Modern English Education

현대영어교육
Modern English Education

The Long-Term Effects of L2 Pragmatic Instruction on Writing Emails to Faculty: Focusing on the Forms of Address

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Ko, Sooweon. (2023). **The long-term effects of L2 pragmatic instruction on writing emails to faculty: Focusing on the forms of address.** *Modern English Education*, *24*, 77-90.

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Abstract
This study explored long-term effect of explicit instruction on English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' pragmatic competence when writing emails in English to examine Korean university students' usage of forms of address when writing emails to faculty. The data comprised of 94 English emails written by 32 Korean university students in Korea. Over two weeks, Korean EFL students received four hours of instructions on how to write an appropriate email to faculty members. Data were collected quantitively and qualitatively through email writing assignments in pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest. A follow-up interview was administered. A descriptive analysis of usage frequency of address forms was conducted to examine changes between before and after instruction. Results indicated that Korean EFL students obtained pragmatic competence focusing on forms of address. Regarding retention effect, findings showed that pragmatic competence was retained over an extended period (i.e., 10 months). In addition, through interview, it was found that participants showed enhanced awareness of forms of address along with norms of target culture through the instruction. Further implications of this study are given in terms of instruction on email pragmatics in the EFL environment, particularly in academia.

INTRODUCTION

With the spread of the Internet, email has become a common means of communication, including in the academe (e.g., Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chang & Hsu, 1998; C.-F.E.Chen, 2001, 2006; Y. Chen, 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Nguyen et al., 2015; Rau & Rau, 2016). Email discourse is characterized by a hybrid register ranging from that of casual conversation to that of an academic letter, depending on the communicative context and writer-reader relationship (Barron, 2007). It also has both a speech style and a writing style. Writing emails involves the frequent use of first- and second-person pronouns, the present tense, and contractions; colloquial vocabulary and typos may also be used to resemble speech. At the same time, email writing resembles formal letter writing in the use of openings, pre-closings, and signatures (Barron, 2007; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000). Despite the hybrid register

of emails, some types of emails require more caution, particularly in the construction of an appropriate message, especially in academic situations.

Writing an email to an authority figure, such as a university faculty member, requires high pragmatic competence and awareness of politeness conventions (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2015). Many EFL learners struggle with writing emails to faculty members because they lack not only linguistic proficiency but also sophisticated pragmatic competence. EFL learners may end up in a pragmatic failure by deploying inappropriate language and unintentionally violating the social appropriateness prescribed in the target culture. Comparative studies have found that EFL learners—even those with high English proficiency—lack the appropriate pragmalinguistic ability in writing emails to authority figures (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Chalak et al., 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). Various factors make the recipient uncomfortable, such as unreasonable requests, impolite tone, inappropriate informality, inappropriate salutations, and spelling and grammar errors (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). Therefore, the need for explicit pragmatic instruction in the language classroom has been emphasized by a number of studies (Alcón-Soler, 2015; Y. Chen, 2015; Ford, 2006; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2015; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Yin, 2020).

Although various studies on email writing by Korean EFL learners have been conducted (H.-R. Kim, 1998; Yang, 2006; Yin, 2020), the effects of instruction on writing academic emails in a Korean EFL setting have rarely been examined, if at all. Past studies show that the absence of a salutation might increase the degree of directness and violate the politeness of the email request (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Yasuda, 2011). In addition, as the form of address is used at the very first part of the email, using the incorrect academic title (e.g., "Mrs.," instead of "Dr.") is considered likely to offend the faculty (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). The choice of form of address in academic emails varies depending on the perceived power of the recipient and the relationship between the faculty and student (Rau & Rau, 2016). Only a few studies examine the forms of address used, if any, by Korean EFL students in writing emails to faculty members. Whereas most of the past studies observe the immediate effects of instruction on pragmatic development, the present study investigates the instructional effect over an extended period (i.e., ten months). It aims to examine the forms of address in academic emails and the effect of instruction in email writing on Korean EFL students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics of Email in Student–Faculty Communication

Some previous studies have analyzed EFL students' request emails to faculty (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; C-F. E. Chen, 2001, 2006; Y. Chen, 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007). It has been found that EFL learners' emails in the academic context contain a wide range of pragmatic failures, including overdependence on direct strategies, use of insufficient lexical and syntactical mitigation devices, and inappropriate forms of address. EFL learners also tend to use inappropriate greetings and closings in their emails.

