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<https://doi.org/10.47526/2024-4/2664-0686.132>A. ZHORABEKOVA<sup>1</sup>, G.K. KASSYMOVA<sup>2</sup>, W. XU<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>PhD Doctoral Student of Nazarbayev University

(Kazakhstan, Astana), e-mail: aruzhan.zhorabekova@nu.edu.kz

<sup>2</sup>PhD, Associate Professor, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

(Kazakhstan, Almaty), e-mail: g.kassymova@abaiuniversity.edu.kz

<sup>3</sup>PhD, Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

(Kazakhstan, Almaty), e-mail: xuwenxin0124@163.com

## ENHANCING STUDENTS' PRAGMATIC AND SELF-EFFICACY SKILLS BY WRITING EMAILS

**Abstract.** Nowadays, the importance of developing pragmatic skills and self-efficacy among students is growing. This study examines the pragmatic competence and self-efficacy skills of students by analyzing email inquiries. Pragmatic competence is the social context in which it is important for effective communication, which includes the understanding and appropriate use of language. Pragmatic competence has become an integral part of language acquisition, as good linguistic knowledge would not be enough to have successful communication. As e-mail communication becomes more common in academic and professional environments, it is important to develop students' pragmatic and self-efficacy skills. Moreover, emailing has become an official communication tool between instructors and students in higher education. Students often use corporate mail for requesting, which might be in and out of educators' responsibilities, such as asking for extra tasks, making personal appointments, and requesting recommendation letters. This means making requests tends to be a common discourse in higher educational institutions; however, it is still a face-threatening act for students. By considering power relations, cultural norms and other socio-linguistic factors, writing emails to teachers requires sufficient knowledge of pragmatics. This study explores students' pragmatic competence and self-efficacy skills in the context of Kazakhstani higher education, provides valuable insights into the difficulties and offers suggestions for improving teaching writing skills.

**Keywords:** pragmatic competence, self-efficacy skills, writing, teaching, students.

A. Жорабекова<sup>1</sup>, Г.К. Касымова<sup>2</sup>, В. Сюй<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>Назарбаев университетінің PhD докторанты

(Қазақстан, Астана қ.), e-mail: aruzhan.zhorabekova@nu.edu.kz

<sup>2</sup>PhD, қауымдастырылған профессор

Абай атындағы Қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті

(Қазақстан, Алматы қ.), e-mail: g.kassymova@abaiuniversity.edu.kz

<sup>3</sup>PhD, Абай атындағы Қазақ ұлттық педагогикалық университеті

(Қазақстан, Алматы қ.), e-mail: xuwenxin0124@163.com

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### Электрондық хаттар жазу арқылы студенттердің прагматикалық дағдылары мен өзіндік тиімділік дағдыларын дамыту

**Аңдатпа.** Қазіргі уақытта студенттер арасында прагматикалық дағдылар мен өзіндік тиімділік дағдыларын дамытудың маңыздылығы артып келеді. Бұл зерттеу электрондық пошта сұрауларын талдау арқылы студенттердің прагматикалық құзыреттілігі мен өзін-өзі тиімді ету дағдыларын зерттейді. Прагматикалық құзыреттілік – тілді түсіну мен орынды қолдануды қамтитын тиімді қарым-қатынас үшін маңызды болып табылатын әлеуметтік контекст. Прагматикалық құзыреттілік тілді меңгерудің құрамдас бөлігіне айналды, өйткені табысты қарым-қатынас жасау үшін жақсы лингвистикалық білім жеткіліксіз. Электрондық пошта байланысы академиялық және кәсіби ортада жиірек пайдаланыла бастағандықтан, студенттердің прагматикалық және өзіндік тиімділік дағдыларын дамыту маңызды. Сонымен қатар, электрондық пошта жоғары оқу орындарындағы оқытушылар мен студенттер арасындағы ресми байланыс құралына айналды. Студенттер көбінесе корпоративтік поштаны қосымша тапсырмаларды сұрау, жеке кездесулер ұйымдастыру және ұсыныс хаттарын сұрау сияқты мақсатта пайдалануы мүмкін. Бұл жоғары оқу орындарында сұраныс жасау әдеттегі дискурсқа айналатынын білдіреді; дегенмен, бұл әлі де студенттер үшін қауіпті әрекет. Билік қатынастарын, мәдени нормаларды және басқа да әлеуметтік-лингвистикалық факторларды ескере отырып, мұғалімдерге электрондық хаттар жазу прагматика туралы жеткілікті білімді талап етеді. Бұл зерттеу қазақстандық жоғары білім контексінде студенттердің прагматикалық құзыреттілігі мен өзін-өзі басқару дағдыларын зерттейді, қиындықтар туралы құнды түсініктер береді және оқытудың жазу дағдыларын жетілдіру бойынша ұсыныстарды ұсынады.

