Relationship Management in Intercultural Business Emails

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To my Grandpa John who has always inspired my love of language, and my Grandma Judy; together you have been amazing supporters of my education.

&

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Abstract

While relational networks have been an important part of much research into human interaction since at least the 1980s, there has been little research into network creation and decay, with much research simply creating a snapshot of an established network. Additionally, only a small number of studies have portrayed networks as dynamic and changing, instead viewing ties as binary, either strong or weak, but not something in between. This thesis addresses both these problems using intercultural business email data to map relationships from the first introduction of two parties, to eventual decay, including stages of change along the way. A comprehensive model of dynamic relational networks is also presented, adding significant detail to the descriptions presented by prior studies and presenting the idea graphically for the first time.

The thesis uses a corpus of 1072 emails sent between a sole trader and 19 of her clients. Initially, an exploratory data analysis is conducted to present some of the structural and statistical aspects of the data. Then, using an inductive qualitative research process, tie creation is examined looking at how relationships are initiated and begin to progress. How strong functional ties are developed is then examined through linguistic strategies such as self-disclosures, multimedia sharing, and paying compliments. A systematic analysis of the usage of CMC (computer mediated communication) cues for relational work is given particular attention. The maintenance of weak ties is also examined, including using politic behaviour, adherence to one's line, and recipient design. Tie decay, an under-explored area, is also analysed by describing how language differs before and after a break in contact, how a relationship can be destabilised and (possibly) repaired, or how it may become dysfunctional.

It is found that traits put forward by prior studies categorising relationships as strong, e.g. homophily, time dedication and trust, can be exemplified through linguistic elements in those relationships which are moving *towards* being strong (and, importantly, *functional* i.e. friendly, rather than *dysfunctional*, i.e. bullying). The thesis also shows how in *all* the business relationships presented, there is some amount of relational communication, which is important for ensuring a smooth business relationship.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

"if I am not alone, then neither are you, and hand in hand we can marvel together at the strangeness of the human condition."
– Stephen Fry (2010)

This thesis analyses 1072 email messages to provide an in-depth explanation of some of the ways in which clients from different cultures form and maintain relationships with Liz, a British sole trader offering academic proofreading and transcription services. This relationship management is examined using relational networks (Granovetter, 1973; Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009), showing how ties are created, and then may go through various stages such as maintenance, reinforcing and destabilisation, until they finally decay. The qualitative analysis, Chapter 5—Chapter 9, explores, in roughly chronological order, the relationship trajectory these email communications follow, looking at the linguistic elements that affect each relational stage, and informing the model of relational networks presented in the following chapter.

This chapter briefly introduces the reader to the background and data (described in detail in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), and then to the research questions. Following this, a short description of the methods of analysis used in the study is presented, followed by a description of the thesis' structure.

1.1 Study background and aims

The emails used in this study were sent between Liz (a sole trader), and her clients (international students and academics), while Liz was working as a proofreader and transcriber between ending her Master's degree (2011), and the first year of her PhD (2014-2015).[2] The emails are all in English; for some of the clients, this meant using English as a foreign or second language.

The thesis' main aim was to answer the question "How are relationships managed via business email?". This question was the primary driver of the study, and informed not only the tools and methods used for data analysis, but also the overarching structure of the

[2] The ethics process, collection, and clean-up of these emails is explained in more detail in 2.4 (Methodology).

thesis, which is taken from network analyses (Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Burt, 2001). The focus on relationship management is evident throughout all areas of this thesis, with attention paid to analysing the emails in sequence, while taking into account their context and the historicity of the relationship between the participants. The relationship is followed from its foundation (often a recommendation from a friend, colleague, or tutor about Liz's services), until the proofreading or transcription work is completed, to its possible finish.[3] Communication throughout the thesis data is almost entirely dyadic, involving one business client and the business owner; however, connections exist beyond the dyad which affect interactions within it. These relationships are mapped in detail, both in statistical/graphical ways (Figure 5—Figure 15, pp. 67-75), and through an in-depth qualitative analysis.

1.2 Research questions

Through the process of inductive research, I formed several interlinked research questions concerning the broad themes of my analysis, plus, some minor questions, each of which is answered within a specific chapter. These research questions are as follows:

<u>Broad Questions</u>

These are addressed in **all** chapters of the thesis:

1) How are relationships managed via business email?
2) How can existing definitions of strong and weak ties be made to more accurately reflect observed relationships and relational changes?
3) Is there a relationship 'trajectory' including stages through which all relationships must pass?

<u>Specific Questions</u>

1) How can the contact between participants be visually mapped? (Chapter 4, section 4.3)

[3] It should be noted here that for some clients the relationship evolved beyond business, and for others, while the business relationship did eventually end, this had not yet happened when data collection stopped.

2) How is first contact made, and what factors of this initial meeting influence how the relationship progresses? (Chapter 5)

3) How can relationships change to become more intimate? (Chapter 6)

4) What role do CMC cues (computer mediated communication cues), e.g. bolds, emoticons, ellipses, etc., play in relationship management? (Chapter 7)

5) Can ties be maintained without becoming more intimate? (Chapter 8)

6) How can ties decay and what factors may cause tie decay? (Chapter 9)

These questions should give the reader a sense of how this study will progress, and indicate that an attempt has been made to map and understand the entire relationship from first contact to eventual decay. Of course, all these questions are constrained by the nature of the data – intercultural business email in an educational context. However, the findings should to some extent be generalizable to other settings.

1.3 Study Context

In terms of data, this study most closely resembles qualitative studies by Gimenez (2006), Kankaanranta (2006) and Incelli (2013), all of which focus on business emails between people from different cultures. In addition, like this study, both Incelli (2013) and Gimenez (2006) use data in which an entire email conversation can be seen sequentially. This allows emails to be analysed with their surrounding context, which can alter their interpretation, and allows the researcher to see how/if the relationship between the interactants changed over time. However, this study is potentially unique in its focus not only on business-to-consumer data (as opposed to business-to-business, or business-internal communications like those mentioned above), but also because the business in this instance is a sole-trader, meaning that relationships with the business are in fact relationships with a single individual. This fundamentally alters the parameters of business talk; with no corporate identity to protect or represent, and no set guidelines about workplace culture or etiquette to follow, the sole trader and her clients are free to create their own norms through their communication with each other (compare Harrington, 2018 for an example of strictly-controlled language in the workplace).

In creating their own workplace norms, sole traders are free to adopt a formal and impersonal way of communicating, or a more personalised, friendly approach where emails and other communication is not always entirely business-focussed. In line with this thesis' claims, researchers such as Jabbari et al. (Jabbari, Allison, Guthrie, & Guthrie, 2006) have stated that business emails are not always about business. Jabbari et al. presented preliminary results on an auto-classifier designed to discriminate between business and personal emails, using email data from the Enron corpus.[4] They found there was no definite line between business and personal emails that could be applied in all cases, and 6% of the emails were too ambiguous to get a definite result from either the human annotators or the computer program. Likewise, data within this thesis cannot always be classified as wholly one or the other, especially in such cases where a personal matter, such as one's parents being taken ill, has a direct repercussion on business e.g. a hand-in being delayed. In such cases, denying the relationship between the emails discussing the hand-in and those discussing the parents' illness, if indeed they are separate at all, would ignore the importance of sending personal emails. While Jabbari et al. began their project with the aim of monitoring staff productivity to "report the percentage of time which each employee was spending engaged in non-work related email activities" (Jabbari et al., 2006), this thesis argues that all emails *may* be productive for business in the sense of improving relationships between email senders, and contextualising problems when they occur. This thesis aims to describe the richness of expression in email data, showing how business and personal topics are closely intertwined, and how bringing in personal elements can fundamentally alter the nature of ties between participants.

To provide a deeper explanation of this thesis' conception of network ties, a secondary aim was to provide a model of possible network connections, and how these connections can alter over time. The proposed model for the analysis of network ties (Figure 1, p. 37) will allow other researchers to compare, build on, and describe their findings in terms of this study. The network tie model presented in this thesis is transformational rather than static, and throughout the thesis, the idea that relationships within dyads can change in response to certain stimuli is explored (primarily in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 9). This idea *rejects the solid binary* of strong versus weak ties proposed by much of the literature (see

4 See Appendix section 11.3 for a description of this dataset.

e.g. Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992), introducing further categories and routes by which a relationship can transform from one type to another. Most (but not all) of these transformations can be observed directly in the real examples used for analysis.[5]

This thesis also makes an important practical contribution intended to benefit readers of this study who have their own email data to compare. Prior email studies have often given inadequate accounts of the data used (see Table 2, p. 58), sometimes neglecting to mention even such relatively basic statistics as how many writers contributed the emails, or even how many emails were studied. With these shortcomings, I often struggled to compare my findings in any meaningful way with prior studies due to inadequate knowledge of their datasets. Therefore, it is a key aim of this thesis to be as transparent as possible in describing the data used and the statistics associated with these data. The thesis' sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 all describe aspects of the email dataset in precise detail, from the study participants' native language, gender and number of emails written, to statistics relevant to all emails in the database, such as number, average length, speed of reply and more. This is in order that this study can present a detailed and comparable description of the dataset used in order to allow future research to engage with it deeply and effectively. Additionally, this supports the development of the primary aim by providing detailed supplementary statistical and graphical data for the qualitative analysis to draw upon.