C.-F.E. Chen (2001) compared the email requests sent by Taiwanese and U.S. graduate students to faculty members and found that Taiwanese students use different discourse strategies in their request emails. Students use diverse strategies due to culturally different perceptions of power relations, familiarity, and imposition level of the request. Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) examined the email requests sent by graduate-level native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) of English to faculty members. Biesenbach-Lucas applied Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) speech act analysis framework to compare levels of directness and investigate syntactic and lexical politeness devices. The findings show that non-native speakers (NNS) use more direct strategies than indirect strategies compared to native speakers (NS). NS students exhibit the use of more resources (e.g., syntactic modifiers) in writing polite messages to their faculty members than NNS students. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) analyzed 200 request emails written by Greek students and found that NNS students resort mostly to direct request strategies and tend to omit greetings and closings. In addition, NNS students do not use any lexical/phrasal downgraders, except for the politeness marker "please." Some studies focused on the evaluation of the recipient of the email. Hendriks (2010) investigated Dutch learners' use of syntactic and lexical modifiers in their email requests. Those emails were evaluated by native speakers of English. The results show that the underuse of elaborate request modification (e.g., the combination of subjectivizer/tense/aspect) leads to a negative evaluation. In other words, the lack of request modification in emails may earn the sender of the email a negative impression of his/her personality. In the same vein, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2015) examined how Greek-Cypriot EFL learners' authentic emails are perceived by British English NS lecturers. The findings show that too much mitigation or too less mitigation may sound inappropriate, subservient, and insincere.

Only a few studies have analyzed Korean EFL students' request emails to faculty members. Son (2021) investigated the effects of English proficiency on Korean EFL students' emails to their faculty. A total of 40 emails were analyzed in terms of forms of directness, internal modifications, and external modifications. The results show no significant proficiency effects, leading to the conclusion that Korean EFL students are lacking in pragmatic repertoire in general. Suh (2007) analyzed the data collected using two different data-gathering methods—hypothetical discourse completion test and authentic emails—with a focus on the requests students made of their professors. The study reveals that NS students employ the conventionally indirect level more often and use a higher number of downgraders than Korean NNS students. With its primary focus on the request speech act, however, the study does not substantially delve into the genre of academic email.

The Role of Explicit Instruction in Developing L2 Pragmatic Competence

As previous research implies that pragmatic failure can be serious for L2 learners, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) claims the importance of explicit instruction in email pragmatics. EFL students may be unaware of email etiquette, and many studies show the need for explicit pragmatic instruction in writing academic emails (Y. Chen, 2015; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Yasuda, 2011). Y. Chen (2015) investigated request emails written by Chinese learners of English. Employing a pretest–instruction–posttest design, this study reveals that students do improve after the instruction. The analysis shows that students make great progress in terms of framing moves (i.e., subject, greeting, and closing). However, students still struggle in terms of content moves (i.e., request strategies and request support) even after the instruction. Yasuda (2011) examined Japanese undergraduate students (n=70) in a writing course. Various types of email tasks (e.g., gratitude, apology, request) were incorporated into the writing course. Throughout the 15-week writing course, the students made progress in terms of their awareness of genre and gained knowledge of the language choice of each email type after the instruction. The results of the study show that genre-based tasks in writing in a foreign language are effective in terms of second-language writing development.

Some studies have been conducted on the role of explicit instruction in developing L2 pragmatic competence among Korean EFL students (Han, 1999; H. Kim, 2014; H-R. Kim, 1998; Y. M. Kim, 2020; Ko, 2017; Yang, 2006; Yin, 2020). Yin (2020) examined the pragmatic development in students' writing of request emails during explicit instruction. In particular, Yin focused on the frequency of politeness devices used in request emails. Interviews with participants who have not received prior instruction in pragmatics reveal that they tend to focus more on the accuracy than on the politeness of the request. However, after explicit instruction, students used more indirect request strategies, downgraders, supportive moves, and impersonal perspectives. Yin concluded that explicit instruction is needed for Korean EFL students to develop their pragmatic competence. Yang (2006) explored the effects of instruction on the request expressions of Korean EFL learners at a college. Yang compared the deductive method with the inductive instructional method, and the result shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the two methods. In addition, an open-ended discourse completion test (DCT) was conducted to investigate the use of the students' target forms in their oral production. The study indicates that focus-on-form and function instruction using email writing practice has a positive effect on the result of DCT.

