

## Politeness of Filipino HEI Students in Realizing Computer-Mediated Requests

Lourdes dela Cruz-Rudio

Languages and Literature Department, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Philippines

[lcrudio@dlsud.edu.ph](mailto:lcrudio@dlsud.edu.ph)

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i2.2049>

**APA Citation:** Dela Cruz-Rudio, L. D. (2025). Politeness of Filipino HEI Students in Realizing Computer-Mediated Requests. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 7(2).476-491. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i2.2049>

### Received:

13/01/2024

### Accepted:

05/03/2024

### Keywords:

Politeness,  
request speech  
act, computer-  
mediated  
communication.

### Abstract

Pragmatic competence is an essential ingredient in the success of human interaction; it ensures that a message is expressed and understood appropriately based on the norms of a given discourse community. This study was conducted to offer an analysis of the realization of the speech act of request among higher education students sent via email to their professor in the light of the Politeness construct. Forty-eight emails of requests sent to the researcher were analyzed using the frameworks of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978). Through discourse analysis, this qualitative study presents prominent strategies used by the students in their request head acts and accompanying statements that also indicate politeness. It is concluded that the students exhibit pragmatic competence with their use of appropriate request and politeness strategies to serve their communicative purposes. However, their use of some pragmatic markers might be indicative of either politeness or negative pragmatic transfer or both. Finally, the study offers recommendations for future researchers as well as pedagogical implications.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication remains vital in human interaction, with its success depending on linguistic competence. Pragmatic competence may be defined as the ability to produce and understand meaning in communication in context (Thomas, 1983). The speaker exhibits this by being able to express the purpose of the message and the hearer being able to comprehend the intended meaning of the speaker. In such case, both participants access their linguistic knowledge and the sociolinguistic rules of discourse for them to interact accordingly based on the given context (Bialystok, 1993). Thomas (1983) claims that failure to acknowledge either or both the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects leads to communication breakdown.

Pragmatic competence is often discussed in the light of Politeness, being one of the important social conventions one must consider in communication and is an indicator of pragmatic competence (Wang, 2021). Among the many proponents of Politeness, Brown and Levinson (1978) propose its universality; on the other hand, scholars such as Leech (2005) claim that different cultures and languages manifest politeness differently. Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1978) argue that social distance, power relations, and degree of imposition influence the way people use politeness in communication.

Although pragmatic competence and politeness are expressed through language, studies show that a person's linguistic proficiency does not greatly affect one's pragmatic competence. For instance, the study of Onchaiya and Phimsawat (2021) found that language proficiency does not affect the realization of speech acts nor the appropriateness of the politeness strategies

used. Meanwhile, social distance and power relations are seen to influence the choice of realization and politeness strategies, which is also supported by dela Cruz-Rudio (2023). Together with these, Laabidi and Bousfiha (2020) identified the severity of the offense as another determining factor in the strategies used by the speakers in apologizing.

## 2. REQUEST SPEECH ACT AND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION (CMC)

Because request is classified under directive speech act, scholars have been investigating how this is realized by speakers over the years. For instance, Anwar, Raya, Sadia, and Aktar (2021) identified the strategies used by 400 ESL university students in Pakistan in their request through written discourse completion test (WDCT). Aside from gender influence in terms of the level of directness of the students' requests (females were indirect while males were direct), the study also found the prominence of mood derivable as request strategy used by the participants. Mood derivable, being the most direct strategy, was utilized by the students regardless of power relations that exist between them and their interlocutors. The same was found by Ahmed, Saleem, and Habib (2021) on both native Punjabi speakers (PL1) and Punjabi ESL speakers (P-ESL) compared to native English speakers who used query preparatory more. However, while the latter considers this as a pragmatic transfer the former study interprets the result as an indicator of pragmatic incompetence among the participants and calls for the need for the integration of pragmatics in language teaching.

Comparing Arabic EFL and ESL speakers, Alshraah and Dardadkeh (2021) asked 60 lecturers to realize their requests through discourse completion test (DCT). Although there is a slight difference in the level of directness, in which ESL used more direct strategies than EFL speakers, the study generally found that both groups of speakers were more inclined to use conventionally indirect strategies. Meanwhile, Onchaiya and Phimsawat (2021) determined the request strategies used by Thai and Filipino teachers through WDCT and interview. They found that both groups display awareness of both social status and distance in communication; however, they differ in their realization of the speech act. Thai participants were seen to use more direct strategies by expressing imperatives while Filipino teachers were more indirect by directing their requests to their interlocutor's ability.

These studies both show that requests can be realized in varied ways and how different factors could affect or influence the strategies used in realizing it. At the same time, it could also indicate the participants' pragmatic competence. However, through the use of DCT or WDCT, the participants were made to assume that they were conversing with their interlocutors face-to-face in these studies. Other studies like that of Puksi (2016) present the notion that changing the mode of communication might yield different results, which took their interests in looking at computer-mediated communication (CMC). Specifically, Puksi analyzed 200 hotel reviews over the course of one year and found that most reviews contained complaints and threats. These very direct strategies indicate the reviewers' non-desire to save face. The researcher then associates this to the medium of communication which somehow promotes impersonality and even anonymity.

Wang (2021), on the other hand, suggests that familiarity is a stronger determinant of politeness than mode of communication. This was seen through the analysis of the researcher's CMC conversations with 4 interlocutors in which both positive and negative politeness strategies were exhibited. Particularly, positive politeness was used by offering suggestions and attending to H while negative politeness was used by hedging and questioning.