While the methodology is discussed in detail later, I outline here the most basic tools of analysis the thesis uses to achieve the aims. For the exploratory data analysis (Chapter 4) the analysis of the dataset is primarily quantitative-driven. This chapter outlines both statistical features of the dataset (length of emails, reply times, participant statistics etc.) and features that emerge from the data upon reading it, such as network diagrams of participant interconnections (derived from email content). All these graphs, tables and diagrams help to build a detailed and rich picture of the data, before the qualitative analysis has even taken place, and gives the reader a chance to understand who the participants are, how and when they communicated, whether or not they are part of networks with each other, and more. The following five analysis chapters use primarily qualitative methods, taking a bottom-up inductive approach, informed and supported where appropriate by the

5 Thus, some are hypothetical and require further study.

exploratory data analysis chapter. These chapters build a detailed picture of how relationships were formed in the dataset.

Before proceeding to the theoretical background of the study, one aspect of the data must first be clarified: the relationship between the thesis author and Liz. Following this, I present the outline of the thesis.

1.4 Clarification

1.4.1 Liz

This is Liz:	This is me:
	
Liz is a proofreader and transcriber…	so am I.
Liz has just finished her MA and is also working in a university café…	whereas I worked in a café for the first year of my PhD, then did the PhD full time.
Liz is between 22 and 26 years old…	I was 26 when I started my PhD, by the time you read this, I'll be over 30.
Liz thinks of doing a PhD, but doesn't know what to do one on. She looks at lecturers coming to the café and envies them…	I have written a thesis – I hope you like it! I look at lecturers with a mixture of awe and sympathy, but I'd still like to be one someday.[6]

[6] And yes, I (we?) still have that coat.

Liz and I are, and are not, different people. The distinction between us is important, as she did not write the majority of her emails in the knowledge that someday I would be analysing them (though there is a slight overlap, explained in detail in section 3.2). She certainly did not know what I would be analysing them *for*. An important aspect of this thesis is keeping these personae separate so that there is no confusion. I may remember events that happened to Liz, but memory can be fickle and is certainly not always trustworthy (see P. V. Marsden, 1990, p. 135; Dewaele, 2004, p. 206; Charmaz, 2006, p. 68; Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu, 2007, p. 70), especially in the long-term:

> We know that memory is fallible, that it is impossible to recall or report on events in language that exactly represents how those events were lived and felt; and we recognize that people who have experienced the "same" event often tell different stories about what happened (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, pp. 6–7)

Therefore, I avoid interpreting her actions with undue prescience. A similar situation is described in O'Driscoll's (2013) paper in which he analyses an interaction in which he was a participant, which he transcribed from memory shortly after the event, and analysed later. In hypothesising why he behaved in a certain way during the interaction, O'Driscoll states that the intentions he attributed to himself were only what he retrospectively *suspected*. He notes that "It is very unwise to approach the analysis of encounters from the viewpoint of speaker intention. But this can nevertheless serve as supplement to explanation." (O'Driscoll, 2013, p. 179). To keep this distinction between Liz and myself clear throughout the thesis, I refer to myself, "Liz-the-thesis-author", as "I", "myself" or "me" and to "Liz-the-study-participant", as "Liz", "she", "her". Where my remembering of past events is necessary and appropriate for the analysis, it is clearly indicated as such a remembrance. Of course, this being an 'insider research' study does present some possible limitations; these are explored in sections 3.4 and 10.2.

1.5 Thesis structure

In the explanation below, the content of each chapter is outlined along with the goals of the analysis, where applicable

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Background presents overarching concepts, such as politeness, culture, and network ties which affect all aspects of the thesis analysis in order to ground and contextualise the discussion. Additionally, the 'Tie Trajectory Model' is presented in section 2.4.2. This model is one of the thesis' primary contributions to knowledge, and lays out the fundamental way in which network ties are conceptualised within the thesis' analysis.

Chapter 3 – Methodology describes the method of data collection, the ethics process needed to validate this study, the research design, data cleanup, and the analysis process including tools used.

Chapter 4 – Exploratory Data Analysis presents detailed data on the composition of the dataset such as who the participants are, how long contact lasted, where participants are from and their first languages. Data is also given on the statistical makeup of the email data: the length, response time, mode and median length etc. Additionally, network diagrams are presented to show the interrelationships between participants, how referrals passed between participants, and which participants were talking about each other.

Chapter 5 – Tie Creation analyses the very first emails between Liz and her clients looking at initial relationship formation. This chapter also looks at referral emails (sent by mutual acquaintances of Liz and the client) and how these differ from first contact emails written by clients with whom there has been no prior contact. This chapter sets the stage for the following four analysis chapters which show how a relationship can proceed after creation.

Chapter 6 – Tie Reinforcing analyses emails occurring once contact has been established, specifically focussing on features such as self-disclosures, multimedia content sharing and giving compliments. This chapter begins to show how a relationship can change and transform from being business-focussed into communication for purely relational purposes, and how this relational talk can be found in virtually every interaction to some degree.

Chapter 7 – CMC Cues: This chapter considers the CMC cues which are used in building a strong functional tie. CMC cues are given an entire chapter, not only because they occur frequently in the data, but also because there is limited research looking at specific cues other than emoji/emoticons i.e. parentheses, ellipses, exclamation marks etc. individually and systematically. This is important because these cues are shown to have many, and diverse, relational effects. Those which do not have relationally reinforcing effects are considered in the following chapter.

Chapter 8 – Maintaining Weak Functional Ties analyses the emails where little to no reinforcing occurs, but the relationship does not become dysfunctional (i.e. characterised by a lack of trust, unfriendly or impolite discourse, lack of mutual support etc.). These weak, but functional, relationships are maintained through adherence to expectations, timely communication, minimising the possibility of misunderstanding and politic or rote politeness.

Chapter 9 – Tie Decay, Destabilisation, Repair and Reinitiation analyses those emails that display tie decay, either through time or through a negative tie-affecting occurrence such as a misunderstanding or disagreement (destabilisation). The chapter also looks at some email conversations where participants repaired a damaged relationship, or where contact was reinitiated after some decay had occurred.

Chapter 10 – Conclusion completes the study, presents the unique contributions to knowledge, the research limitations, and suggestions for further research.

The final chapter is followed by the Appendix with additional information plus the bibliography.

The following chapter considers the broad concepts and theories of politeness, culture and network ties that inform the thesis' analysis.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Background

"Those who cannot feel the littleness of great things in themselves are apt to overlook the greatness of little things in others"
– Okakura (2016 [1906], p. 5)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the theoretical background of the study, taking a broad overview on the thesis' conception of politeness theory, the stance on culture, what is meant by 'relational network analysis', and the network related terms I will be using throughout the thesis. The chapter concludes with a model of relational ties which is the backbone of the thesis and one of the major original contributions. These are broad issues applicable to every analysis chapter, while specific literature will be brought in as and when it is relevant.

2.2 Politeness

This thesis takes a "third wave" or interactional approach to politeness, "retain[ing] both an emphasis on contextualised, naturalistic discourse data and an interest in participants' constructions of meaning in interaction" (Grainger, 2011, p. 171). Third wave researchers stress the importance of separating lay/emic understandings of politeness (called politeness1) from theoretical/etic understandings of politeness (called politeness2) (O'Driscoll, 2007; Haugh, Kádár, & Mills, 2013), as scientific descriptions of politeness may not conform to participants' first-order experiences (O'Driscoll, 2007, p. 464), and insider understandings may not always accord with outsider ones. As Locher and Watts state, "there is discursive dispute about what is considered "rude", "impolite", "normal", "appropriate", "politic", "polite" or "over-polite" behavior in the various communities of practice in which these terms are actually used" (Locher & Watts, 2005, p. 16).

Researchers in this third wave insist that (im)politeness cannot be analysed in a vacuum and must take into account the contextual factors surrounding language production (Spencer-Oatey, 2002; Holmes, 2012; Kádár, 2017a). Additionally, not only the immediate context must be taken into account, but also the historic context of the involved participants (Kádár, 2017a). This style of politeness analysis also stresses the need to acknowledge that different speakers/writers and listeners/readers interpret what is polite and impolite differently (van der Bom & Mills, 2015): “whether or not an utterance is heard as being polite is, to a large extent, in the hands (or ears) of the hearer” (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p. 4).