In the light of the literature given above, the present study attempts to fill a niche in the research concerning the long-term effects of instruction on writing emails to faculty members. The following research questions ground this study:

Research Question 1: What forms of address do Korean EFL students use when writing an email to their English-speaking faculty?

Research Question 2: Does explicit instruction in email writing have positive effects on writing socially acceptable emails?

Research Question 3: Is the improvement, if any, retained over an extended period of time?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study's participants consisted of 32 Korean EFL students enrolled in a course titled "Academic English 1" during the spring semester of 2022 and "Academic English 2" during the fall semester of 2022 at K University, Sejong, Korea. The

"Academic English 1" and "Academic English 2" course meets twice a week. The textbook of the course consists of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. However, there are no parts about writing emails in the textbook.

Demographic variables were not considered in the present study. However, a general description of the participants is given here according to a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire was administered to them on the first week of the "Academic English 1" course. All of them were freshmen students and their average age was 20. The students—all of them pursuing a major in AI Semiconductor Engineering—were taking a compulsory English course (i.e., Academic English 1, 2). In terms of gender, 19 of the students were males and 13 were females. In addition, the questionnaire showed that the participants' average TOEIC score fell within the range of 600~700 and none of them had experience studying abroad.

Data Collection and Analysis

The present study examines the effects of instruction in writing English emails to faculty. More specifically, it focuses on the usage of address forms before and after the explicit instruction. In order to answer the research questions of this study, the data were collected quantitively and qualitatively through email writing assignments and a follow-up interview.

Email Writing Assignments: pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest

The email data of the present study consisted of a pretest, treatment (instruction), immediate posttest, and delayed posttest. Before the instruction, the students were required to write a request email to English-speaking faculty and 32 students participated in the pretest. The requesting situation was to ask the professor for an extension of the research paper deadline. To ensure that ethical issues in relation to this study were addressed, it was explained to the students that their emails would be stored for analysis. The students were informed that no personal information would be revealed, and they were given the opportunity to opt out of having their emails used in the study.

Email instruction was conducted in two class periods—50 minutes per week on the 2nd and 3rd weeks of the 16 weeks of the semestral period, in the middle of the course. In the first session, the students were given authentic academic emails and asked to respond to a questionnaire adopted from Y. Chen's (2015) study. During this activity, the students became aware of how a given email would make an impression on its recipient (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). This consciousness-raising activity is meaningful since it is a starting point for all learning take place (Schmidt, 1990). See the Appendix for the sample of consciousness-raising activity used in the present study.

In the second session, sociopragmatic and pragmalinguisitc information in writing academic emails was introduced. Some examples and suggestions were also given in terms of which subject, opening, message, and closing were considered more or less formal. Particularly inappropriate forms of address were presented when writing request emails to faculty members. Exercise questions were also given to reinforce the pragmalinguistic constructions taught to the students. No additional class was spent on email instruction.

The posttest was conducted on the 4th week of the spring semester which is one week after the email instruction class. In the posttest, the participants were asked to write a request email to the faculty for an appointment to discuss their grades. The request situation is similar to that of which used in the pretest.

In addition, to investigate the long terms effect of the instruction the delayed posttest was administered at the end of the fall semester (10 months after the instruction). The participants in the delayed posttest were the same students as in the pretest and posttest. However, among the 32 students who participated in the pretest and posttest, two did not enroll in the "Academic English class 2" in the fall semester, resulting in 30 emails in the delayed posttest. The students were asked to write a request email asking for feedback on their homework in the delayed posttest.

A total of 94 emails were collected during the pretest (n = 32), posttest (n = 32), and delayed posttest (n = 30) to compare how students improved due to the instruction.

The situations employed in all the tests were variations of the same form (see Table 1): the request email, the most common form in academic encounters between students and professors. The situations used in this study were adopted from Bloch's (2002) and Y. Chen's (2015) studies. The participants were informed that their email writing would not be graded.