In his literature review, Chauhan (2022) particularly focused on a specific computer-mediated communication in a definite academic context, emails of ESL learners to their professors. The review establishes pragmatic failure among ESL students with their emails

seen in their direct strategies and absence of mitigators. Because the students failed to recognize values and norms in an academic setting, their emails were generally considered impolite and unacceptable. This is supported by other studies such as that of Alemi and Maleknia (2023) and Almoaily (2018) with the latter taking the perspective of communication accommodation in relation to politeness and the former focusing on greetings as politeness marker in emails. Both studies found that ESL students did not have thorough understanding of politeness through their failure to accommodate verbal and structural politeness markers as well as unawareness of the importance of greetings in their emails, respectively.

Furthermore, Salazar-Campillo (2023) looked at 40 emails initiated by undergraduate and graduate students to their professor written in Spanish. Particularly, the researcher investigated the use of two personal pronouns which are semantically the same but pragmatically different, *tu* (second person 'you') and *usted* (third person 'you'). These variations of 'you' were equally used in the first emails of the students regardless of their educational degree; however, *tu* was consistently used by the students even in their second emails to their professor even increasing in frequency (20 in first email; 29 in second email). In addition, *tu* is used by the students together with the professor's first name in the greeting. Although the use of the less formal *tu* is seen as something to signal solidarity, the researcher also suggests it as something that indicates lack of deference of the students to their professor. Finally, it was recommended that students need to develop their awareness of factors such as uneven relationship in producing emails appropriately as well as their socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence in academic contexts.

These, however, contradict the study of Albawardi and Alqahtani (2022), in which female Saudi students exercised politeness in their request sent through email to their professors using opening and closing moves. These moves were expressed through a greeting, self-introduction, apology, and phatic elements, to name a few. Moreover, students employed negative politeness by giving deference and positive politeness by giving reasons.

### **3. FILIPINO POLITENESS**

Meanwhile, Filipinos are generally known for being polite, and recent studies have attempted to describe Filipinos' politeness in various contexts. For instance, Llorica and Sosas (2022) investigated the politeness strategies used by Filipino teenagers in their households. The study is somewhat a response to the common observation of the degeneration of politeness among the youth in the country. The researchers recorded and observed 10 conversations between teenagers aged 13 to 19 with their parents. It was then found that the subjects used positive and negative politeness as well as bald on-record strategies in their conversations with their parents. However, it somehow disproves the common observation of impoliteness among the youth; rather, it presents evidence of pragmatic competence of the subjects instead. This is because the Filipino teenagers were able to apply the appropriate politeness strategies according to the purpose of their message. Specifically, they used positive politeness to establish kinship while negative politeness was used to lessen the degree of imposition to their parents by using hedging and framing. The subjects were also found to have used bald on-record strategies when they wanted to be clear and unambiguous with their messages.

Sandoval-Delos Santos, Araneta, Ingilan, and Palayon (2023) present similar results among 67 Manobo (Philippine indigenous group) students who were observed while interacting with their teachers. The students indicated the same purposes for using the same politeness strategies. However, their use of positive politeness is slightly different when conversing with their Manobo and non-Manobo teachers, with whom they prominently used jokes and seeking agreement, respectively. Both Llorica and Sosas' (2022) and Sandoval-Delos Santos et al.'s (2023) studies imply that Filipino youth regard their parents and teachers

as authorities; yet they access various politeness strategies according to their communicative purposes.

When engaged in CMCs, Filipinos also tend to exhibit politeness. Two hundred seventy-nine posts in a politically charged online forum was analyzed by Correo (2014). Written in Bikolano language, the talk turns mostly expressed positive politeness strategies, which were used to address opposing views. At the same time, negative politeness was also employed as a means to encourage participation among the members without being too intrusive. Meanwhile, the participants also used bald on-record strategies when they intended to be concise and direct to their points in relation to their reader's attention while off-record strategies were used when giving criticisms or to hint negative emotions.

Briones and Liwanag (2023) found that Filipino students and teachers were able to utilize politeness strategies to meet their communicative needs, in which both positive and negative politeness strategies were seen in 95 emails between 17 students and 17 professors. Students tend to use positive politeness strategies to either give justifications for their actions or receive favorable response from their professors who, in turn, use the strategy to express a sense of inclusivity and empathy toward the students. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is prominent in student-initiated emails seen in giving deference while it is also used by professors to avoid imposing. In general, in either strategy used by the students and professors, their emails include hierarchical linguistic politeness markers as well as the use of emoticons to indicate politeness.

Finally, AlAfnan and dela Cruz-Rudio (2023) found that both Filipino and Malaysian university students use indirect strategies in their emails of request to their professors. By analyzing a total of 40 emails, the study somehow supports the notion of indirectness in speech act realizations of non-native English speakers. However, both groups of students also used direct strategies, where Malaysians are seen to be more direct than their Filipino counterparts. Specifically, the former prominently used imperatives, while the latter hedged performatives. On the other hand, Filipinos utilized more politeness strategies (positive and negative) in their emails compared to Malaysians.