Given the context-based and participant-dictated nature of politeness, it is unsurprising that intercultural communication brings certain issues to the fore, from the researcher’s own cultural norms impacting the analysis of data (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 237), to politeness norms differing from group to group and from culture to culture (Grainger, 2011; Holmes, 2012; Incelli, 2013). These issues influence the way that a politeness analysis of intercultural data is carried out, as multiple studies have shown that within different cultures, there are different conceptions of what counts as polite, which may even be in direct opposition (Murphy & Levy, 2006; Grainger, 2011; Incelli, 2013). Grainger (2011) states that “British speakers and Zimbabwean speakers operate with differing interpretation frameworks with regard to indirectness and politeness.” (Grainger, 2011, p. 168), while Incelli (2013) in her study of business-to-business email between an Italian and British firm found that British discourse was more business-like, but used many politeness markers e.g. “please” and “if you’re happy”, while Italian discourse was more relational, for example, offers were made to the British partners of travelling to Italy. As Holmes states:

> each individual typically follows the interactional norms of their own culture, and they unthinkingly and instinctively use those norms to interpret the behavior of others. People make judgments about others, including how polite or impolite they are, based on their behavior in relation to those norms. (Holmes, 2012, p. 205)

This must be taken into account when analysing intercultural data, as participant interpretations and analyst interpretations may be at odds. This is one of the issues this thesis faces, as without post-event interviews to supplement the analysis of how certain phrases were interpreted or intended from the clients’ perspectives, only the reply emails’ text can be used as evidence, which in turn is also subject to the analyst’s interpretation. Therefore, it is made clear throughout that interpretations are hypotheses, deeply informed by the email data, but in many ways untested.

Politeness, specifically in relation to email data, has been analysed in the literature, for example, as mentioned in relation to Incelli's study above. Interestingly, Incelli (2013) found in her data that the level of formality for Italian writers was context dependant, with "serious information, especially when referring to payment methods and invoice details…conveyed in a more formal, cohesively written way, e.g. please find attached our official quote." (Incelli, 2013, p. 529). Again, the business setting played a part, as did the intercultural aspect of Incelli's data, meaning that emails had to be expressed more clearly. As with contextual factors for politeness in general, Pilegaard (1997, p. 223) notes that which politeness strategy is used in email, and what form it takes "vary as a function of the dynamics of the course of business communication". Additionally, "opening salutation and closing valediction in email… [constitute] structural forms of politeness" (Bunz and Campbell 2002, described by McKeown & Zhang, 2015, p. 93) and emails including these features may be interpreted as more polite or more relational (Kankaanranta, 2006). This shows how different communication media have their own rules of what is and is not considered polite, which creates a compound problem when looking at intercultural CMC, where body language, immediate reactions, vocal tone etc. are not available. Additionally, what is perceived as 'polite' may be seen as over-polite, and thus received negatively. This makes both the intent behind production, and the recipient's interpretation, harder to analyse.

Incelli is not the only author to have considered intercultural business email; Murphy and Levy (2006) also made a study of Australian versus Korean politeness perceptions, conducting a survey of how Australians and Koreans perceived emails from overseas colleagues in terms of politeness, and how they believed they altered their own writing styles when communicating with overseas colleagues. Murphy and Levy found that:

> [P]articipants said that they expressed politeness in their overseas communications through the level of formality. Other ways of expressing politeness included 'using proper titles', 'showing more attention to clarity', 'using formal greetings and goodbyes', 'avoiding colloquialisms' and 'giving attention to please and thank-you'. (Murphy & Levy, 2006, pp. 3–4)

However, what was perceived as impolite from both sides was different. Australians listed problems such as direct, assertive and abrupt language, incorrect use of titles and inappropriate register (Murphy & Levy, 2006, p. 4). On the other hand, Koreans complained of "'no formal titles' or 'no titles at all', 'addressing by first name only on the first email contact', 'not enough face-saving expressions used', 'too business-like', 'no opening and closing of message' and 'lack of interest in communication partner'" (Murphy & Levy, 2006, p. 4). These differing perceptions show a mismatch in politeness interpretations. However, this study used questionnaire data rather than real emails, so it is possible that participants misrepresented their actual behaviour.

This entire discussion shows that politeness itself, in its third wave conceptualisation, is hard to define by any overarching theory or model, as different groups have different norms, and so do different communication media. These norms inform what is considered polite, as does the context, the relationship between the participants, the medium of communication etc. Taking all this into account in the absence of any metadata is difficult, but hypotheses about what is happening between the participants can be presented by looking at the language, evidence of reactions to that language, and the wider conversational context in detail.

Having considered the thesis' approach to politeness, I now move on to the approach to culture and cultural norms.

2.3 Culture

While this thesis' focus is primarily on relationship management through email, and not on culture, it cannot and should not be ignored that the thesis uses intercultural data, and this plays an important role in how the participants communicate. The notion of culture, and notions of norms, with which culture is inextricably intertwined, ought to be defined before the main analysis takes place in order to clarify my stance towards these notions and therefore disambiguate the discussion. This thesis takes a view of culture as exemplified by the quotes below.

According to Chang and Haugh (2011), culture encompasses:

> ways of perceiving, shared knowledge, norms, values, and practices, which are learned and shared through (un)conscious observation, interaction and imitation amongst members of the social group in question (Chang & Haugh, 2011, p. 413)

Similarly, Jandt (2004) describes culture, and cultural norms, as follows:

> [O]ur culture teaches us rules or norms that tell us how to behave inside our culture… Culture also includes all the things that guide a group of people through life, such as myths, language and gestures, ways of communicating, economic systems, what kinds of things to eat and how to dress. (Jandt, 2004, p. 26)

It is this kind of definition of what constitutes culture that this thesis uses; no one is seen as a cultural robot, and each culture is different in ways that cannot be easily grouped in relation to the study data. While other studies may bracket groups of cultures under broad headings such as high context/low context (Hooker, 2008) individual/collective, masculine/feminine (cf. Hofstede, 1983) etc., this requires parameters of comparison, and more representatives from each culture. Therefore, in this study, participants are only bracketed as British/other, which does NOT assume or imply that any culture that is 'other' is similar to any other culture under this heading, or indeed that any other British person would be identical to Liz or the other British participants.[7] What matters in this distinction, is that everybody 'other' is communicating with someone following British cultural norms, and is studying or working at a British academic institution (whether physically present or remotely) and is thus exposed to British culture, alongside their own culture, on a frequent basis. Thus the influence of British culture upon the non-British participants (and in turn, the clients' cultures upon Liz) cannot be ignored. Whilst Liz and two referrers are British, and several clients state the same country of origin, for example Hai and Victoria are from the same country in East Asia, Imran and Meera from the same country in South Asia etc., as O'Driscoll (2007, p. 465) states, "people are not cultural clones". This means that within a given context, a person may deliberately deviate from their cultural norms . In this case, some aspects of norms from one's home culture may be suppressed, altered or supplanted by norms from another culture when interacting with someone from a different culture. Watanabe (2011, p. 216) concurs, stating that a "new set of interactional norms" may emerge when a group of people from different cultural backgrounds have a "continuous relationship", and these norms may be different from any of the included cultures (Watanabe, 2011, p. 220).

[7] There are only two other British participants who contribute data – the two referrers Robyn and Mathew who each write one email to introduce, respectively, clients Zétény and Avin.

This is not to say that definitions that group cultures according to culture-specific norms such as, for example, indirectness and politeness in requests (Yu, 2011) or how apologies and requests are realized (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) are not worthwhile; they undoubtedly give useful generalizable insights. Nevertheless, this method is not suitable for my thesis as the participant numbers are too small to provide generalizable insights into how, for example, people from different specific cultural backgrounds might use emoji/emoticons. Such explanations are of limited use at these small numbers, as individual factors are likely to be more prominent than, or indistinguishable from, broad cultural ones. Additionally, making cultural distinctions is not the main aim of this study, rather the focus is on writing techniques that are available to anyone when constructing an email, such as making a self-disclosure, using exclamation marks, or mirroring the writing partner's greeting or sign-off. While future research may show that certain cultures use these resources to a greater or lesser extent, the focus here is on how they can be used and what possible affect this might have on the conversational partner.

To summarise, this thesis takes the view that the participants within should be treated as individuals, not as cultural representatives. Each Liz-Client dyad is expected to create their own norms based on their unique interaction with each other. Generally, culture is only brought into the analysis where there is an obvious case of mismatch, and even here it is only used to hypothesise, never to firmly conclude, e.g. "X may be a result of Y's cultural background", as such, an explanation can never be made with complete certainty as there may be other affecting factors.