TABLE 1
Email Request Situations in the Pretest, Posttest, and Delayed Posttest

	Request Situation
Pretest	Your professor asked you to hand in a research paper today, but you are unable to submit it on the deadline. You decide to write your professor an email to ask for an extension. (Professor's name: John Edward)
Posttest	Write your professor an email asking for an appointment to discuss your grade. (Professor's name: Joe Moore)
Delayed Posttest	Write your professor an email in the form of a request and ask for feedback on your homework. (Professor's name: Alex Jackson)

Since the goal of the present study is to determine the effects of instruction, similar hypothetical situations were used to control the level of difficulty. As seen in Table 1, these situations are all requesting situations that make it easier to compare and interpret the results of the study. However, there could be a practice effect, by pretest and posttest. To minimize the practice effect, the recipient (i.e., professor) is named differently in each test and a delayed posttest is administered.

Interview

To complement the analysis of the students' email data, a follow-up interview was conducted about one week after the delayed posttest with appropriate time coordinated with the researcher.

All the students who participated in the delayed posttest (n = 30) were interviewed and the average interview time was 15 minutes. The topic of the interview was their perception of how explicit instruction affected their improvement in writing request emails to their professors. The interview was conducted in Korean, and it was transcribed for analysis. The interviewees were informed that the interviews were audio-recording and would be used for academic purposes only.

Data Analysis

A total of 94 emails were collected during the pretest (n = 32), posttest (n = 32), and delayed posttest (n = 30). To examine the first research question, which is to examine the forms of address that Korean EFL students use when writing an email to their English faculty, all the email scripts were examined by the researcher and one native speaker of English. The native speaker of English was an instructor at K University with 10 years of teaching experience. Each email was analyzed in terms of the form of address used and the frequency rates were calculated. In addition, the subjects' accounts during the interview were analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although students are quite comfortable writing informal emails, writing emails to faculty members requires not only sophisticated pragmatic skills but also language awareness of how discourse reflects power relations in an institutional context. It is known that the student–professor relationship affects the choice of forms of address and that inappropriate forms of address cause pragmatic failure. According to past studies, the use of inappropriate forms of address in request emails offend faculty members. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) examined how faculty members view EFL learners' emails and found that students' omission of the term of deference "dear" and incorrect use of the title + first name (FN) construction are negatively received by the NS authority figure. Such practices are seen as rude and insulting, causing pragmatic failure. In a similar vein, Mckay (2010) found that using the first name is inappropriate and suggests using "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Dr." when unsure of the specific profile of the recipient. It is even more difficult for EFL learners to decide which form of address to use in writing a formal email in English.

This section presents the results of the study with reference to the research questions. In order to answer the first research question, the results of the pretest were analyzed.

Research Question 1: What Forms of Address Do Korean EFL Learners Use When Writing an Email to Their English-Speaking Faculty?

The present study specifically examines the following features: the use of incorrect titles (Mr., Mrs., and Miss, instead of Professor/Dr.), the use of unacceptable constructions, such as title + FN (e.g., Professor/Dr. Susan), and zero forms of address (emails without a salutation). Since the use of incorrect titles and the use of unacceptable constructions offend the English-speaking faculty, these features are examined in this study. The results of the pre-test show that six types of forms of address are used in the email corpus:

(1) Dear + correct academic title + last name (LN)
(2) Dear + correct academic title + FN
(3) Dear + incorrect title + LN
(4) Dear + incorrect title + FN
(5) Others
(6) None

The forms of address used range from no opening to more formal openings, but most of the emails include a relatively formal opening. The findings show that 72% of the students in the pre-test use the deference form "dear," demonstrating that they tend to use a formal register when writing an email to the professor. This result coincides with Hofstede's (2001) study, in that students in a high power distance culture prefer using a formal communication register. Moreover, Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) study showed that NNS of English with Asian backgrounds use the construction "Dear + title + LN" to address their professors. In the same vein, Gu (1990) stated that Asian students rely heavily on the business letter template and Chinese address maxim. Table 2 presents the various forms of address used by the students in the pretest.