These reviewed literature and studies on politeness and request speech act realization present both consistent and contradicting results. Nevertheless, scholarly works established the universality of politeness and request speech acts, simultaneously the culture-dependency of some of their aspects. In addition, recent studies also established the possibility of ESL speakers' difficulty to transfer pragmatic competence to computer-mediated communication (emails) as they are seen to be adhering to politeness norms in supposed face-to-face conversations (eg. Alshraah & Daradkeh, 2021; Ahmed, Saleem, & Habib, 2021) but seen as impolite and improper in their emails (Chauhan, 2022; Alami & Maleknia, 2023). On the other hand, local studies seem to consistently present Filipinos as polite, indicative of pragmatic competence. This is seen in studies on their face-to-face interactions with their teachers (Sandoval-Delos Santos, Araneta, Ingilan, & Palayon, 2023), their parents (Llorica & Sosas, 2022) or even with different interlocutors (Onchaiya & Phimsawat, 2021). Even their CMC interactions exhibit politeness (Correo, 2014; AlAfnan & dela Cruz-Rudio, 2023).

Despite these studies, very little attention has been given to Filipino students' realization of requests through emails. Although some works looked into Filipino students' email (eg. Briones & Liwanag, 2023), the corpus was analyzed regardless of the nature of the email sent. Meanwhile, although the work of AlAfnan & dela Cruz-Rudio (2023) considered the speech act of request in emails, it was somewhat lacking in depth as it mostly focused on the head act strategies and did not provide discussions on other politeness markers in the corpus. Because of this, the researcher felt the need to conduct a study that would present a

focused and in-depth analysis of the discursive strategies employed by Filipino students in their request realization in computer-mediated communication.

To fill this gap, the present study aims to investigate the speech act of request realization of students in their emails to their professor. Specifically, it wants to answer the following questions:

1. What politeness markers are seen in the students' requests?
2. How do the students employ politeness in their requests?
3. What strategies do the students use to realize their requests?

This study hopes to offer insights on how university students achieve their communicative needs through email as well as their awareness of the different factors contributing to their use of politeness strategies. In addition, this could also contribute to the academic community by offering pedagogical implications especially on the integration of pragmatic competence in language instructions.

Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978) and Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969) provided the theoretical framework of the study. The theory suggests that a person has either the need for recognition or acceptance or need for independence and freedom from the other person with whom they are communicating. These needs are called *positive face* and *negative face*, respectively. Although these are assumed to be respected by people in their interaction, some actions tend to threaten them, referred to as *face threatening acts* (FTA). To remedy or alleviate the threat, politeness is then applied by speakers through various strategies.

**Figure 1**

*Brown and Levinson's (1978) strategies for performing FTA*

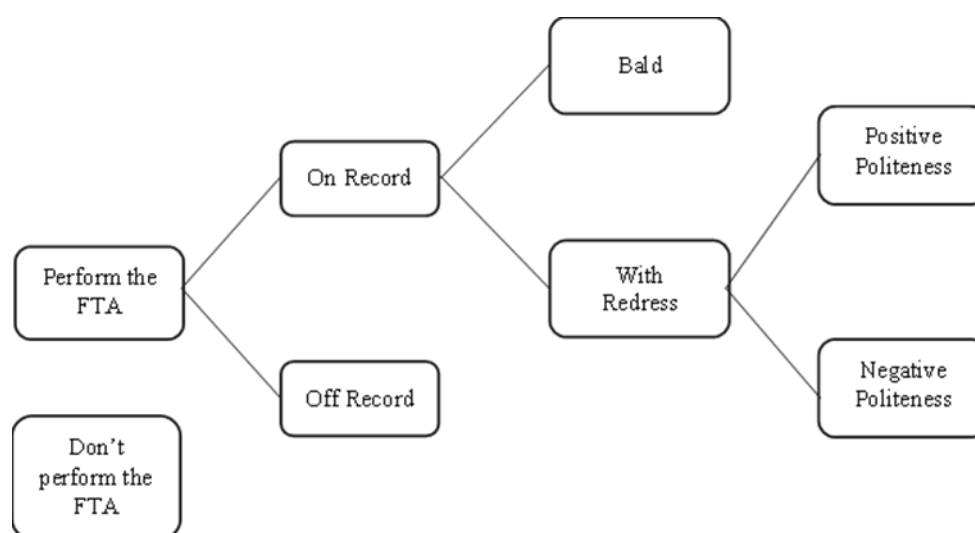


Figure 1 shows the different decisions a speaker makes in face threatening acts. Notice that positive and negative politeness both stem out as redressive strategies of going on-record in FTA performance. These are strategies used to somewhat soften the impact of the FTA, and is opposite the direct and unmitigated Bald On Record FTA. Moreover, positive politeness is a strategy promoting solidarity or common ground between interlocutors while negative



politeness expresses acknowledgment of distance between the participants; thus, avoiding intrusion of personal space or freedom.

In relation to this, the speech act of request is categorized as directives, which, according to Searle (1976) are “attempts...by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (p. 11), and in turn, considered a Face Threatening Act (FTA) by Brown and Levinson (1978). The proponents suggest that requests put a pressure on the hearer (H) since the speaker (S) wants him/her to do a certain action (A). Although it has a lesser imposition than other directives, requests also pose a threat to H’s negative face. This means that the speech act somehow impedes H’s freedom. Therefore, discursive analysis of the speech act of requests exposes the choice of strategies made by the speaker given the threat it naturally poses and based on what he/she thinks is appropriate in the given context; therefore, underlying pragmatic competence also surfaces.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive research applying qualitative method design. Such method fits the study as it covers qualitative data such as semantic features and politeness strategies in speech act realization. This also employed a Discourse Analysis approach as it investigates how people use language as a means to express their experiences. At the same time, Wang (2021) claims that CMCs can also be subject to discursive approach of analysis, making it more fitting to the present research.