Before proceeding to the analysis with these definitions of culture and politeness in mind, the terminology used to describe tie and network types must first be explored and the thesis unique model of relational networks presented.

2.4 Network ties

At its most basic level, a network tie is any mutual knowing between two persons, from the bare minimum of recognition e.g. a colleague who works in the same building, right up to the deepest level of intimacy, for example one's life partner. Traditionally, ties between people have been conceptualised as either strong or weak, with strong ties being categorised as longer lasting and more emotionally intense and intimate, and weak ties being characterised by tit-for-tat interactions persisting as long as there is a mutual benefit (Granovetter, 1973; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009). Additionally, there has not been much discussion of ties becoming strong if they started weak, or acknowledgement that a tie can exist at some intermediate point between strong and weak.

No single piece of literature has categorised ties in a way the sufficiently defines the complexity of all ties that may exist between differently connected people. Hafner-Burton et al. (2009) provide by far the most rigorous analysis of how social network studies can, and have been used, emphasising that ties are dynamic and change over time. They also emphasise that relations between persons or entities (such a corporations or governments) can be asymmetrical and can be characterised by enmity rather than cooperation. They additionally stress how theories of interaction must inform assumptions about what mechanisms help to create ties. While their review is highly detailed, it does not present a comprehensive model, and an issue of application to this study is that Hafner-Burton et al.'s (2009) purpose in writing their review was to show how social network analysis as a method can be used in international relations. Therefore the 'nodes' or members of their networks are entire government agencies, or intergovernmential organisations, which interact differently to individuals. Therefore, other literature must be brought in which looks at person-to-person relationships. A brief overview of this literature is presented here, noting what aspects of each is most original:

A. Goffman (1971), while not talking about ties, but rather relationship management, does describe relational decay, he also shows how once a meeting has taken place, the two parties cannot "revert to non-acquaintanceship" (Goffman, 1971, p. 189), and effectively describes how relationships can change and develop.

B. Granovetter (1973) describes the characteristics of weak and strong ties in detail, including how ties are created between people who have a mutual friend, and how information effectively flows through networks.

C. Watts (1991) describes network relations in a family group. He notes how networks are in a continual state of flux, and how network structure could help in interpreting nodes' behaviour. Watts also describes how different types of relationships, e.g. professional versus kin, could be shorter or longer lived and relationships could be non-reciprocal.

D. Milroy and Milroy (1992) describe how those within a network were able to identify themselves through forms of language use. They also describe the difference between "structural" and "interactional" characteristics of networks.

E. Ehrlich and Carboni (2005) describe strong and weak ties in terms of positive relations, but with strong ties, as in the majority of the literature, being characterised by emotional support, companionship and needing effort to maintain. The authors assert that ties can be non-reciprocal, e.g. A can ask B for information where B never asks A. They also present how a network can be analysed to identify people acting as bridges, cliques etc.

F. Martin and Yeung (2006) look at the persistence versus decay of relationships over time. They show that individual, dyadic and wider network characteristics effect tie persistence between two nodes.[8] They also show how factors such as geographic distance strongly effect decay.

G. Kivran-Swaine et al. (2011) look at breaking ties in online social networks. They describe tie formation and decay, asserting that decay is often a gradual process.

In general, the problems with the literature mentioned above, and network studies on the whole, are as follows. The studies which exhibit these problems are listed by their above alphabetical designation following the problem description:

- Weak ties, and to a greater extent, strong ties, are described only in terms of functional relationships. (A, B, E, G).
- Asymmetric relationships (e.g. as defined by power, age, role, etc.) are not mentioned. (A, B, D, E, G).
- There is no mention of how new ties are formed. (B, C, D, E, F).

[8] For this dataset, the wider network context is modelled in Figure 5—Figure 15, pp. 67-75.

- There is no mention of the breaking or decaying of ties. (B, D, E).

My model of the relational aspect of network ties hopes to address these problems, and add a means of categorising different relationship types which is more nuanced than ‘weak’ or ‘strong’. It should be noted that this model, as Milroy and Milroy (1992, p. 5) define, is of ‘interactional’ rather than ‘structural’ network characteristics, i.e. it “pertains to the content of the ties” not “the shape and pattern of the network”. The structural form of networks has been clearly defined by such authors as Ehrlich and Carboni (2005) and Hafner-Burton et al. (2009). These models describe such features as centrality (various measures of keyness or interconnectedness of nodes within a network); structural holes, also called bridges, which are links between otherwise unconnected communities; density (how close-knit a network is, i.e. to what degree all network members are tied to all other network members); subgroups/cliques etc. This structural analysis was not possible for the thesis data, as measuring such factors as interconnectedness would require revealing all study participants’ names to all other study participants to determine if connections existed. Additionally, Liz’s wider network of business contacts would also have to be modelled. The first step would remove participant anonymity, being in breach of ethics, the second is beyond the scope of this thesis. The closest this thesis comes to a structural analysis of the network can be seen in the network diagrams presented in Chapter 4, section 4.3.

The conception of ties as static is a problem largely caused by the relative lack of longitudinal studies on network creation and decay (studies which do consider these areas are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and Chapter 9). For example, many studies analyse a network as it stands, not considering how it came to be, or how it may develop or decay. This type of static investigation in a business setting can usefully lead to organisational restructuring, or changing management styles (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005). However, what cannot be examined in such a study is the process by which an employee *became* key to a network, acting for example as an information broker. This would require a longitudinal study, which could identify how the network changed over time. As my data is longitudinal, and collected, to the best of my knowledge, over the largest *continuous* period ever publicised using email data (with the exception of the Clinton email corpus (see De Felice & Garretson, 2018)), I am in a unique position to explore a network from formation to decay.

When looking at network change over time, one way relationships can be altered is through reinforcing them (see Glossary, p. 17). Talk of personal matters is one of the basic methods of reinforcing a relational tie in the data. As the literature on relational ties states, trust and emotional support (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005; De Meo, Ferrara, Fiumara, & Provetti, 2014) and shared interests (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Shen & Chen, 2015) are some of the bases on which a strong functional relationship can be built. Thus, self-disclosures are an important factor in building a stronger functional tie (section 6.2.1). Naturally, while there are techniques which reinforce a tie, there are also ways to purely maintain it (the relationship does not change, see Chapter 8), or to destabilise it (the relationship becomes dysfunctional or is repaired, section 9.2). These processes are further complicated in this thesis data because the communication is intercultural, which in a few instances leads to misunderstandings or showing of cultural ignorance which can destabilise a tie, but in others leads to cultural sharing and greater personal disclosure, which can reinforce the tie.

In this thesis, language is seen as the primary means by which network ties between people can be expressed, thus taking a pragmatic stance towards relational work. Prior to this thesis, works by Kádár, Haugh and co-authors stood as perhaps the only attempts to integrate relational networks into a strictly pragmatic approach to language (see Haugh et al., 2013; Kádár & Bax, 2013; Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Kádár, 2017b). And while Kádár, Haugh, and others showed that relational history is enormously important, especially for the formation of in-group ritual, they did not delve into, as this study does, the role that language and interaction has in network *creation*. Additionally, their 'relational network' examples always use individuals who share a strong functional tie, such as closely bonded friends, family or colleagues. The idea of other bonds existing is only vaguely hinted at, e.g., when it is mentioned that interactants are part of a "broader relational network or societal milieu" (Haugh et al., 2013). As such, the interesting nature of weak ties, or dysfunctional ties categorised by abuse, is ignored. Of course, weak ties are not where one would expect unique interpersonal ritual or other unique and salient linguistic practices to develop, and if they did, this thesis would argue that, at that point, the tie had undergone a transformation, and was no longer weak. Nevertheless, Kádár and Haugh neglect even to mention that different types of tie exist, applying 'relational network' as a general term for strong functional relations. This thesis, on the other hand, attempts to show the nuance of relational ties. The pragmatic approach is also more detailed, delving into not only that which is salient, such as ritual, but also that which is non-salient, such as mimetic behaviour and maintaining the status quo.

2.4.1 Glossary of network-related terms

This thesis uses a large number of terms related to networks, which are described below. As described in detail in section 2.4, the model put forward by this thesis is fundamentally transformational, which differs from many, but not all, prior studies. Many of the concepts below are taken from the previous literature, but my specific usage is given here. Note, some of those terms listed under 'relational network states' were coined by this thesis.

Network

At its most basic level, a network is simply all the people a person knows, no matter how often they see them, in what capacity they know them, how well they know them or whether or not they like them. These relationships between people are called 'ties' (see Milroy & Milroy, 1992) and these can be described in different ways to indicate the type of relationship between the two people, referred to as 'nodes' (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005). Networks can also describe ties between nodes who are not individuals, but governments, nation states, organizations etc., (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009).

