathered from the data are analysed according to relevant theory. The first examples cover aspects such as titles, followed by examples illustrating different communication patterns such as direct and indirect language and the various politeness indicators that are embedded in those communication patterns.

According to the participants in this study, conventionalised utterances are important for politeness in intercultural email communication (Watts 2003). Such expressions include:

- The full address e.g., *Dear Professor*
- Suitable formulaic expressions e.g., *please, many thanks*
- Respectful expressions of salutations and leave taking e.g., *best wishes, kind regards, I look forward to hearing from you, thanks once again etc.*
- Appropriate sentential structures containing modal verbs eg *may I ask you, would you consider* etc.

4.1 Examples of the use of titles

It has been shown in this study that the use of the correct title for the address in email communication is, to some extent, culturally determined. From the results, the correct title was found to be a more important politeness consideration for the Korean than the Australian cohort. However, personal choice, both in the way people choose to address their overseas receivers and also in the way they, themselves, like to be addressed, may contradict cultural norms. One Korean participant listed this reason when asked if he ever noticed a lack of politeness in the emails he received from non-Korean speaking people (Q2): *Yes, one of my English speaking acquaintances considers my email sexually harassing. I began my mail to her as 'Dear Alexandra'. She wrote (to) me that I could **not** use 'Dear' or 'Dear First Name'. I showed my email (the same email) to another native speaker lady, and she said my email was quite alright.*

This Korean participant felt comfortable addressing an English-speaking person by her first name in the email. However, the use of first name was not acceptable to this particular receiver who was offended by such informality. This example illustrates the type of offence that can easily occur when politeness indicators are not used appropriately or according to the personal preference of the receiver, which may, at times, be at odds with certain cultural stereotypes or conventions.

4.2 Examples of the use of different communication patterns

Direct language, often cited as a characteristic of email discourse (Baron 2001; Gains 1999; Holmes 1994; Lan 2000; Ma 1996), had mixed appeal according to the participants. Direct expression style refers to the use of messages to show one's true intentions (Ma 1996). Many Korean and Australian participants cited direct language in email as being polite as it was considered to portray clarity. By contrast, indirect expression style refers to the use of messages to camouflage one's true intentions (Ma 1996). It can include the use of negative politeness strategies such as hinting, being vague, overgeneralising, using metaphors and understating.

Requests made via email were seen as impolite, by most participants in this study, if they were worded directly. One Korean participant listed her preferred form for a 'request' as *'I was wondering if you could possibly do this for me….'* This linguistic structure illustrates several types of negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987), which show non-imposition and respect for the receiver's own world. On the scale of politeness, this form rates very high (Brown & Levinson 1987). It is a 'hint' strategy which is the most common form of 'off record' request as it is really the sender wondering to him/herself about the request rather than directly asking for something. Positive and negative politeness strategies (using modal verbs e.g., *could* and formulaic expressions e.g., *possibly*) have been added to soften this request. The negative politeness strategies show a desire on the part of the sender for non-imposition or not assuming that the request will be automatically carried out. Here the sender was almost giving the receiver the option to choose whether or not to carry out the request such was the concern for negative politeness towards the receiver. Giving receiver options in requests is part of Lakoff's Politeness Principle (Lakoff 1989, 1990).

Requests by imperatives are a threat to face and, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), those imperatives without any softening language included ('baldly on record'), rate the highest on the face threat continuum. An example of a 'baldly on record' imperative was given by an Australian participant. When asked if he ever perceived a lack of politeness in the emails he received from overseas (Q2), he gave this answer: *I don't like pushy requests expressed by imperatives,* an example (*could be*) *'Send me a copy of your available times and include your contact details'.*

This Australian participant dislikes these two imperative requests (*Send me a copy …*, and include *your details…),* which he considers 'pushy'. These types of request may be examples of the increasingly apparent direct, transactional nature of email communication. The sender has not added any softening language with the requests, which may save the face of the receiver. Politeness strategies can be added to this type of request so that face may be saved and even validated. Such language may include negative politeness strategies which respect the receiver's own world, for example, *'If you have the time, could you send me a copy….'* The addition, *'if you have the time',* minimises the imposition and the illocutionary force of the request (Watts 2003). It shows that the sender is aware and considerate of the receiver's busy schedule. The other addition *'could you',* shows the sender is giving the receiver an option, as the modal verb *'could'* implies that the receiver may or may not be able to send a copy and as such, does not assume a willingness of the receiver to comply to the sender's request (Brown & Levinson 1987). Giving options is an important politeness factor, as it shows consideration for other and also gives the other a face-saving line of escape (Fraser 1990; Lakoff 1987, 1990).

Positive politeness strategies, that is, strategies that show interest and sympathy towards the receiver are important and should be included in intercultural email language according to the participants. One Korean participant was offended by an absence of such positive politeness strategies. He gave this answer when asked about a lack of politeness from non-Korean speaking people (Q2): *Yes, just the way he talked (in the email). I was recruiting some English instructors and just one of them was not polite enough. He talked about what he wanted and never wanted to hear what our situation was like here.*

According to this Korean participant, the sender did not include in the email any language of solidarity, interest or involvement and did not seek out the point of view of the receiver. Consequently, there was no sharing of knowledge (Scollon & Scollon 1995) and as a result, the receiver's own face projection or self-image was not accepted (Brown & Levinson 1987). If, however, the sender had expressed interest in the receiver's world, by way of warm comments showing concern for receiver, it would have engendered a commonly created viewpoint and thus feelings of solidarity. Such comments could include, '*Does this fit in with the way you would like'…*. or '*Can you tell me more about your program… it sounds interesting.'* The use of the modal verbs *'would, can',* the attitudinal epithet *'interesting'* and second

person pronominal use '*you would like, can you tell me more about your program*' are examples of the language of solidarity. In using such language, the receiver's face is accepted and even validated (Brown & Levinson 1987).

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the results of politeness perceptions of Australian and Korean academics in their intercultural email communications as part of their work practices. It was found that considerations of politeness are very important in email communication especially with people from other cultures. The use of politeness strategies, both positive and negative, was found to be an important way to consider face aspects both for sender and receiver (Brown & Levinson 1987; Goffman 1967). These include linguistic expressions that promote solidarity between sender and receiver and also that show a consideration and interest for the other. As seen from the results of this research, consideration of culturally different other in email communication may include such things as giving a full title for address and using formality in language. This research also shows that people from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations in their email communication (e.g., how they expect to be addressed and greeted). As a result, they may feel uncomfortable when a correspondent does not conform to their expectations.

A level of discomfort may also be experienced by culturally different others when email language displays too direct a style. Some cultures prefer indirect communication styles from unknown receivers, especially for the speech act of requests which may be inherently face threatening (Ma 1996). Currently in email, there appears to be a contemporary bias across cultures towards informality, directness and brevity (Baron 2001; Crystal 2001; Gains 1999; Lan 2000; Ma 1996). However, this study shows such stylistic qualities are not as universal as we might think. Therefore, email correspondents need to be especially prudent when choosing the level of formality, directness and length if their intercultural communication is to be effective.

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