The researcher gathered all online communication sent to her by her undergraduate students from the second semester of the schoolyear 2022-2023 and the first semester of the schoolyear 2023-2024. The university observes blended modality; therefore, students meet their professors for 1.5 hours in class, and the other 1.5 hours is spent in asynchronous learning. This modality contributes to the use of email or other online communication channels by the students with their professors. The students either sent their communication through the email feature of their LMS or the message feature of MS Teams. After the initial analysis, the researcher was able to discriminate 48 email requests from other non-request emails. These were further analyzed to determine the request strategies used as well as the politeness strategies employed by the students in their messages.

Requests were coded using the analytical framework of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) based on their cross-cultural analysis of requests considered to be the pioneering study on such speech act. At the same time, Brown and Levinson’s (1978) framework in categorizing politeness strategies was used in determining the ones used by the students.

The percentage of the strategies used in the request head act is computed and presented quantitatively. However, interpretation of the data is not solely based on the quantity of strategies and elements; rather, they are also qualitatively presented in the paper by looking at how these strategies and elements were used to achieve their communicative goals.

#### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the analysis of data in the light of Politeness and Speech Act.

##### **Research Question #1: What linguistic politeness markers are seen in the students’ requests?**

Analysis of the data shows politeness markers present in the students’ requests such as formulaic expressions, L1 politeness markers, and code-switching.

Phatic elements may be considered formulaic and may not necessarily carry any meaningful information. However, Fadhil (2022) highlights its social more than informative function. Therefore, it may not have essential information or meaning, but it helps establish a

good social relationship between interlocutors. Phatic elements found in the corpus are seen both in the opening and closing segments of the student emails as seen in the following excerpts.

1. “Good morning, Professor Rudio.”
2. “Hello and good day po!”
3. “Thank you and God bless!”
4. “...have a nice rest of the week po!”

These expressions, usually greetings, are mostly used as the opening statement of the requests. The greetings were either formal as in 1 by including the professor’s name or a more casual one (2). Phatic elements are also used to signal the end of the message as presented in 3 and 4, in which the former is combined with another politeness strategy and the latter used on its own to end the communication. All of which are used to establish or sustain solidarity as indicated in the study of Almoaily (2018) in emails in academic context as it minimizes the distance between interlocutors.

Another politeness marker found in the corpus is the L1 respect-marker “po”. Meneses (2018) defines this as equivalent to honorifics in the English language but may also function as internal modification in imperative sentences. As an indicator of deference, the speaker lowers oneself with the utterance of “po”.

5. “...give me 1 week po para matapos ko yung... (*give me 1 week to finish...*)”
6. “I sincerely apologize po for any inconvenience.”

In 5, a seemingly direct imperative is given by the student; however, the politeness marker “po” is used to soften it. This does not only serve as mitigator, but it may also serve as an intensifier to the strategy it appears with as seen in 6 where the student intensifies another negative politeness of apology.

This L1 politeness marker is used 154 times by the students. This suggests that most students used it more than once in their whole utterance; some may even have overused it especially when expressing their request in their L1 as seen in the following excerpt where “po” is used six times in a single sentence.

7. “I know po it’s my fault po pero nawala po talaga sa isip ko... since andami pong ginagawa... 2pm po natapos yung video editing po ng editor. (*I know it’s my fault but it honestly slipped my mind... since a lot needs to be done... it took our editor until 2pm to finish the work...*)”

Nevertheless, the use of this L1 politeness marker is an indication of the students’ negative politeness towards their professor as it gives deference, lowering themselves to someone in authority. Correo (2014) also highlights the use of “po” in her corpus of computer-mediated communication to denote deference since the expression is commonly used toward older people or those who hold authority.

In relation to this, instances of higher-level code switching are also found in the corpus. This means that aside from the word-level switching as in the instance of “po”, the students sometimes switched in the middle of their sentences or between sentences as seen in 8 to 11.

8. “I got caught up with the face-to-face classes...and it drained me mentally kaya now lang po ako nakapag open ng schoolbook (*that’s why I only accessed School Book today*).”
9. “...di ko po kasi na take due to certain reasons... (*I didn’t take [the assessment] for certain reasons*).”
10. “...but I assure naman po that I am fully committed to completing the task...”

11. “May quiz po ako na hindi na take (*I wasn’t able to take an assessment*). I know it’s my responsibility to check my assessments po.

Three studies among Asian students also established the politeness function of code-switching. Pradina, Soeriasoemantri, and Hiriyato (2013) found that 4<sup>th</sup> graders code switch from Indonesian to English in their conversations with their teachers to indicate politeness, while Bashir (2022) states that Punjabi speakers switch to English when speaking to their superiors. This is supported by Sugianto and Salehuddin (2019) who also found that Javenese youth switch to local variation of their language when talking to authority especially their parents and the elderly, to express their politeness.

Meneses (2018) also found instances of code-switching in her analysis using sessions of the provincial council of Albay. In her study, code-switching was done in various levels – function words, particles, phrases, and sentences, which were also found in the present study. Analysis of the data by the previous scholar indicated that speakers code-switched to accommodate politeness in their utterances. Furthermore, the researcher associated code-switching among Filipinos to their multilingual society and highlights its necessity to achieve communication goals for which English may not be enough especially in exhibiting politeness.

### Research Question #2: How do the students employ politeness strategies in their requests?

Referring to the head act strategies, students were found to employ the Bald-On Record strategies through the identified direct strategies previously discussed. At the same time, conventionally indirect strategies previously identified are also considered indicators of negative politeness. Aside from the head acts, other parts of the request act may also exhibit politeness in the students’ emails.