Network models

Relational network model

A model of a network which describes the kinds of social relationships that exist between those in the network. Useful when describing subcultures, in-group norms and rituals, dialect usage, generosity and reciprocity, etc. (see e.g., Kádár & Bax, 2013; Scanlan & Zisselsberger, 2015).

Structural network model

A network model that describes what connections exist between all members, and how information flows between them. Useful when describing which members of a network are key gatekeepers or information brokers, whether there are sub-groups within a network and who connects those subgroups, etc. (Burt, 2001; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009).

Relational Ties

Note that the terms 'functional tie' and 'dysfunctional tie' were coined by this thesis. However, a description of interactions between ties being either "positive or cooperative" or "negative… [e.g.] two states in an enduring rivalry", which parallels these terms, can be found in Hafner-Burton et al. (2009, p. 563).

Weak tie

A tie characterised by knowing little about the other in terms of life, work, likes/dislikes or even age, gender, location etc. and interacting infrequently. The relationship *may* be purely task-based (e.g. colleagues, customer) (see e.g., Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Fuerst, 2012). The tie may be functional or dysfunctional.

Strong tie

A tie characterised by knowing a significant amount about the other in terms of life, work, likes/dislikes, age, gender, location etc. and interacting frequently. The relationship *may* exist for purely relational reasons (e.g. kin, friends) (Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005). The tie may be functional or dysfunctional.

Functional tie

A tie between two people where the relationship is polite, respectful and where both parties behave as expected. The tie may be strong or weak.

Dysfunctional tie

A tie between two people which is impolite, abusive, mistrustful and where participants may violate expected norms or the moral order. It is possible that one party may not know the tie is dysfunctional for some time, i.e. if the other party hides that they are being deceptive or betraying the other. The tie may be strong or weak.

Decayed tie

A tie between two people who have stopped having any contact with each other, they know nothing of each other's current life/work/location etc. Decay may have been through time, life circumstances, or through destabilisation resulting in an agreed relationship end (Burt, 2001). If neither party is dead, it is possible that the tie may be reinitiated, and even transform, at a later date.

Asymmetric tie

Weak/strong, functional/dysfunctional ties may all be asymmetric; one party may know lots about the other, but give away little about themselves, or one party may bully the other, but this may not be reciprocated. Structural ties may also be asymmetric, e.g. information may flow between interactants in only one direction (Martin & Yeung, 2006; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009).

Relational network states

Creation

The beginning of a relationship between two parties (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009) is called 'creation'.

Transformation

Transformation describes anything that results in a relationship changing in some way, whether purposeful or accidental, i.e., when a relationship is reinforced, destabilises, decays or is reinitiated (Watts, 1991, pp. 6–7; Locher & Watts, 2008, p. 96).

Reinforcing

A change in a relationship characterised by one or more of: a greater degree of trust, expressions of approval or liking the other, discovering shared interests, spending more time together (this concept can be found, under different names, in such sources as: Granovetter, 1973; De Meo et al., 2014; Shen & Chen, 2015). Continued reinforcing results in a strong functional relationship.

Destabilising

A change in a relationship characterised by one or more of: expressions of disapproval, dislike or distrust of the other, one or both parties not fulfilling their expected roles, or violating the moral order (Kádár & Márquez-Reiter, 2015; Kádár, 2017a), whether intentional or unintentional (e.g. breaking a promise or misleading the other, see Zummo, 2018b). If not repaired, this results in a dysfunctional relationship.

Repairing

When a relationship has been destabilised, before it becomes fully dysfunctional, participants may take actions to mitigate the damage and apologise (this may not be entirely successful, see Chang & Haugh, 2011), or atone in some way so that both participants agree the relationship is functional again e.g. by forgiving or admitting there had been a misunderstanding.

Decay

A change in a relationship characterised by interacting less, knowing less about the other's current life/circumstances/geographic location and committing less time to the relationship, whether gradual or sudden (Burt, 2001; McPherson et al., 2001). The tie may remain as a weak tie, or may decay to a point of having no contact at all.

Maintenance

A relationship of any type that is being maintained by any behaviours that are not changing the relationship parameters in any of the four above ways. For example, a weak functional relationship can be maintained by politic behaviour (Watts, 1989; Locher & Watts, 2008); a strong functional one by continuous expressions of approval, spending time together, honesty and self-disclosures; a strong dysfunctional tie by repeated abuse and bullying.

Reinitiating

If a tie has decayed, it is possible for participants to meet at a later time, either by accident or on purpose, and at that point re-establish and even transform their relationship (see Goffman, 1971, pp. 189–191).

Having outlined the specific terminology used by this thesis, the model of network ties used and created by this thesis is now presented.

2.4.2 Tie trajectory model

From the point of tie creation onwards, the relationship can follow a number of trajectories, several of which are explored in the analysis chapters (5-9). It is important to note that no relationship is truly static, but undergoes frequent small transformations. Additionally, when a relationship is undergoing a major transformational phase, e.g., it is moving from being a weak relationship to a strong one, or from functional to dysfunctional, it may occupy some space in between those two states, whilst being truly neither. A crucial question this thesis uses to interrogate both the thesis' data, and the literature on network studies, is "*how* did the network come to be like that?" – for example, by what process did your partner or your best friend come to occupy that role? If there is someone you really dislike, through what process did this state occur? When looking back at our own past and present relationships, for some relationships there may be absolute clarity about a "change signal" (Goffman, 1971, p. 203) that moved the relationship to a different level: the moment you found out your colleague was gossiping behind your back, or the moment your current partner first asked you on a date. However, for others the process may be distinctly less clear. This is where the type of data used by this thesis is useful as it can show in detail the entire relational history between two people, documenting any changes *en route*.

This thesis presents a fundamentally transformational theory of network ties and relationships, but also acknowledges that some relationships can remain relatively static until they decay. These 'static' relationships are generally task-based, and probably have a limited time in which to operate. For example, your rushed order of your usual drink at your regular coffee shop: maybe the barista, once they have deduced you are a person of habit, greets you every day with “good morning, the usual?”. You reply “please” and then you take your leave wishing each other a good day – and perhaps it never goes any further. Then you find out the barista has a new job, and do not meet them again. This relationship started and remained categorically weak and functional until its sudden decay. As Kádár notes: “rituals do not have to be clearly constructive or destructive in a relational sense: there are also stasis rituals, which are meant to uphold in-group or general social relationships” (Kádár, 2017a), this greeting and phatic talk is one such ritual.

The following interactional network model attempts to cover all possibilities for tie formation, transformation, and decay, drawing on insights from the literature, the thesis’ data, and pragmatic analyses of different relationships (e.g., O’Driscoll, 2013; Kádár, 2017a).