**Кілт сөздер:** прагматикалық құзыреттілік, өзіндік тиімділік дағдылары, хат жазу, оқыту, студенттер.

**А. Жорабекова<sup>1</sup>, Г.К. Касымова<sup>2</sup>, В. Сюй<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PhD докторант Назарбаев университеті

(Қазақстан, г. Астана), e-mail: aruzhan.zhorabekova@nu.edu.kz

<sup>2</sup>PhD, ассоциированный профессор

Казахский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая

(Қазақстан, г. Алматы), e-mail: g.kassymova@abaiuniversity.edu.kz

<sup>3</sup>PhD, Казахский национальный педагогический университет имени Абая

(Қазақстан, г. Алматы), e-mail: xuwenxin0124@163.com

### Развитие прагматических навыков и навыков самоэффективности у студентов путем написания электронных писем

**Аннотация.** В настоящее время растет важность развития прагматических навыков и самоэффективности среди студентов. В этом исследовании изучаются прагматическая компетентность и навыки самоэффективности студентов путем анализа запросов по электронной почте. Прагматическая компетентность – это социальный контекст, в котором важно эффективное общение, включая понимание и правильное использование языка. Прагматическая компетентность стала неотъемлемой частью усвоения языка, поскольку хороших языковых знаний было бы недостаточно для успешной коммуникации. Поскольку общение по электронной почте становится все более распространенным в академической и профессиональной среде, важно развивать у студентов прагматические навыки и навыки самоэффективности. Более того, электронная почта стала официальным средством коммуникации между преподавателями и студентами в высших учебных заведениях. Студенты часто используют корпоративную почту для запросов, которые могут быть как в

рамках обязанностей преподавателей, так и за их пределами, например, для получения дополнительных заданий, рекомендательных писем или назначения личных встреч. Это означает, что отправка запросов, как правило, является обычным делом в высших учебных заведениях; однако, это по-прежнему является проблемой для студентов. Учитывая субординацию, культурные нормы и другие социолингвистические факторы, написание электронных писем учителям требует достаточных знаний прагматики. Авторы этого исследования изучают прагматическую компетентность студентов и навыки самоэффективности в контексте казахстанского высшего образования, дают ценную информацию о трудностях и вносят предложения по улучшению навыков преподавания письменной речи.

**Ключевые слова:** прагматическая компетентность, навыки самоэффективности, письмо, преподавание, студенты.

### Introduction

The ability to communicate effectively is critical to students' success in academic and professional life. One of the most important aspects of communication is pragmatic skills; they include the ability to use the language appropriately in different social contexts, such as e-mail conversations by using information technologies. In today's digital age, email communication has become an essential part of academic life, and effective email communication skills are crucial for students' academic success. In universities, teachers usually use corporate mail to announce deadlines, to share course materials and for other educational purposes. Students often use corporate mail for requesting, which might be in and out of educators' responsibilities, such as asking for extra tasks, making personal appointments, and requesting recommendation letters. This means making requests tends to be common discourse in higher educational institutions; however, it is still face-threatening for students. By considering power relations, cultural norms and other socio-linguistic factors, writing emails to teachers requires sufficient knowledge of pragmatics. Otherwise, inappropriate requests to instructors might result in misunderstanding of intentions, and conflicts and negatively impact on further teacher-student relationships [1]. Hence, writing an appropriate email with the consideration of requesting strategies should be prioritized, as only this can minimize misinterpretation and result in effective interaction.