Table 1 presents both positive and negative politeness strategies used by the students and the part of their emails on which they appear whether in the opening or closing segments or as adjunct to the head acts. These strategies are identified based on the framework offered by Brown and Levinson (1978).

**Table 1**

*Positive and negative politeness strategies in students’ requests*

	Opening	Adjunct	Closing	f	%
Positive	<b>14</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>51.74</b>
Identity Markers	14			14	8.14
Be Optimistic		10		10	5.81
Common Ground		7		7	4.07
Promise		12		12	6.98
Grounder		45		45	26.16
Reciprocity		1		1	0.58
Negative	<b>10</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48.26</b>
Thanking			35	35	20.35
Deference		9		9	5.23
Incurring a Debt		2		2	1.16
Apology	10	19	8	37	21.51
Total	<b>34</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>100.00</b>



As Table 1 presents, the students are found to have used more positive (51.74%) than negative politeness strategies (48.26%). In addition, it also presents that most positive politeness are used as adjunct to the head act ( $f=75$ ), that is, the expression preceding or proceeding the head act statement. On the other hand, negative politeness is either distributed in all parts of the email or in the closing segment ( $f=43$ ).

Specific positive politeness strategies are more frequently used by the students to serve their communicative purposes. The following excerpts present the three most used strategies used as adjunct to the head act.

12. "I couldn't open my Schoolbook and eventually missed the deadline."

13. "I will be unable to attend my classes po... as I was currently under medical care. I have consulted a medical professional..."

Grounder or giving reason is used forty-five times in the student requests. These are placed either immediately before or right after the head act statements. This implies that they wanted to explain or justify their request to their professor. Grounders in the corpus vary in length as some express them in one sentence as in 12 while others in 2 or more sentences as in 13, and others as long as one paragraph offering very detailed explanation. This may be related to the finding Briones and Liwanag (2023) on their analysis of email exchanges between Filipino students and teachers, in which justification were given by students in their emails to receive favorable response from their teachers. On the other hand, grounders may also be associated to low level of proficiency of students as suggested by Chauhan (2022).

Aside from Grounder, the students also employed other positive politeness strategies such as Promise, and Optimism. Promising is considered positive politeness since it gives an assurance to the hearer that the speaker is committed to doing something in return to the favor or request asked (14 & 15). At the same time, to be Optimistic is also positive politeness as it encourages camaraderie and cooperation of the hearer (16 & 17).

14. "It won't happen again po."

15. "Rest assured that I will accomplish all the needed requirements in our subject po."

16. "I hope you would take this into consideration."

17. "...hoping for your understanding and support."

Moreover, Identity Markers such as self-introduction are seen at the opening segment of 14 emails. Introducing oneself is seen as positive politeness because it serves as an in-group identity marker.

18. "I am your student from xxx21 in your subject Classic Literatures of the World."

19. "I'm xx from xxx25."

In both 18 and 19, the students introduced themselves either by telling their names or simply stating the class in which they belong to indicate that they belong to the same group as the hearer being the teacher of their classes. Recent studies show that self-introduction is a politeness strategy especially among students when communicating with their teachers (eg., Trang, 2019; Albawardi & Alqahtani, 2022). By doing so, the students make it known that they are aware of their professor's positive face needs and that they are attending to such; hence, positive politeness.

Although negative politeness strategies only make up 32.55% of the corpus, it is more distributed to the different parts of the emails compared to positive politeness which is concentrated on the body as adjunct to head act. The following excerpts show that Apology is the most used negative politeness strategy seen in the opening segment (as in 20), closing segment (21), and also used as adjunct to head act (22). Apology is a speech act itself that recognizes the violation of a social norm (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1983) and which therefore damages the speaker's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

20. "I apologize for messaging on a weekend."

21. "I wrote this message po to apologize for missing my two quizzes. Ask ko lang po if may chance pa po ba ko mag take ng Review Quiz 1 and Review Quiz 5 po? (*I just want to ask if I could be given a chance to take Review Quiz 1 and Review Quiz 5.*)"

22. "Thank you po and my apologies for messaging at this late hour."

In 20, the speaker uses the Apology as, according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983), a disarmer, which is an expression of the speaker's awareness of potential offense. In this case, because the student sent an email on a weekend, and he/she knows that it was inappropriate and may offend the professor, he/she initially apologizes for it. As an adjunct to the head act, however, the apology in 21 is expressed right before the head act statement to not only hint the professor of the upcoming request, but to also somehow mitigate the imposition. Finally, the apology in 22 is the closing segment of the email. As the student thanks the professor, he/she also apologizes for offending the receiver for the untimely message.

Thanking is another negative politeness found in the corpus. Unlike Apology, Thanking is concentrated on the closing segment of the emails as seen in 23 and 24.

23. "Thank you po."

24. "Thank you and God bless!"

Thanking is also another speech act considered as negative politeness as the speaker expresses his/her indebtedness to the hearer. Although Trang (2019) considers thanking as a mere phatic expression, Waldvogel (2007 cited in Albawardi & Alqahtani, 2022) suggests that thanking is a hierarchical politeness marker especially when the message is directed toward someone of higher status. In the present study, students' thanking may be expressed on its own as seen in 23 or may be combined with a religion-loaded greeting as in 24. Moreover, it could also be combined with another negative politeness as previously seen in 22.

The use of negative politeness is commonly seen in communication between interlocutors with imbalance status and positive social distance; this has been supported by past studies showing the prominence of negative politeness in speech act realizations in which the speaker holds lower power (eg. dela Cruz-Rudio, 2023; Masruddin, Amir, Langaji and Rusdiansyah, 2023).