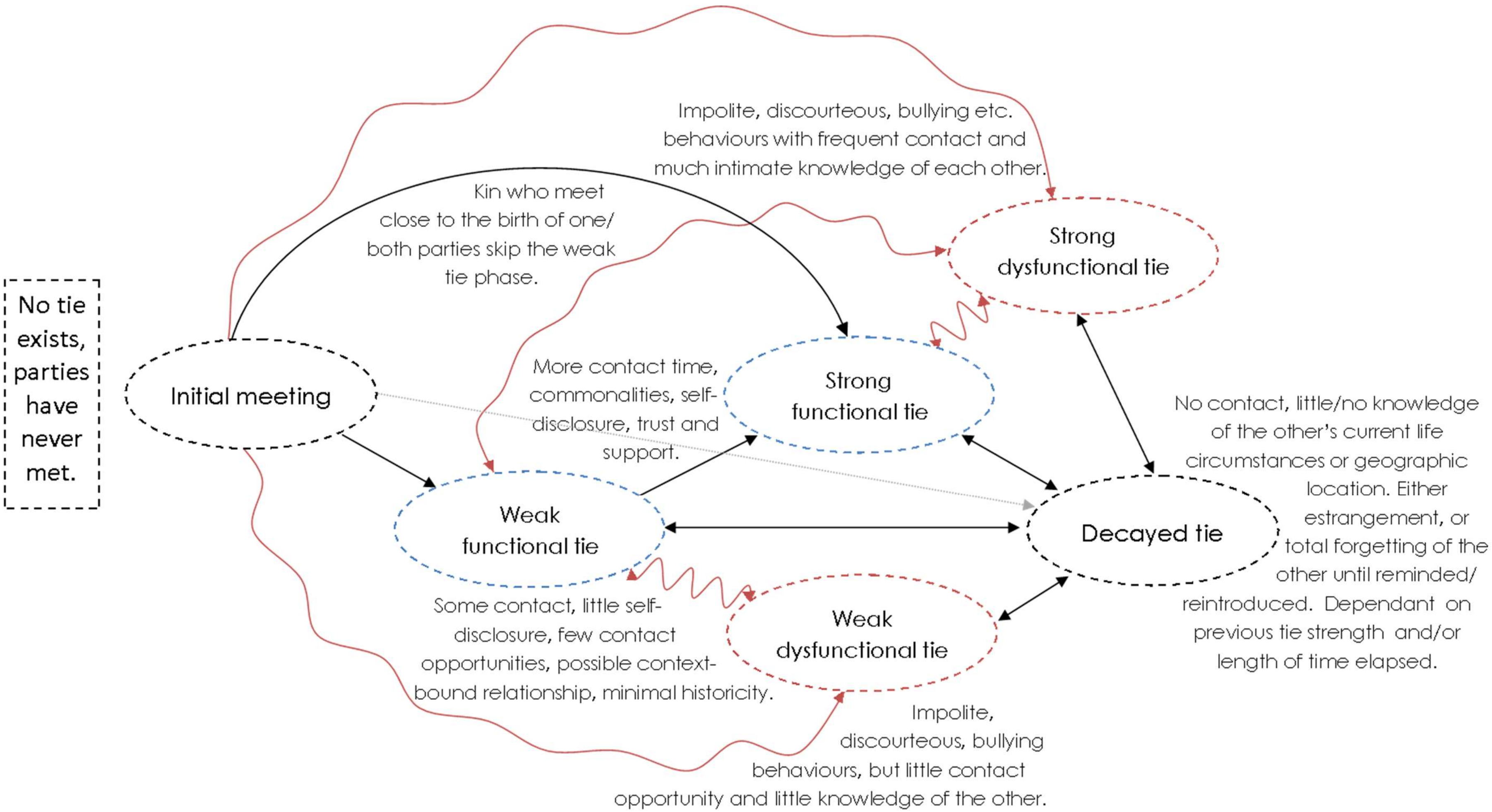

Figure 1: Model of interactional network ties[9]

[9] A version of the diagram without additional text annotations can be viewed in the Appendix, section 11.4.

The initial meeting represents the first instance of acquaintanceship, from which the concerned parties cannot revert to non-acquaintanceship (Goffman, 1971, p. 189). From here, dependent on the context of the meeting and the nature of the interaction, the tie can advance to any of the five tie-types. The tie can immediately begin to decay if participants never meet again (grey arrow), it can become a weak tie if there is some sporadic interaction, and it can become immediately strong in the case of kin[10] ties which develop when at least one party is in early childhood. All arrows leading from the initial meeting have a single arrowhead, showing that the tie must change, and cannot revert to being an initial meeting on a second occasion, even if participants initially fail to recognise each other.[11] However, under exceptional circumstances, such as amnesia/brain injury, this may be possible.

Red wavy lines illustrate relationship destabilisation e.g. offence, abuse, out-of-the-ordinary behaviour etc. These represent a tipping point, where relationships can either be repaired, returning to where they were before, move down a black arrow to another tie type, or can become dysfunctional and characterised by enmity. For example, a strong dysfunctional tie could be one between classmates at school or between kin such as a married couple or carer and child. In these relationships there are multiple contact opportunities and parties have good knowledge of each other. A weak dysfunctional tie on the other hand may be between a disgruntled customer and a shop assistant, or a chance encounter with a rude drunk person or heckler etc., (Kádár, 2017a). Time spent in either 'dysfunctional' tie zone may be very brief, as these negative relationships can be subject to rapid decay, or may be extended. It is important to note that one argument between, for example, a married couple, does not make their relationship dysfunctional, rather a dysfunctional relationship is one characterised and maintained through abusive/damaging interactions. An argument may briefly move functional ties onto the destabilisation arrow, but if they reconcile, they return to a positive, functional relationship. It is important to note that one or more people may enact a different relationship type with one or more others e.g. making a pretence at being functional, or pretending not to know someone. In these cases, it would be difficult

[10] Here, and in Figure 1 'kin' is used loosely, e.g. it may include close family friends and other such intimate, near-familial relationships.

[11] This is an idea explored in the TV series *How I Met Your Mother* (Episode 'Double Date', aired 2009) where the character Ted dates a girl again several years later and neither recognises the other until finally the penny drops. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1510422/

for an analyst to ascertain the true relationship without candid and honest participant disclosure, and this human ability to hide the truth will always present problems.

From the point of decay, relationships can be reinitiated, and whether they were previously functional (blue outlines) or dysfunctional (red outlines), the relational parameters may change upon this reinitiation. For example, an estranged parent may attempt reconciliation; a childhood bully may apologise as an adult and attempt to rebuild the relationship; two former best friends who became separated may have a chance meeting and reignite their friendship etc.

It is important to note that at all levels there may be asymmetry, self-disclosures may be one-sided, the bullied/abused may never be the bully/abuser etc. It should also be clarified that a meeting, through some medium (face-to-face, CMC, telephone etc.), must have taken place for a tie to be present. A celebrity fan does *not* have a relationship with that celebrity if they have not had reciprocal contact through any medium – however deluded about this fact they may be. As mentioned previously, they can however, attempt to enact such a relationship, even to the extent of fabricating evidence.

It should also be noted that tie types have fuzzy boundaries, and while participants are in some intermediate phase i.e. making progress from one type to another, it may be hard to define precisely where their relationship stands. Defining a relationship as existing somewhere between two tie types *is* and *should be* valid; it is a complexity of real human relationships not often mentioned in the literature, and it accounts for such phenomena as business contacts (or other task/context-bound relationships) developing into friendships, as this thesis, especially Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, explores in detail. It is also probably the reason that certain social media sites provide such labels as “it’s complicated” to describe relationships.

Additionally, it is possible for a relationship tie to be maintained only through conventionally polite or ‘politic’ behaviour. There is nothing that states a relationship must be reinforced, or indeed must destabilise. It is entirely possible for rote, polite, interactions to define a relationship, with no changes made by either participant, even for multiple years. Such relationships as this are examined in Chapter 8.

Having presented this model, the thesis now moves on to describe the processes which allowed this model to take shape – the data collection and analysis, research design, and ethics.

Chapter 3 Methodology

"Always listen to experts. They'll tell you what can't be done, and why. Then do it."
– Robert A. Heinlein (1973, p. 142)

3.1 Introduction

This thesis, as described in Chapter 1, has two primary objectives: 1) to build an improved theory of network ties as established, reinforced, maintained, destabilised and decayed through the medium of email and 2) to describe the dataset in such detail that the thesis could provide a useful resource for future researchers. This chapter describes: the data collection, anonymization and ethical process; the reason behind the thesis' aims; the research theoretical perspective; and the methods of data analysis.

3.2 Data collection

The participants for this study were selected based on whether or not they had contacted Liz, the business owner, for proofreading or transcription services *regardless of whether work was actually undertaken or not*, and based on their being from a cultural background which was not British. Although the focus of the study was not specifically determined before data were collected (see 3.4 Research design), I had already decided I wanted to work with intercultural email due to my interest in intercultural pragmatics and my desire to see what cultural factors may affect this type of communication.

The data are a collection of email conversations between Liz, the owner of a small business (sole trader) and her clients: international students and researchers who got in contact for proofreading and transcription services. The data total a collection of 1072 email messages, equalling approximately 70,000 total words, around half of which were written by Liz. The mean number of messages in a 'conversation' is 56, with the most being 147 and the least, 5. There are 19 clients from a variety of nationalities e.g. North African, West African, East Asian etc. More detailed participant information can be found in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

On 27th May 2014, preliminary permission requests were sent out to many existing clients asking for their permission to use their emails with Liz for this research. This email also assured clients of my commitment to anonymization and data protection, and requested some basic information about them including their country of origin and mother tongue (see section 11.7 for a copy of this email template). Of the 33 clients initially contacted, I received 19 acceptances and one refusal, while 14 clients did not reply.

The data for this study, from the 19 clients who agreed to take part, were collected from earliest June 2011 until latest May 2015. I obtained informed ethical consent from all participants before including them for coding and data clean-up. The permission obtained was initially given via their response to the aforementioned standard email I sent to all clients. This was before the study went through the official ethics process as I wanted to make sure I would have enough participants to make the study worthwhile. When official ethics approval was obtained (as described in the following section), I then sent the official documentation and asked participants to give their permissions on the official forms. Also included for permissions and anonymization were two referrers who had written emails introducing clients; these were not clients themselves, but mutual acquaintances of Liz and the client.

Thus, the data collection dates were determined by those clients who agreed to be part of the study, some of whom were clients with whom all business had been concluded in the past, and some of whom were returning or continuing clients at the time my study started. Because some business was concluded but other business was ongoing, the final data collection date for the majority of clients is between May and September 2014; the dates at which replies to my initial participation request emails were responded to. For most clients, these are the final emails included in the dataset. However, for some clients there was some later data collection: some clients were later asked to provide or clarify answers to questions about their native language, home country, how they heard about the service and so on. Therefore these emails are included as they provide important supplementary information. Other clients with whom work was started after the project was conceived (Alice, Hai and Miyako), were informed about the project and asked for their permission after the work was concluded and payment had been received. Until the point at which permission was received, their emails were not included for clean-up and analysis.