Kazakhstani students learn English as a foreign language at all levels of education and writing email requests in English might be challenging, as each culture represents different norms of language use. According to Aijmer for American students "please" is often perceived as a softened tone; however, for other representatives of different cultures, it might be offensive and pressured [2]. According to Thomas, pragmatic competence is choosing appropriate language and speech acts to express intentions, which means pragmatic competence plays a vital role in communication [3]. Pragmatics explore the contextual meaning of speech with the interpretation of the text of what the speaker means [4]. Similarly, Griffiths claimed that pragmatics means vocabulary encoded with knowledge and using its patterns to avoid miscommunication [5]. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in social contexts, taking into account factors such as the speaker's intentions, the listener's expectations, and the situational context. As language utterances can be different lexically, grammatically and pragmatically, it can lead to communication failures between two interlocutors. The issue of language deviation while requesting is a central question in pragmatics [6].

McCarthy et al. defined the concept of writing self-efficacy in a literature study published in 1985, which is the confidence of an individual in his or her ability to write tasks. Students' writing self-efficacy is affected by many factors, including past writing experience, teacher feedback, peer support, etc. [7]. Students with high self-efficacy show higher motivation and persistence in writing

tasks and are usually able to overcome challenges and achieve better writing results. Shell et al. (1989) found that students' writing self-efficacy significantly affects their writing performance. Confident students usually achieve better writing results [8]. Self-efficacy not only affects students' motivation but also their attitudes and emotional states towards the writing process, such as anxiety and persistence. Students with high self-efficacy tend to use more effective writing strategies, actively respond to challenges, and improve their writing skills. The study emphasizes the importance of teachers in shaping students' self-efficacy, and through positive feedback and support, students' writing confidence can be enhanced.

The current study contributes to the understanding of students' pragmatic competence and writing self-efficacy skills; it provides insights into the challenges and opportunities of email communication in academic contexts.

### **Research methods and materials**

The qualitative paradigm was found as the appropriate method for this study, as it focuses on human experience, beliefs, behaviour and interaction [9]. In qualitative research, the data collected to examine a social phenomenon could be in the form of spoken transcripts or written texts, which are analysed to understand human behaviour in social settings [1].

Many background studies applied the categorization system of CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) to analyze email requests [1]. It is a valuable tool for collecting and analyzing data across different cultural contexts. The CCSARP is a comprehensive approach to cross-cultural data collection, blending rigorous methodologies with cultural sensitivity. It increases our understanding by facilitating the collection of comparative data in different contexts. It is developed by 10 researchers to create a theoretical and methodological framework to collect data on two speech acts- requests and apologies [10]. However, these studies adopted emails into predefined categories such as query-preparatory, need-statement and imperative, while some authentic emails might not be valid in one of these categories.

The authentic emails written to teachers are collected from second-year students at Suleyman Demirel University. The study employs a qualitative approach to analyze a corpus of email requests from EFL students to their instructors, using a framework that integrates theories of pragmatics, politeness, and speech act theory. 50 participants are employed from second-year students studying at the Two Foreign Languages Department. Students were invited to fill in the survey with educational background information and submit at least three emails written to their instructors, which contained diverse requesting contexts. The analysis aims to uncover the patterns and strategies used by EFL students in making requests and to evaluate their effectiveness in achieving their communicative goals. Any information obtained for this study through which participants might be identified remained confidential and was disclosed only with the participants' permission. To maintain the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used in the data presentation.

### **Results**

#### ***Development of pragmatic skills***

Pragmatic skills are the ability to use language effectively in a social context, including understanding speech acts, conversational implicature, and communication norms in various situations. The importance of pragmatic skills in education cannot be overstated, as they directly affect students' ability to interact successfully in both educational environments and the workplace. Durlak et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of social and emotional learning in enhancing students' communication and interpersonal skills, which underpin pragmatic competence [11]. In addition, Chung et al. (2014) show how engaging students in discussions about socio-scientific issues can improve their communication skills in science education [12]. This suggests that context-based learning can be an effective strategy for developing pragmatic skills, suggesting that similar approaches to email writing contexts can be used to facilitate pragmatic comprehension.