Upon analysis of data, the study has found that the students used both positive and negative politeness strategies in different parts of their email to serve their purposes. For instance, they open their messages by using positive politeness to establish friendliness, but they also use negative politeness to apologize for their untimely message. At the same time, they also use both strategies as support to their head acts to offer explanation, to express optimism, or to give the receiver an assurance that their offense will not be committed again in the future. Finally, negative politeness makes up their closing segment to give deference to the

receiver. This finding supports those of recent studies by Wang (2021), AlAfnan and dela Cruz-Rudio (2023), and Correo (2014) on computer-mediated communication and politeness. Moreover, it strengthens the claims of Llorica and Sosa (2022), Sandoval-Delos Santos et al. (2023) on the general politeness of Filipinos in way that they use various strategies to satisfy their different communicative needs.

**Research Question 3: What strategies do the students use to realize their requests?**

The students used both direct and indirect strategies in realizing the speech act of request; however, direct strategies are used more as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Head act strategies in students' requests*

Strategies	f	%
Direct	29	53.70
Mood Derivable	3	5.56
Unhedged Performative	5	9.26
Hedged Performative	21	38.89
Conventionally Indirect	25	46.30
Scope Stating	4	7.41
Query Preparatory	21	38.89
Total	54	100

Considering specific strategies, the data suggests that among the direct strategies, the students prominently used Hedge Performative (38.89%) to realize the speech act of request. Hedged Performative, as defined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) is a strategy in which the illocutionary act is embedded in the utterance. This is seen in the following excerpts.

25. "...we would like to request for the opportunity [for you] to be one of our interview respondents."
26. "...I would like to ask lang po sana ng chance to take the quiz... (*I would like to ask for a chance to take the quiz*)"
27. "... I would like to request, if possible, for you to open the most recent quiz..."

The students expressed their hedged performatives by including the modal "would" which softens the imposition of the request. Moreover, aside from the hedging device, the utterance in 27 also included an embedded 'if' clause, which Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) consider to be a syntactic modification furthering the softening of the imposition.

Other direct strategies are also found in the corpus as seen in Table 2, particularly Unhedged Performative (9.26%) and the most direct, Mood Derivable (5.56%). Unhedged Performative is a strategy in which the illocutionary force is explicitly indicated by the speaker while Mood Derivable is expressed by the grammatical move of the verb (Blum-Kulka & Olshtein, 1984).

28. "I ask for your utmost consideration..." (unhedged performative)
29. "I humbly request for a second chance to retake the quiz." (unhedged performative)

5. "...give me 1 week po para matapos ko yung mga assessment (*give me 1 week to finish the assessments*). " (mood derivable)
30. "Please excuse me for today's class..." (mood derivable)

Notice that in 28 and 29, the mention of the illocutionary force in "ask" and "request" are made explicit while in 5 and 30 are imperatives "give me" and "excuse me". Despite the directness of the last two excerpts, variations in the use of these strategies are also used by the students through the use of politeness markers "humbly" (29) and "please" (30). "Kindly" was another hedging device used by the students in the corpus appearing twice. Moreover, as previously seen in 5, although no hedging was used, a Filipino politeness marker was used after the imperative making the imposition softer.

The use of hedging to soften the mood derivable strategy was also found in recent studies suggesting the students' attempt to soften or mitigate a rather direct strategy (eg. AlfAnan & dela Cruz-Rudio, 2023). Meanwhile, direct strategies were also found in the study of Anwar et al. (2021) and in the review of Chauhan (2022). In the former, the participants prominently used mood derivable in their requests to professors followed by hedge performative while the former highlights the use of direct strategies of students without the use of any mitigators. These studies concluded for the students' lack of pragmatic awareness as their strategies seem to be inappropriate in the academic context.

In terms of the indirect strategies, the students only used Scope Stating and Query Preparatory, in which the latter was prominently used (38.89%) than the former (7.41%). It is also worth noting that Query Preparatory was equally used with Hedge Performative.

31. "May I still submit my outline analysis, ma'am?"
32. "...is there any chance po for the assessment to be reopened?"

Query Preparatory refers to preparatory conditions such as ability, willingness or possibility of the act being performed. In 31, the student refers to the professor's willingness to allow submission, while the possibility of the professor to open the assessment is referred to in 32. In their study of request strategies among teachers, Onchaiya and Phimsawat (2021) also found the prominence of query preparatory strategies among Filipinos focusing on the hearer's ability. The focus on ability is also similar to the findings of AlfAnan and dela Cruz-Rudio (2023) among Filipino students, often expressed in phrases "Can I..." or "Can you..."

Meanwhile, Scope Stating is another indirect strategy which expresses the speaker's emotion, intention or desire towards the hearer doing the action. This is seen in the following excerpts.

33. "I was hoping if you would allow me to pass the pdf form..."
34. "I've been wondering if I may ask for an extension w/ deductions..."

The speakers in 33 and 34 above express their "hope" for the professor allowing him/her to submit the document in another format (33). On the other hand, the speaker in 34 took a speaker-oriented approach by "wondering" whether she is allowed to ask for an extension of submission.

Filipinos have been found to be conventionally indirect when it comes to requests as previously suggested in recent studies. This is similar to what Alshraah & Daradkeh (2021) found among their EFL and ESL Arabic participants in which these lecturers mostly used indirect strategies; although ESL were found to be more direct their EFL counterparts. On the other hand, native English speakers who took part in the study of Ahmed, et al. (2021) were

found to have used query preparatory in realizing their requests similar to what the present study found.