TABLE 2
Forms of Address Used in the Pretest

	Pretest	
Dear + correct academic title + LN	10/32	31%
Dear + correct academic title + FN	5/32	16%
Dear + incorrect title + LN	7/32	22%
Dear + incorrect title + FN	1/32	3%
Others	4/32	12%
Zero address forms	5/32	16%
Total	32/32	100%

The data reveal that 31% use forms of address correctly (academic title + LN), such as "Dear Professor Edward." However, more than half of the forms of address are constructed inappropriately. The construction "Dear + incorrect title + LN" has the second most frequency of occurrence at 22%, followed by "Dear +correct academic title + FN" at 16%, "others" at 12%, and "Dear+ incorrect title + FN" at 3%. In addition, 16% of the students do not even use a form of address at all which is categorized as "Zero address terms".

Example (7) shows one of the emails categorized as "Dear+ correct academic title + FN." Since the subjects' demographic variables were not considered in the present study, the given examples are samples of each category of the forms of address. In addition, the participants are referred to as "Student A, B.." in the present study for the sake of confidentiality.

(7) Pretest (Student A): Dear + correct academic title + FN

Hey Professor john, I have something to say.
give me a little more time for my homework.
Thanks men good nigth bro. bye bye for reference, I am jeongseon Ha.

Example (8) illustrates one of the emails of "Dear + incorrect title + FN".

(8) Pretest (Student B): Dear + incorrect title + FN

Dear Mr. John.
I'm Dongmin Kim studying in Academic English 45 class. Our assignment is supposed to be due to Friday,
but may I ask you to delay the assignment? I have an unexpected circumstance so I can't finish it.

It is interesting to see that the students in (7) and (8) both use the inappropriate form "Dear + correct academic title + FN" and "Dear + incorrect title + FN", respectively. They both used the faculty's first name to address the recipient. However, it seems that they have different linguistic competence. Example (7) shows that Student A doesn't capitalize not only the name of the professor but also his own name. He also uses "Hey" and the colloquial expression "Thanks men good night bro," which is normally used in spoken language. Moreover, "night" is misspelled, and the first letter of the sentence is not capitalized. By contrast, Student B in Example (8) commits no typos and grammatical errors and employs a quite mannered tone in making the request. It shows that the student may have linguistic competence but may be unaware that "Dear + incorrect title + FN" is inappropriate when writing to a faculty member.

   Some of the students do not use any title and just address the faculty's name, such as "Dear Edward," "Dear John," "Edward," "John," and "John Edward". These are coded as "Others" and these constitute 12% (n = 4) of the pretest. Example (9) shows one of them. In this example, Student C does not use "Dear" or "title," but just calls the professor by his full name (i.e., John Edward).

(9) Pretest (Student C): Others

John Edward
Hey what's up give me more time
bye bye

Student C uses "Hey what's up," which is normally used in conversations between friends. In addition, no punctuation mark is used in the email. Even in spoken situations with a professor, it is not common to use "thanks men good night bro" and "Hey what's up." Students A and C may have acquired these expressions from the media, such as the Internet and TV, but it seems that they have not developed a sociopragmatic competence in writing a formal email. However, after the instruction, Students A and C did not use these colloquial expressions in the posttest and also did not commit any spelling errors.

In the pretest, 16% (n = 5) of the students use no forms of address and they are shown in (10)-(14). The students shown in (10)-(14) directly introduce themselves without addressing the faculty or simply jumping into the request.

(10) Pretest (Student D): Zero address forms

Good evening.
This is donghyun noh from your class.
I would like to ask for an extension of one day allow me to properly complete my assignment.
Thank you.
From. Donghyun

(11) Pretest (Student E): Zero address forms

Hello. Your assignment submission date is too short.
Please stretch it out a little bit.

(12) Pretest (Student F): Zero address forms

My name is Jiseong-Lee. one of your students in this new semester.
I am sorry, but I was unable to do my assignment on time.
It is because when I checked through the composition, I found several mistakes,
so need more time to correct them I was wondering if you could extend the deadline till tomorrow. Would you give me an extension for the assignment?

(13) Pretest (Student G): Zero address forms

Hello, edward
I want to extend my submission date.