***Self-efficacy and writing skills***

Self-efficacy can perform certain tasks and plays a crucial role in the development of students' writing. Sun and Wang (2020) found that college students' writing self-efficacy had a significant effect on their use of self-regulated learning strategies in English as a foreign language [13]. This finding highlights the need for self-efficacy to improve students' writing skills, including email composition. Research shows that self-efficacy is related not only to the quality of writing but also to the overall academic performance of students. Cleary et al. (2017) examined the effects of a self-regulatory empowerment program, finding improvements in students' self-efficacy and strategic skills, which are important for effective writing [14]. This suggests the potential of structured interventions to improve self-efficacy and writing abilities.

***Integrating pragmatic and self-efficacy skills in teaching writing***

The intersection of pragmatic skills and self-efficacy is especially relevant in the context of email writing. Succi and Canovi (2020) investigated how soft skills, including communication skills, affect graduate employability [15]. Their results indicate that students with strong pragmatic skills and self-efficacy in their writing are more likely to succeed in the labour market. In addition, Häkkinen et al. (2017) suggested that it could be adapted to include email writing exercises that develop pragmatics and self-efficacy to enhance collaborative problem-solving and strategic learning skills [16]. These exercises may include peer review, a collaborative project, and reflective practices to integrate social learning with writing assignments.

Currently, the development of self-efficacy and confidence in a teacher's identity is also important. In addition, the development of the self-efficacy of the teacher's identity is a crucial aspect of the productivity of the professional growth and spiritual development of his specialty at workplaces. Self-efficacy implies a person's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks and personal achievements in life [17]. In the context of the teacher's personality, self-efficacy plays a key role in shaping the beliefs, plans and attitudes of future teachers at the very beginning of their professional careers. In the teaching context, it means a teacher's confidence in their ability to teach effectively, manage a classroom, engage and motivate students, as a result, positively influence students' learning outcomes. Several factors such as the experience of becoming a master of one's profession, professional experience, social support, emotional state, on-the-job reflection, self-development or lifelong learning, teacher identity and values can affect the self-efficacy of a teacher's identity (Table 1).

**Table 1 – Factors influencing self-efficacy**

<b>Internal and external factors</b>	<b>Characteristics of the factors influencing self-efficacy</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>The experience of becoming a master of one's profession</i>	The experience of teaching with real positive results increases confidence and reinforce it. It is more likely that teachers will develop a self-efficacy effectiveness if students show real results in their studies.
<i>Professional experience</i>	Observing the success of other teachers in the course of teaching also increases self-efficacy, and if they solve difficult situations together, or witness the correct solution to that situation, they can become confident.
<i>Social support</i>	Encouragement from colleagues and administration, praise and feedback in front of others can instill confidence in a teacher's own abilities. The social context of the school environment can impact teacher self-efficacy. Supportive staff and collaborative environments can foster a self-efficacy among teachers.

Continuation of Table 1

1	2
<i>Emotional state</i>	Feelings of stress, anxiety, lack of finances, or fatigue reduce self-efficacy, while positive emotions and feelings of well-being increase it. Teachers need to have strong emotional states and well-being to maintain confidence in their abilities. Timely eating and resting are very important.
<i>On-the-job reflection</i>	Engaging in reflective practices such as self-assessment or peer observation allows teachers to identify strengths and weakness. Asking students to answer survey questions can help teachers gain a deeper understanding of their abilities and increase confidence in their teaching abilities.
<i>Self-development or lifelong learning</i>	Opportunities for continuous professional development are important for teachers to acquire new knowledge, build skills and improve their teaching practice. Attending relevant trainings and seminars, or teaching others what you have learned through additional research, can increase confidence and self-efficacy, too.
<i>Teacher identity and Values</i>	Teachers' identity and values about teaching and learning influence their self-efficacy. Teachers who hold high expectations for their students and trust in themselves as educators have a higher sense of efficacy.

Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011) examined prospective teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and provided valuable insights into teacher formation. The results of the study showed that different factors, such as previous experience, feedback from mentors, in-depth knowledge, and the complexity of learning tasks influence self-efficacy beliefs. Research has highlighted the importance of creating an environment conducive to the development of self-efficacy among prospective teachers. In addition, the study particularly highlighted the role of mentoring in shaping teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Mentors who provided constructive feedback and support positively influenced the development of self-efficacy beliefs of prospective teachers [18]. In general, the development of self-efficacy in a teacher's identity is a dynamic process, as it depends on various internal and external factors. By providing opportunities for self-development and reflection while providing social support, teachers' self-efficacy can be increased and student academic outcomes can be gradually improved. It can be said that the development of self-efficacy beliefs in a teacher's identity is a multifaceted process influenced by personal, contextual and educational factors.

Based on the content of emails, three common types of academic emails have been found: requesting special consideration, requesting assignment/exam clarification, and requesting grade consideration.

*Type 1: Requesting a special consideration*

This type of email was the most frequent (accounting for 40%) and includes two main parts:

- 1) asking for deadline extension and 2) attendance issues.

*a) Attendance issues*

While asking to take time off or not to mark the absence, the data analysis showed that the majority of students preferred to use direct strategies even though requesting special consideration is a high-imposition request. Students may not have the official right to ask such a request, hence, it was assumed that various politeness strategies and indirectness would be applied. However, the majority of requests were direct.

## Sample A

Good evening, Ms B  
I hope this email finds you well!)  
My name is Ainur and from the TFL course.  
I apologize for writing at night (this is the first and last time). I want to take time off from class tomorrow, as today the weather wasn't favourable and I couldn't leave. Can I ask you not to give me an absence for tomorrow's lesson? Can I work it through an extra lesson?  
Best regards,  
Ainur

The “want statement” and “direct question” strategies were used in this email, making it a direct request. To minimize the imposition level, students used such supportive moves as “grounders” giving explanations for being absent and “apologising” promising that this issue will not be repeated. In addition, the student apologizes for writing at night, which shows respect for the teacher's time and offering a solution makes this a courteous and respectful request. Giving reasons and the “because- therefore” strategy was common in many requests.

## Sample B

Good morning teacher, I am from TRA. I am writing you to say that I will not be able at the lesson today, because I feel unwell. Please, don't put absence. I hope for your understanding.  
Best regards,  
Roza

In sample B, the direct request was made through the strategy “explicit performative”. The student conveys the information before making a request, showing firstly the intention to make the request. Despite the politeness marker “please”, the act of request is speaker-oriented, and “don't put absence” might be perceived impolitely.

## Sample C

Hello, Ms Aray ! How are you?  
I entered the military school and today we were called, and since today, I have your English class I wanted to ask for permission. Could you please not to put absent?  
Thanks for understanding!  
Best wishes,  
Karakoz (15P)

Whereas this email request was made through a conventionally indirect strategy, as the request was made by using the “query preparatory” strategy. The head act is more polite, as the requester used such internal modifiers as downgrades “past simple” and “politeness marker” please. Even though the request was made conventionally indirectly, the salutation “How are you” is informal and inappropriate for an academic context.

## Sample D

Hello teacher! Hope you are doing well!  
I cannot come to today's class. Because my friends invited me to help with the translation for one TV program. Hope for your understanding.  
 Regards,  
 Aliya

The request is not explicitly stated, by mentioning that student has other important task, which should be done, with the help of “strong hint” strategy student implicitly asking not to put the absence. This non-conventionally indirect request can not be seen as successful, as it is only speaker-oriented. Imposition-minimize, politeness strategies or supportive moves were not used, making the request impolite.