This study wanted to offer an in-depth analysis of the request realization of Filipino university students in the light of politeness. After the analysis of the 48 request emails of students, the study found that although direct strategies were prominently used in the head acts, indirect strategies were also employed by the students. Moreover, it was also found that students used both positive and negative politeness strategies beyond the head acts in which positive was mostly used as adjuncts while negative was used both in the opening and closing segments of their requests. Finally, although positive outnumbered negative politeness strategies in the sentential level, other politeness markers suggest deference among the students especially with the use of the Filipino politeness marker “po”. This suggests that students may have appealed to the sense of solidarity and cooperation to their professor, but they also did not impede the professor’s freedom and acknowledged her authority.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

These findings present the students’ pragmatic competence in realizing their request to their professor. Their choice of request as well as politeness strategies indicate their awareness of the power and social distance they have in relation to their professor; hence, they realized their requests by appealing to the professor’s sense of cooperation and consideration without being too intrusive or persistent. Even their code switching may also indicate their attempt to maintain politeness in their communication. On the other hand, the presence of too many L1 politeness markers as well as code switching instance may also suggest students’ lack of awareness of the conventions of written communication. Since previous studies found code switching as an indicator of politeness in spoken discourse, this might suggest a negative pragmatic transfer. Nevertheless, the study lends support to recent works on Filipino politeness within and outside the academic context; however, it also offers opportunities for further studies and pedagogical implications.

Future studies could investigate a larger corpus to analyze and consider other variables that may influence the choice of strategies. In addition, other Face Threatening Acts may also yield interesting results. Furthermore, although this study analyzed corpus written both in English and Filipino, it might also be good to investigate how these speech acts are realized in L1 and L2 to see any pragmatic transfer.

Pedagogically, although the study suggests pragmatic competence among the students, integration of such in English and non-English classrooms could further enhance the students’ pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic competence. Research has found the benefit of both implicit and explicit instructions in developing pragmatic competence among students (Huang, 2022; Barezenko, 2019), particularly task-based language teaching and creating an immersive environment (both face-to-face and virtual) to accommodate pragmatic skills among students (Taguchi, 2018). By incorporating cultural awareness, teachers could remedy or avoid negative pragmatic transfer among students (Chen, 2023), as in the case of the overuse of the L1 politeness marker and code-switching in this study. These, together with explicit instructions in writing conventions in the target language, could also offer students other means or ways to express politeness, which are appropriate and acceptable to written communication in English.

## **Acknowledgement**

This research was conducted through the Br. Andrew Gonzalez Professorial Chair in Linguistics awarded by the University Research Office of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Philippines.



## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, K., Saleem, T., and Habib, A. (2021). Socio-cultural transfer in Punjabi ESL speech behaviours: Case study of request patterns. *Psychology and Education*, 58(2).10812-10825. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350979410\\_Socio\\_cultural\\_Transfer\\_in\\_Punjabi\\_ESL\\_Speech\\_Behaviors\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_Request\\_Patterns](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350979410_Socio_cultural_Transfer_in_Punjabi_ESL_Speech_Behaviors_Case_Study_of_Request_Patterns)
- Alshraah, S. and Daradkeh, S. (2021). Contrasting the request act used by EFL/ESL native-Arabic speakers in Arabic and English situations. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, May-Jun, 2021, pp. 395-408. DOI: 10.22161/ijels
- AlAfnan, M. and dela Cruz-Rudio, L. (2023). Student-teacher email requests: Comparative analysis of politeness strategies used by Malaysian and Filipino university students. *World Journal of English Language*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2023, pp. 353-361. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n1p353>
- Albawardi, A. and Alqahtani, A. (2022). Politeness in an educational context. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(6), pp. 284-299. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0168>
- Alemi, M. and Maleknia, Z. (2023). Politeness markers in emails of non-native English speaking university students. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 67-87. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-33334>
- Almoaily, M. (2018). Greetings as politeness strategy in EFL distance learning students' official emails. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 6, pp. 259-266. DOI: 10.13189/lis.2018.060601
- Anwar, U., Raja, F., Sadia, H., and Akhtar, R. (2021). An investigation of request strategy employed by ESL undergraduate students. *Journal of Social Sciences and Media Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352762231\\_AN\\_INVESTIGATION\\_OF\\_REQUEST\\_STRATEGY\\_EMPLOYED\\_BY\\_ESL\\_UNDERGRADUATE\\_STUDENT\\_S](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352762231_AN_INVESTIGATION_OF_REQUEST_STRATEGY_EMPLOYED_BY_ESL_UNDERGRADUATE_STUDENT_S)
- Bashir, R. (2022). Effects of age on politeness and faithfulness of identity – A Pakistani Punjabi community analysis. *Webology Volume 19, Number 1, 2022*. [https://www.webology.org/data-cms/articles/20220305012725pmwebology%2019%20\(1\)%20-%2086%20pdf.pdf](https://www.webology.org/data-cms/articles/20220305012725pmwebology%2019%20(1)%20-%2086%20pdf.pdf)
- Berezenko, V. (2019). Developing pragmatic competence of foreign learners: Guidelines to using constatives in modern English discourse. *Advanced Education*, Issue 13, 2019. [EJ1305485.pdf](https://doi.org/10.13189/ae.2019.1305485.pdf)
- Bialystok, E. (1993). Metalinguistic awareness: The development of children's representations of language. In C. Pratt, & A. Garton (Eds.), *Systems of representation in children: Development and use* (pp. 211 – 233). London: Wiley & Sons.
- Blum-Kulka, S. and Olshtain, E. (1983). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 5, No. 3. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/31338837>
- Briones, G. and Liwanag, M. (2023). Politeness strategies in Filipino student-professor email correspondence in higher education amid pandemic. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 17(2), pp. 25-50. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369532347\\_Politeness\\_strategies\\_in\\_Filipin](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369532347_Politeness_strategies_in_Filipin)