(14) Pretest (Student H): Zero address forms

Hello I'm seoyunchoi 2022
Is it possible to extend the deadline for submitting assignments

In the pretest, some of the students commit capitalization errors. However, grammatical and spelling errors are not included since these belong to L2 linguistic competence. Student G in example (13) does not capitalize the professor's name. Students D and H, in examples (10) and (14), do not capitalize the first letter of their own names. However, it is interesting to see that Student D does capitalize his name at the end of the email. It seems that Student D did not proofread the email or did not pay attention to capitalization rules. Student H, shown in example (14), does not use a punctuation mark (i.e., a question mark) for the interrogative sentence.

The participants in this study are all university students, with at least six years of English education in middle school and high school. Therefore, it can be said that they all know the rules of capitalization but are unaware of the pragmatic situation. If they are told to proofread their email, they will not make those mistakes without any additional instructions on the rules of capitalization. However, it seems crucial to give instructions to proofread the email and this leads to the second research question.

Research Question 2: Does Explicit Instruction in Email Writing Have Positive Effects on Writing Socially Acceptable Emails?

To address the second research question, the results of posttest were examined. The descriptive analysis showing the frequencies of forms of address in the posttest is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Forms of Address Used in the Posttest

	Posttest	
Dear + correct academic title + LN	29/32	91%
Dear + correct academic title + FN	0/32	0%
Dear + incorrect title + LN	0/32	0%
Dear + incorrect title + FN	0/32	0%
Others	2/32	6%
Zero address forms	1/32	3%
Total	32/32	100%

According to Table 3, 91% of the students used the "Dear + correct academic title + FN". The second most used form was "Others" at 6% and "Zero address forms" was the least used (3%). The most interesting thing is that none of the students used the "Dear + correct academic title + FN", "Dear + incorrect title + LN" and "Dear + incorrect title + FN".

Among the 30 students in the posttest, two are coded as "others," as shown in Table 3. In (15) and (16), the students use "professor" to address the recipient.

(15) Posttest (Student I): Others

Hello, professor. I'm a student attending your class.
…..

(16) Posttest (Student J): Others

Dear professor. I'm Kim Hyunjin, a student who takes your class.
…..

In Korean, the word "professor" can be used as an address term; it also shows respect to the recipient. It is not awkward to use the word "professor" alone to address a professor in Korean. However, the use of "Dear Professor" in English may imply writing to a generalized or indefinite personage, which is not appropriate in writing an email to a specific faculty member. As such, this result shows that students in (15) and (16) have a lack of knowledge of the address system in English.

In order to answer the third research question, the results of the delayed pretest were analyzed.

Research Question 3: Is the Improvement, If Any, Retained Over an Extended Period of Time?

The frequency of forms of address used in the delayed posttest is listed in Table 4. In the delayed posttest, 90% of the students used "Dear + correct academic title + LN" and only 9% used other formulations. It seems that they retained pragmatic competence quite well after 10 months.

TABLE 4
Forms of Address Used in the Delayed Posttest

	Delayed posttest	
Dear + correct academic title + LN	27/30	90%
Dear + correct academic title + FN	0/30	0%
Dear + incorrect title + LN	0/30	0%
Dear + incorrect title + FN	0/30	0%
Others	3/30	10%
Zero address forms	0/30	0%
Total	30/30	100%

Example (17) and (18) illustrates sample examples of "others" in the delayed posttest. Student B, in example (17), uses "Dear + Alex + Jackson + professor". This Student B uses an incorrect title (i.e., Mr.) to address the faculty in the pretest (see example (8) for Student B), but after the instruction, the student uses the correct academic title (i.e., Professor). However, example (18) illustrates "Dear + Alex + Jackson + professor," which shows the L1 transfer. In Korean, the term professor is often followed by the name (e.g., Kim kyo-su-nim). This reveals that Student B retains the knowledge to address the faculty by the correct academic title, but the word order is awkward, which shows L1 influence.

(17) Delayed posttest (Student B): Others

Dear Alex Jackson professor.
….

In Example (18), Student K uses the appropriate form "Dear + correct academic title + LN" at the beginning of the email. However, Student K uses "Dear + incorrect academic title + FN" in the body of the email. This shows that Student K has acquired the knowledge of not calling the professor by FN, but not fully enough.

(18) Delayed posttest (Student K): Others

Dear Professor Jackson
Hello, Mr. Alex
I'm the student named Jiho in your class…..
….