## Sample E

Hello Mrs Aizhan!  
 Today I have a meeting with a club, which I have been preparing for 2 weeks, important one.  
 Therefore, can I tell the air travel dialogue and then leave the lesson. And if you give us work until the night like the previous one, I will definitely do. I hope it is not going to be a problem, right?  
 Thanks,  
 Damir (TFL)

In Sample E, the request is informal and conversational. There is no formal salutation or background information about the student. The request is writer-oriented only; the students highlight the importance of the event, even though there is a lesson. The request was made directly “Can I” and supported with the “promise” strategy “I will do it later”. The request was closed “expectation statement” strategy, however, the interrogative “right?” made the request impolite.

*b) Deadline extension*

A request to extend the deadline is also a high-imposition request, as it is a completely speaker-oriented email, which has no definite benefits for the recipient. For this reason, it might be assumed that all deadline extension requests will be conventionally indirect. However, the results of the data analysis show that students used both direct and indirect strategies.

## Sample A

Hello teacher! I've been sick these last few days. And that's why I won't be able to do my homework today. Can I send it to you later?

Sample A is a direct request, as the student used a direct question with supporting move “grounder” outlining the reason for the request. Several pragmatic failures can be seen, there is a lack of appropriate salutation, and students directly move to explain their own needs. Even though asking for a deadline extension is considered to be a face-threatening act, students could not use such politeness strategies as “hedging”, “appreciation” and “apology”.

The same request patterns can be noticed in Sample B:



Hello teacher!

I couldn't submit the document in Moodle, so I decided to send it through gmail, I hope it finds you well!Please, send feedback if you read this email.

Regards,  
Kairat

The request is indirect, as the student is not explicitly asking for feedback, but they are hinting at it by saying "Please, send feedback if you read this email." The students used the "expectation" statement strategy "I hope it finds you well". Even though the writer used the politeness marker "please", it did not minimize the imposition level, the request act is still too straight.

### Sample C

Dear Mrs Madina

Hope you are doing well!

I am from TFL. Using Moodle is a new form of studying for me, so I am still learning how to do it properly. I understand that I am already too late with the submission. That is why I want to ask you, is it possible for you give me a chance and grade my work, if I submit it today.

Otherwise, I will start to prepare for the current week's assignments, as I am already aware of where to find them on Moodle.

With best wishes,  
Tomiris

In Sample C, the writer started with a self-introduction, making sure that the instructor will be able to recognize it. Before making the request, the student used two supportive moves such as "grounder" showing the intention of the request, and after the "disarmer" strategy, "I understand that I am already too late, but...". "Disarmer" was used as a downgrader to show that the student is aware of their own mistake and it is justifying if the request would be rejected. The request is conventionally indirect, which makes the request polite.

#### *Type 2: Requesting grade consideration*

Many pragmatic failures have been found in this type of request. All requests were writer-oriented only, the majority of students used direct strategies.

### Sample A

Dear Ms Albinab

I want to ask you to add points from the bonus task to my pre-final grade. Thank you!

Regards,  
Nargiza

The request starts from the "want statement", the students first directly states their own need. It can be seen that there were no greetings and salutations, which makes the request impolite. Moreover, the request was not supported with "supportive moves" and "imposition minimizers".

### Sample B

Sorry for bothering you again, but about my participation scores,I found my grade a

little bit unfair, because I was very active and completed all tasks. I am curious why you think I deserve only 70 out of 100? If there is another reason, please let me know!

Best regards,  
Ailuna!

In Sample B, it is clear that it is not the first email to the instructor, so the email starts from “Sorry for bothering you again”. Also start their email with a clear statement of the purpose, which is to express their concern about the grade. This is a high imposition request, as the student questions the teacher’s authority and competence by stating that the assessment was unfair. The student also used the “direct question” strategy “Why do you think I deserve only 70 out of 100”, which may make the request more impolite. Also, there is an “Orthographic emphasis” to make the dramatic effect on request “Please let me know!”.

#### Sample C

Good day, teacher!  
I want to clarify about my pre-final grade. Have you checked our listening assignment and added our quiz scores to our pre-final?

Regards,  
Aisha

In Sample C, the student used a non-conventionally indirect strategy “strong hint”. The sentence “I want to clarify about my pre-final grades” means indirectly requesting the teacher to email back with score explanations. Even though the request is made indirectly, it does not minimize the imposition level. The student immediately moves to the desired act without salutation and background information. The clarification of quiz scores is also requested impolitely, without using politeness strategies.