[o student-professor email correspondence in higher education amid pandemic/citations](#)

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (pp. 56-310). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chauhan, P. (2022). Request strategies used by English language learners: Student-professor email communication. *Communication and Theater Association of Minnesota Journal*, 45(1). <https://doi.org/10.56816/2471-0032.1144>
- Chen, Z. (2023). The study of negative pragmatic transfer and its pedagogical implications. In B. Majoul et al. (Eds.), *ICLAHD 2022* (pp. 1109-1117). Atlantis Press. [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-97-8\\_141](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-97-8_141)
- Correo, C. (2014). Politeness strategies deployed by Filipinos in asynchronous computer-mediated discourse. *Asian Journal of English Language Studies (AJELS)*, Volume 2, October 2014, pp. 76-102. <https://doi.org/10.59960/2.a4>
- dela Cruz-Rudio, L. (2023). *Discursive strategies of EFL and ESL speakers in cross-cultural conversations across domains: A socio-pragmatic approach* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. De La Salle University-Dasmariñas.
- Fadhil, Z. (2022). The function of phatic communication in the English language. *English Language, Literature & Culture*, 7(2), 2022, pp. 62-65. doi: 10.11648/j.ellc.20220702.13
- Huang, N. (2022). Revisiting L2 pragmatic competence through implicit vs. explicit instructional framework. *Front. Psychol.*, Vol. 13, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.987729>
- Laabidi, A. and Bousfiha, A. Speech act of complaining: Socio-pragmatic study of complaint by Moroccan EFL learners. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 2020, pp. 148-155. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v2i2.294>
- Leech, G. (2005). Politeness: Is there an east-west divide? *Journal of Foreign Languages*, 3(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/PR.2007.009>
- Llorica, M. and Sosa, R. (2022). Politeness strategies of Filipino teenagers in the household. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(4), 2022, pp. 1357-1368. <https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/5200>
- Meneses, M. (2018). Code-switching as a politeness marker in Sangguniang Panlalawigan regular sessions in Albay. *Bicol University R&D Journal*, 23(3), pp. 1-11. <https://journal.bicol-u.edu.ph/document.php?id=41>
- Onchaiya, P. and Phimsawat, O. (2021). The use of request strategies by Thai and Filipino teachers. *Vacana: A Journal of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2021). <http://rs.mfu.ac.th/ojs/index.php/vacana/article/view/312/227#>
- Pradina, F., Soeriasoemantri, Y., and Heriyanto (2013). Code-switching as the positive politeness strategies in Indonesian 4<sup>th</sup> grade students' conversation. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 22, 2013, pp. 19-25. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/RHSS/article/viewFile/9546/9868>
- Puksi, F. (2016). Speech act of complaints from online hotel review. [\*Proceedings of the Asia Tourism Forum 2016 - the 12th Biennial Conference of Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Asia\*](#), pp. 587-591. DOI: [10.2991/atf-16.2016.92](https://doi.org/10.2991/atf-16.2016.92)

- Salazar-Campillo, P. (2023). Address forms and politeness markers in Spanish students' emails to faculty. *RAEL: Revisita Electronica de Linguistica Aplicada*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2023, pp. 58-73. <https://doi.org/10.58859/rael.v21i1.501>
- Sandoval-Delos Santos, R., Araneta, J., Ingilan, S., and Palayon, R. (2023). Politeness strategies of manobo students in a classroom in Kidapawan City, Philippines. *Southeastern Philippines Journal of Research and Development*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 27-54. <https://doi.org/10.53899/spjrd.v28i2.247>
- Schulz, J. and Wonnacott, E. (2024). Pragmatic competence. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 45, pp. 717-744. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716424000274>
- Searle, J. R. (1976). A Classification of Illocutionary Acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166848>
- Sugianto, S. and Salehuddin, A. (2019). The implications of politeness and speech styles in code switching of youth Javanese. *Jurnal Solid*, Volume 9 No 1, 2019, pp. 9-13. <https://ojs.utmmataram.ac.id/index.php/solid/article/view/167/pdf>
- Taguchi, N. and Kim, Y.J. (2018) Task-based approaches to teaching and assessing pragmatics: An overview. *Task-Based Approaches to Teaching and Assessing Pragmatics*, edited by Naoko Taguchi and YouJin Kim, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018, pp. 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tblt.10.01tag>
- Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, Volum 4, Issue 2, Summer 1983, pp. 91-112. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/4.2.91>
- Trang, N. (2019). Exploring university students' politeness via Vietnamese students' emails of request. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, Vol. 4, No. 3., September 2019, pp. 84-99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29252/ijree.4.3.84>
- Wang, Z. (2021). Politeness in making requests and responses in computer-mediated communication among Chinese college students. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 43-50, January 2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1101.05>

### **AUTHOR'S BIO**

*Lourdes dela Cruz-Rudio is an Assistant Professor at De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Philippines, where she facilitates undergraduate and graduate courses. Her research interests are genre analysis and pragmatic studies..*