Table 5 presents the students' overall preference for various forms of address before and after the instruction.

TABLE 5
Forms of Address: Overall Preference

	Pretest		Posttest		Delayed posttest	
Dear + correct academic title + LN	10/32	31%	29/32	91%	27/30	90%
Dear + correct academic title + FN	5/32	16%	0/32	0%	0/30	0%
Dear + incorrect title + LN	7/32	22%	0/32	0%	0/30	0%
Dear + incorrect title + FN	1/32	3%	0/32	0%	0/30	0%
Others	4/32	12%	2/32	6%	3/30	10%
Zero address forms	5/32	16%	1/32	3%	0/30	0%
Total	32/32	100%	32/32	100%	30/30	100%

Table 5 illustrates that participants use "Dear + correct academic title + LN" the most in all the email assignments (i.e., pretest, posttest, delayed posttest). However, it is interesting to note that none of the students use incorrect titles or family names to address the faculty in the posttest and delayed posttest.

Since the goal of the instruction in this study is not only to acquire appropriate expressions but also to avoid using inappropriate expressions, the forms of address are divided into appropriate and inappropriate terms. The use of the first name, incorrect title, and zero forms of address when writing emails to faculty members is coded as inappropriate. A comparison of the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest in terms of the frequency of appropriateness is outlined in Table 6. The comparison shows that there is a major change in the use of inappropriate forms of address. Table 6 shows that 69% of the students use inappropriate constructions in the pretest.

After the instruction, 91% of the emails use the correct construction "Dear + correct academic title + LN." However, the posttest reveals that 9% of the emails still employ inappropriate forms of address. This shows that some students are yet to master the use of appropriate forms of address.

To examine the long-term effect of explicit instruction, the delayed posttest is compared with the pretest and posttest. In the delayed posttest, administered ten months after the instruction, 90% of the emails use the forms of address appropriately. This result implies that the students retain their knowledge of the appropriateness of forms of address quite well.

TABLE 6
Forms of Address: Appropriate vs. Inappropriate

	Pretest	Posttest	Delayed posttest
Appropriate	31%	91%	90%
Inappropriate	69%	9%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

In terms of spelling and capitalization errors, none of the students commit those errors in the posttest and delayed posttest. It seems that they proofread their emails before clicking the send button, as they were instructed in the email instruction session.

To triangulate and expand the results obtained from the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest, a follow-up interview was transcribed and analyzed. In the interviews, some of them stated that they did not proofread the email in the pretest, but after their instruction in email writing, they proofread their emails and corrected their typos, if any. This explains partly why none of the students committed spelling and capitalization errors in the posttest and delayed posttest.

In the interviews, many students responded that they pay attention only to grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, they were not aware of the forms of address they were using (see (20) for the interview excerpt).

(20) Interview excerpt

I haven't thought about proofreading the email. I thought using the word "please" would make my email polite. But now I always proofread what I wrote. Until now, I was not aware of the address term and proofreading.

One of the interesting points in this study is that while none of the students in the pretest use "Dr.," one of them does use "Dr." in the posttest. In the interview, it was revealed that the student was not sure about using "Dr." as an appropriate form

of address. Because in Korea, it is not usual to call their professor by "Dr." (e.g., Kim bak-sa-nim / bak-sa). However, the student realized that there is a cultural difference in addressing forms after the instruction session (See (21) for the interview excerpt).

(21) Interview excerpt

I was not sure that whether it was okay to call my professor "Dr.," since it is not common to call my Korean professor by. using "Dr." However, after the instruction I realized it is appropriate to use both "Dr." and "Professor."
……..

Some students said in the interview that they gained confidence in writing academic emails in English. Interview excerpts (22) and (23) illustrate this.

(22) Interview excerpt

I was afraid because I had never written an email in English. When writing an English email, I only paid attention to grammar. However, through the class, I learned that I could be unintentionally rude by using inappropriate address forms. I should avoid using inappropriate forms. I gained confidence in writing English emails through the instruction.

(23) Interview excerpt

When writing to English native speakers, I thought it would look like a high level if I use colloquial language. However, through instruction on English e-mail writing, I became careful not only when writing e-mails in English but also in Korean.