#### Sample D

Hello teacher! Hope you are doing well!  
I have a score of 67, please can you add just 3 points? Please, I’ve never lost my scholarship. Just 3 points. Hope you will understand me.

Regards,  
Aruzhan

This type of grade consideration request differs from others, as the writer is asking for “extra”. The request is direct; however, different politeness strategies were used. The imposition level is high, as the student is requesting a specific change to their grade, which could impact the grading curve and the overall fairness of the assessment. Additionally, the student mentions their scholarship, which adds a sense of urgency and pressure to the request. To minimize the imposition level, the supportive move “understater” was applied by writing “just 3 points”. The request is closed with an “expectation statement” relying on the teacher's understanding.

#### *Type 3: Exam and Task clarification*

Request for exam/task clarification is the category, which contains a huge number of emails to clarify their projects and exam procedures. The majority of the emails under this category are direct, short and clear. The common use of direct strategy can be influenced by a teacher’s direct responsibilities, as compared to other requests, provision of clear task/ exam explanation is a part of a teacher's major job.

## Sample A

Good day, teacher!

It is Aliya from your TFL course. Today is the deadline for our assignment - to create a table, comparing the education system in Finland, Kazakhstan and the USA. However, you haven't created a "box" for us to submit our work. Please, take a look at our classroom page.

Have a nice rest of your day!

The student started with a greeting and self-introduction. Before moving to the request act, the student pointed out a discrepancy between the teacher's deadline and the "box" to submit. The request to create a task in Google Classroom was made via a non-conventional indirect strategy. By using the "strong hint" strategy, the student indirectly requests to create a task in the classroom.

## Sample B

Hello dear Ms Aizhan

It is A from TFL. If possible, could you please explain in detail how to work with the quiz, where to answer with a full sentence, and where not. Maybe some recommendations from you, otherwise I have never worked in this application before and the limited time distracts me.

In Sample B, the student used a conventionally indirect strategy with a downgrade "Could you please explain" which makes the request polite. The student is specific about what they need help with - working with the Quizzes - and requests detailed guidance on how to use the application. By providing specific details about the request and explaining the context of their situation, the student was able to soften the request.

## Sample C

Hello teacher!

I am Sabina from TFL. Could you please explain what will happen on the final exam? Or will you announce Google Classroom soon?

In Sample C, the request is conventionally indirectly made via query-preparatory strategy. The student suggests two possible ways to obtain the information they need, through either an explanation or an announcement. For this reason, the request might be considered too straightforward.

**Discussion**

From the above analysis, it was found that students used different request strategies depending on the purpose of emailing. Though only fifteen examples are presented, the common discourse organizational patterns and several pragmatic failures can be noticed. The majority of the emails tend to be informal and direct, as such personal pronouns as "You" and "I" are used in all emails. The use of personal pronouns in academic requests is a matter of debate among scholars. There are some views that personal pronouns in academic emails were found to have a positive effect on the perceived friendliness and approachability of the sender. While others hold the view that, it is generally best to avoid using personal pronouns in your scholarly writing. Moreover, this study found that the majority of students tend to write speaker-oriented emails (Can I...) compared

to hearer-oriented (Can you ...?). Blum-Kulka and Levenston claim that hearer-oriented emails are high-imposition requests, while in speaker-oriented emails the recipient is not named as the performer of the request act, which means the imposition level is lower [10]. For this reason, it was concluded that speaker-oriented emails are more polite. This means, that even though students are likely to use personal pronouns such as “I” and “You” in their requests, some of them are still polite.

The students were favoured to use the expression “Hope for your understanding”, this strategy was particularly used while making requests for special consideration. Even though the purpose of using this expression is to make the request sound more respectful and considerate, the analysis showed that some students tend to use this expression as a manipulative tactic to achieve their aim. Especially, when asking for extra points and attendance issues, the expression was used in such a way as *“I have a score of 67, please can you add just 3 points? Please, I’ve never lost my scholarship. Just 3 points. Hope you will understand me”*. Some of the students showed appreciation for the teacher beforehand as if the request had already been successfully achieved: *“I entered the military school and today we were called, and since today I have your English class, I wanted to ask for permission. Could you please not to put absent? Thanks for understanding!”*. This way of using an appreciation strategy might even cause inconvenience, as the teacher may not want to give permission.