The fact that the majority of emails were collected after the "moment of production", as described by Merrison et al. (2012, p. 1084) "effectively sidestep[s] the observer's paradox" as the emails were not produced in the knowledge they would be used in this study.

This is of course not the case for post-May 2014 emails produced by Liz, as at this point she was aware the emails would potentially be used (subject to client permission), and is also not the case for *ongoing* clients' post-May 2014 emails. The number of emails potentially affected in this way are shown below. However, as this is task-driven non-elicited communication, the influence of the observer's paradox on Liz or the clients should be minimal. This potential problem is discussed in more detail in section 10.2

Client	Business-related emails post-May 2014		PhD permission related emails (including request email)		Total emails	Effected emails as % of total	Business emails affected	
	Liz	Client	Liz	Client			Liz	Client
Abdessalam			2	1	14	21%	0%	0%
Alice	38		2	2	97	43%	100%	0%
Alya			2	2	17	24%	0%	0%
Avin	13	15	2	2	55	58%	54%	56%
Dana			4	3	40	18%	0%	0%
Hai	20		2	2	54	44%	100%	0%
Hassan	17	15	4	4	62	65%	63%	56%
Imran			3	1	73	5%	0%	0%
Irma			2	1	37	8%	0%	0%
Ivie	4	7	2	1	27	52%	33%	58%
Lisa			3	3	13	46%	0%	0%
Lovemore			2	1	5	60%	0%	0%
Meera			2	1	66	5%	0%	0%
Miyako	2		2	1	8	63%	100%	0%
Ruth			6	5	120	9%	0%	0%
Sofia			2	1	29	10%	0%	0%
Supaksorn			2	1	147	2%	0%	0%
Victoria	2	3	3	2	60	17%	7%	11%
Zétény	15	24	1	1	145	28%	24%	30%
Liz total	111		48		515	31%		
Client total		64		35	554	18%		
Business emails only					986	18%	24%	12%

Table 1: Possible influence of observer's paradox

As Table 1 shows, Liz produced 159 total emails after the date at which the project was decided upon, 111 of these were business-related, and 48 were emails collecting information and permissions for the thesis, thus around 24% of her business emails were produced in the knowledge that they may be, or would be, included in the study. For Alice, Hai and Miyako, it can be seen that all emails Liz produced were with the awareness of the project, though for all three clients, none were informed about the project until business had concluded, at which point they were asked for permissions. Thus, a smaller percentage around 12% of client business emails were potentially affected.

3.3 Ethics

As this project uses naturally occurring email data which were retrospectively gathered for inclusion in this project,[12] ethics approval had to be gained before any data could be used. The ethics approval process followed was laid out by the University of Huddersfield and included submitting a detailed project plan stating what data would be used, how it would be used, and the aims of the project, along with producing participant information forms and permission forms for signing. The permissions sought from participants were the use of their email data for analysis (subject to thorough anonymization), and their permission to be interviewed.[13]

The anonymization process for the data was extensive, as not only could participants be identified by their names, but also by references to their specific research areas and verbatim excerpts from their work pasted into the email. As the majority of them were postgraduate, they were engaged in unique and specific research from all disciplines, which could be used to identify them. Therefore, the following identifying information was removed, or anonymized, in all emails:

- Names of clients
- Specific countries of origin, plus mother tongue if strongly linked with a specific country or minority group.

[12] i.e., as described, emails were gathered for the corpus post-production. As precedent, compare the email corpus from Gimenez (2006); and the British corpus from Merrison et al. (2012).

[13] The idea of conducting and transcribing post-event interviews was abandoned part-way through the project due to time constraints, so, although permission was obtained for this from all but one participant (this participant though, did give her permission for her emails to be included and analysed) these permissions were not needed. Copies of the permission form and information form can be seen in the Appendix section 11.8.

- Names of tutors, other staff members, friends, referrers etc. who were mentioned by the clients
- Email addresses, telephone numbers, bank details and other personal information
- References to any specific university
- Excerpts of clients' work directly cut and pasted into emails

This extensive alteration has meant that the 'clean' data is for some emails much shorter than the original emails (for example where long work excerpts have been redacted). In cases where statistics were needed, the original email length has been used, though none of the actual text appears in the study. Where text is omitted for confidentiality reasons, this is always clearly marked with descriptions of what was removed, e.g. [work excerpt], in square brackets.

The participants were anonymised by providing pseudonyms (forename and surname, plus middle initial and nickname where needed). These names were found by searching online for common names from the given countries of origin and first languages of the participants. Any offence given in the choosing of these names is entirely accidental and unintended, and all care was taken to ensure that these names were appropriate.[14]

This chapter now moves on to discuss the research design including the research philosophy followed, the way the data were approached, and the formulation of the thesis aims.

3.4 Research design

This study follows an interpretative design, given its primarily qualitative nature, and the interest in, as Fletcher (2011, p. 43) states: "people's words, perspectives, experiences or accounts", the creation of meaning, and making sense of "particular activities". An inductive approach has been followed, creating theory from data rather than testing a pre-existing hypothesis. As such, I initially began to interrogate the data with few pre-conceived ideas as to what it might show, thinking only that native/non-native British email communication

[14] For example, the two clients from the same West African country (Ivie and Ruth) speak different minority languages, so separate name lists were consulted. Where participants chose to use a Western name and their given name, a Western pseudonym and country-of-origin pseudonym were both selected.

may have some interesting qualities. I did not know, for example, whether my focus would be on different cultures' request strategies, or misunderstandings, or the use of certain address terms etc.; I simply approached the data as open-mindedly as possible. As it turned out, the data did not, to me, illuminate many interesting issues stemming from the intercultural nature of the data; rather, for me, the relational aspect was foregrounded. As Charmaz states:

> The researcher creates an explication, organisation and presentation *of* the data rather than discovering order *within* the data. The discovery process consists of discovering the ideas the *researcher* has about the data after interacting with it (original emphasis, 1990, cited in Willig 2013, p. 77)

As such, the data has been presented in the analysis chapters in such a way as to illuminate the relational aspects, although these are not the only insights the data might offer, and a different researcher would undoubtedly analyse the data in such a way that different features were highlighted.

The exception to this research paradigm is the exploratory data analysis (EDA) chapter (following) which seeks to describe the dataset in terms of its structure in as much detail as possible in order to give the reader a broader insight into the corpus composition, provide a useful resource for future researchers, and to allow the qualitative analysis to draw on these resources for extra detail and verification of the results. As such, this study could be described as a mixed methods study with a strong qualitative bias. The idea for including such a resource as part of the thesis came from personal frustration that many email studies did not provide adequate data (e.g. number of participants, number of emails, date of data collection, etc.) to allow for cross-comparison. This problem is analysed in some detail in section 4.1. The approach taken towards the data in Chapter 4 was EDA, which "is characterized by an extreme flexibility that is necessary for identifying and investigating the range of statistical and substantive phenomena that emerge during empirical research" (Jebb, Parrigon, & Woo, 2017, p. 266). The goal was to understand the structure of the data in a creative way, using whatever tools and methods were most useful for helping the reader visualise the data and recognise patterns within it (Morgenthaler, 2009).

The study however, could never be wholly quantitative given the size of the dataset and the fact that the data represent only one sole trader's interactions with her clients. Thus, it cannot be claimed to be truly generalizable. Thus, an in-depth qualitative approach was taken to advance knowledge in the areas of email communication, use of CMC cues, intercultural business email, and network tie theory as seen through relationships via written language etc.

Additionally, this study can be defined as insider research, in that I, the researcher, can be classified as a "complete member researcher… who [is] already [a] member… of the group or who become[s] fully affiliated during the course of the research" (Adler and Adler (1987), described by Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 55), as mentioned earlier in section 1.4.1. As such I have a unique perspective on the data studied, having been both a participant within it, and a researcher taking an etic perspective on what happens inside it. 'Liz' in the data exists from 30/06/11 to 01/05/15, almost exactly four years from the first recorded email used in the dataset to the last. Thus Liz-the-email-author and Liz-the-researcher live in different temporal spheres (albeit overlapped for a short period), and are separate in terms of their recollections of events, also known as "episodic memory" (Corballis & Suddendorf, 2007, p. 20). This episodic memory is both fragile and malleable; it can be lost and/or inaccurately recalled as events move further into past time. In Husserl's conception of time, as described in the words of Mensch: "just as we interpret a spatial object's getting smaller and contracting together as its spatial departure, so we interpret a primary content's fading as its temporal departure from the now that we occupy." (Mensch, 2014, p. 47). This presents a small methodological dilemma – can I accurately interrogate myself on my perceptions of those events present in my dataset? I would argue that to a degree this may be possible, but is best avoided. Memory is too fallible. This is also a reason why, as well as avoiding reliance on my own subjective opinions, I have not conducted post-event interviews with participants in my dataset. Apart from the time-constraints present in this project, which would make such an undertaking difficult, I did not think it was reasonable to assume exact emotional and contextual recall on events which took place several years ago.