Based on the results of the present study and students' comments in the interviews, it can be concluded that once EFL students receive explicit instruction on email writing, they will develop their pragmatic competence accordingly. In addition, the effects of explicit instruction last long and the students will gain confidence in writing academic English emails.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

How to address the recipient of an email is often one of the most difficult choices that a sender has to make. EFL learners are often faced with uncertainties regarding style and politeness strategies, particularly in student–faculty email interaction (Barron,2007; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). Using deviant or inappropriate expressions can lead to a misunderstanding or communication breakdown. Many faculty members report that they are disturbed by inappropriate salutations, abbreviations, spelling and grammar errors, and an impolite tone (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

The present study shows that EFL students make progress in writing academic emails with the help of explicit instruction focusing on address terms. The development of students' pragmatic competence is evident not only in the posttest but also in the delayed posttest, supporting previous studies (Halenko & Jones, 2011; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Narita, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2015). Even though the delayed posttest was administered after 10 months of the instruction, the participants retained their pragmatic competence quite well. In addition, the interviews reveal that the students struggle in writing request emails to figures of authority because of their lack of instruction in pragmatics. In addition, EFL learners have limited contact with the politeness norms of the target language and culture.

English textbooks used in Korea focus more predominantly on language form than on explaining the sociocultural norms of the language. According to Jung (2017), the explicit indication of interlocutor relationships is disregarded in many textbook dialogues. Therefore, although the students may have developed a higher level of linguistic competence, they may not have developed pragmatic competence.

As for the pedagogical implication of the present study, EFL books and curricula should contain an explicit email instruction section, especially when it comes to writing emails in academia. In addition, writing instruction should include an awareness-raising activity to have students notice the gap between their intentions and actual meaning. However, the goal of pedagogical instruction should be to draw students' attention to the pragmatic norms of the target language, and not merely to make them "well-mannered native speakers," as stated by Aliakbari and Gheitasi (2014, p.28).

To conclude, through instruction, EFL students should be able to identify email features that can be unintentionally

impolite and abrupt. We should prevent EFL students from being unintentionally rude or subservient (Thomas, 1983). This can be achieved by raising their awareness of sociopragmatic skills and the possible consequences of their linguistic choices through explicit instruction.

The present study has some limitations. First, it investigates only one group without reference to a comparison group. Comparison with a control group or NS emails would provide empirical evidence for potential instructional effects. Second, since the corpus used in this study is relatively small, caution is needed in generalizing the results of the study. For future studies, a substantial size of email corpus is necessary. Third, the study does not consider the EFL students' English proficiency level. Finally, the current study focuses on the forms of address of EFL students in emails; further research is needed to examine other aspects of their email writing.

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Appendix

Materials for consciousness-raising activity
Sample 1

Dear Mr. Ko

Hello this is Uhyeong Jeong.
I am writing this email to notice I can't attend the class on March 23. Because I broke my leg in a car accident.
So, could u accept my attendance at class on March 23?
Bye

Sample 2

Dear Professor Ko

My name is Sihyun Kim, one of your students in your English Listening class.
I am writing to request an extension on the deadline for submitting my assignments.

Unfortunately, I have fallen ill and as a result, I am unable to complete my coursework on time.
Over the past few days, I have been experiencing severe flu-like symptoms, including high fever, body aches, and fatigue.
These symptoms have made it extremely difficult for me to concentrate on my studies and complete the assignment by the original deadline.
I apologize for any inconvenience this request may cause. However, due to my current health condition, I am unable to focus on my studies and complete the assignments on time.

I would be grateful if you grant me an extension of 3 days to complete and submit my assignments once I have recovered.
I have attached a medical certificate from my doctor to this email for your reference.

I sincerely apologize for the difficult request.

-Sihyun Kim

A Questionnaire after Reading the Sample Email

Statements	Totally disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Totally agree
1. I think the style of this email is formal.				
2. I think this email carries an appropriate tone in such a student-professor relationship.				
3. I think this email is clear and informative.				
4. I think this email is well-organized and coherent.				
5. I think the student who wrote this email has the right to make this request.				
6. I think it is likely that the professor will comply with this request				
comments				

*The questionnaire is adapted from Y. Chen (2015).