The use of “emojis” was common in many emails, which is not appropriate in academic settings. This means students are not aware of linguistic strategies to appropriately express their requests. Regarding the sequence of information in requests, students should be taught to greet requestees and provide background information. The majority of students tend to underestimate the importance of greetings and background information so they immediately express their request.

Another significant point of analysis is students’ perception of grade reconsideration requests. Students find it acceptable to ask teachers to reconsider their grades or add extra points, which can be inappropriate. For example, American and Taiwanese students’ three common requests were asking for recommendation letters, and requesting an appointment and arrangement. This research analysis shows that grade reconsideration requests are common in Kazakhstani higher education contexts. It can be assumed that students have developed such behaviour from school years or there are such external factors as unclear assessments or rubrics. The results of this study can be implicated in further studies to determine the reasons for bargaining behaviour and the factors that lead to it.

In his research, Pajares elaborated on the concept of self-efficacy, which is an individual's belief in their ability to complete a specific task. High self-efficacy is associated with greater motivation, greater perseverance, and better academic performance. Pajares suggested that teachers should focus on cultivating students' self-efficacy and help them build confidence through encouragement and positive feedback [19]. Teng et al. (2018) found that writing self-efficacy was significantly positively correlated with students' writing performance. Confident students usually achieve better writing results. Writing anxiety mediates the relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance. Higher self-efficacy can reduce students' writing anxiety, thereby improving writing performance. Studies suggest that various interventions (such as writing training and feedback) can be used to improve students' self-efficacy to reduce writing anxiety and improve writing results. Teng et al. believe that writing self-efficacy should be viewed as a multidimensional concept, referring to students' judgments of their ability to apply multiple language and rhetorical knowledge, as well as their confidence in their academic performance and metacognitive control [20].

### Conclusion

The findings of this study show that students often experience pragmatic failures while interacting via email communication. The lower pragmatic competence can be shown in that the students used more direct and less indirect requestive strategies. To achieve a successful outcome of their request and have effective communication, students are expected to soften their request modifications and learn politeness strategies. Even though some of the requests were conventionally indirect and started with “*could you...*”, the explanations of their purpose were rude. The analysis indicates that teaching pragmatics is highly recommended for Kazakhstani students in higher education; so that they will be aware of different types of request strategies, request perspectives, internal/ external modifications and supportive moves. As L2 learners in Kazakhstani higher education do not have many chances to practice pragmatics outside the classroom, teaching pragmatics should be implemented in EFL syllabuses. Incorporating pragmatic competence in the EFL curriculum can be achieved through various instructional approaches, such as explicit teaching of speech acts, role-playing activities, authentic materials, and cultural discussions. By prioritizing pragmatic competence, EFL programs can better prepare learners to communicate successfully and meaningfully in English, both within and outside the classroom.

Enhancing students' pragmatic and self-efficacy skills through email writing is an important area of research with important implications for education and employment. By integrating insights from social-emotional learning, self-regulatory strategies, and context-based learning, educators can develop targeted approaches to equip students with the skills needed to communicate effectively. Addressing identified knowledge gaps contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how to develop these critical skills in the digital age.

*Research recommendation.* This study suggests that there is a need to investigate the use of interactive teaching methods in improving students' pragmatic writing skills, especially in the context of email communication. Despite the noteworthy findings, there are significant gaps in the literature regarding specific strategies for improving pragmatic skills and self-efficacy through email writing. Most existing research focuses on general writing skills or broader communication competencies without isolating the nuances of email communication. Future research should examine targeted email writing interventions, examining the impact on students' pragmatic skills and self-efficacy. Additionally, studies of different student populations may be useful considering how cultural and contextual factors influence the development of pragmatic skills and self-efficacy in email writing.

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