As an insider researcher, I agree with Corbin Dwyer and Buckle who state that:

> As qualitative researchers we are… firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it. The stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these

> individuals with us as we work with the transcripts... We cannot retreat to a distant “researcher” role. (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 61)

There is strength in this approach, as taking texts out of context can be problematic, and there needs to be enough truthful demographic and contextual information to interpret them accurately (Charmaz, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, within reason, my personal knowledge of the participants that goes beyond what is present only in the text, has been occasionally leveraged to provide extra depth to the analysis. This has always been explained in text or in footnotes. Additionally, the longitudinal nature of the data, spanning four years, is a strength of this project. Some Liz/Client relationships were very long-lasting, having periods of contact followed by breaks followed by reinitiation. This helps improve the reliability of the findings, as a snapshot of events over a short period could prove unintentionally atypical (Gray, 2004).

As a researcher, I am doubly and convolutedly involved in the data. As a participant, I was not a researcher, (i.e. I was not conducting ethnographic research by becoming part of a community in order to study it; I was simply conducting business with no pre-conceived notion that the emails filling my inbox would eventually become a dataset). However, as a researcher I am now closer to being a community member than I was as a participant. To explain more clearly, in my data, participants fall into three non-mutually-exclusive groups, which can broadly be described as:

1. University alumna
2. Current students
3. Post-doctoral researchers/lecturers

Many clients who were members of category 2 during the time of conducting business, have now moved into categories 3 and/or 1, while I have moved from category 1 only, to categories 1 and 2, thus bringing me closer to the clients present in my study in terms of my similarity to those clients. Even more confusingly, not only did I have the idea that I would use the emails as my doctoral dataset before I started my doctorate (the idea was in May 2014, my doctorate started officially in the following October), but I was still collecting data when I started my doctorate. At the point at which first contact was initiated with clients

Hai, Miyako and Alice I was a simultaneous member of groups 1 and 2. The following clients also had work overlapping the period at which I started undertaking my doctoral work: Zétény, Hassan, Supaksorn, Ivie, Victoria and Avin (here I am counting only emails which relate to business, not those emails which relate to participants giving information relevant to my PhD). However, I was and am *always* an outsider in terms of culture, as participants were specifically selected because of their non-British cultural backgrounds.

This complex perspective, combined with the fact that I analyse a huge amount of my own textual productions, gives me a unique but biased view of the data. I cannot claim to have always correctly interpreted client illocutionary intent due to possible cultural mismatch, or even Liz's illocutionary intent due to the aforementioned temporal distance problem. However, what I and any other researcher can access, when there is a following email, is the perlocutionary effect on the recipient's language. This is especially in evidence in the destabilisation section (9.2) of this thesis. This is the method this thesis uses to ground its findings; by remaining concerned with the current and historical context in which a text was produced, and by keeping the analysis textually focussed, the thesis makes a strong effort to provide verifiable evidence for its claims. I have a unique perspective on the data, but this does not mean that the findings are invalid or entirely non-replicable. My data presentation and methods could be followed by a researcher investigating network connections using my dataset.

In the following section, I explain how the data was approached in terms of actual steps undertaken for clean-up, analysis and theory generation.

3.5 Data clean-up

The data clean-up process involved cutting and pasting emails from my Hotmail and university email accounts into Word, making sure formatting was consistent and colour-coding the texts to make sure I could quickly and easily differentiate Liz's emails (blue) from the clients' (black). In the clean-up process I also made sure that certain information was included in each text, such as the number of each message in sequence (chronological) for each client, the subject line of the email, the date, whether there was an attachment included or not, and basic information about what this attachment contained. The clean-up also consisted of data anonymization, as described above. Please see Figure 2, p. 51, for an example of the structure of cleaned data.

For ease of use, all emails were converted to the same font and size, although textual alterations such as bolds, italics, underlines etc. were retained, as were inserted emoji, punctuation, spelling, grammar etc. Unfortunately, this process resulted in the loss of font choice, font colour and font size information in most instances. Early on in the project, I did not realise the possible importance of these features as potential CMC cues (see section 7.2.8), and later on it was impossible to rectify, as access to my old university email account was lost along with the original copies of some of the oldest emails.

3.5.1 Data key

This thesis presents many excerpts from the email dataset. Due to the nature of the data, some conventions had to be developed for reproducing that data which differ somewhat from the norm:

++	This is used to indicate elision of text. The standard […] could not be used, as this is used as part of the email text in some instances, where ++ is never used by email authors for any purpose.
/	This is used to indicate a line break where email text is presented as a continuous line.
[ ]	Square brackets are used to indicate the nature of text removed for confidentiality reasons in as much detail as allowable. Square brackets may sometimes contain a description: [telephone number], [excerpt from client's work] etc. or where even such a summary is not possible, brackets may indicate this with [confidential discussion].
[Alice: 2] [Liz to Alice: 5]	The writer of a given email is always the first name in the brackets which appear at the end of an email excerpt. If Liz is the writer, the client to

whom she is writing is also included. The number following the colon indicates the email number in sequence for that client. On occasions where other recipients are included, or the client or Liz is not the writer (as is the case for some referral emails) this is indicated in the brackets e.g. [Robyn to Liz and Zétény: 1].

Where emails are presented indented, not inline, parts of the email are shown and referred to as follows:

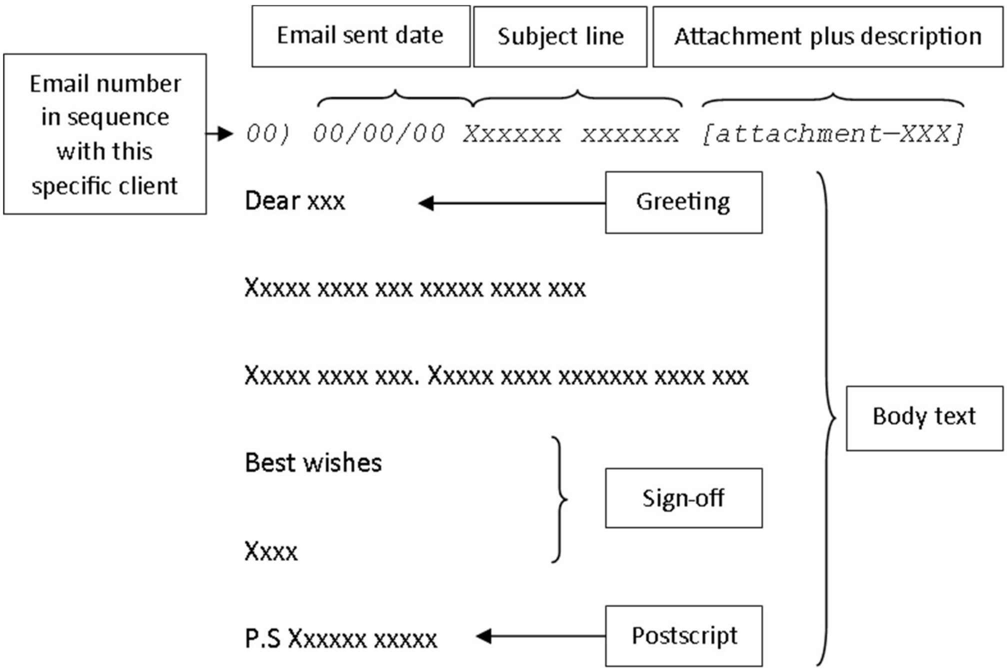

Figure 2: Parts of an email

Throughout the thesis, these font conventions are retained, with the heading (sequence number, plus date, plus subject line and if applicable, attachment description) in Courier New, and the email text in Calibri. Regarding the features represented in Figure 2, only the email number in sequence and the date are present for every email. Across the dataset, emails may have any number of the other features missing. Note that 'body' text/message in some studies does not include the greeting and sign-off (cf. Zummo, 2018a, p. 51).

3.6 Analysis process

Following the data clean-up and anonymization, I loaded each client's email conversation document into QDA Miner Lite (Provalis Research, 2013), a qualitative data management programme which allows for the data to be coded by any terms the researcher chooses, and then recalled either by these codes, or by text excerpts. For example, all examples of the word 'hello' could be recalled with their surrounding context, or, if data has been coded for the year it was produced, all data from a certain year, e.g. 2012 could be retrieved.

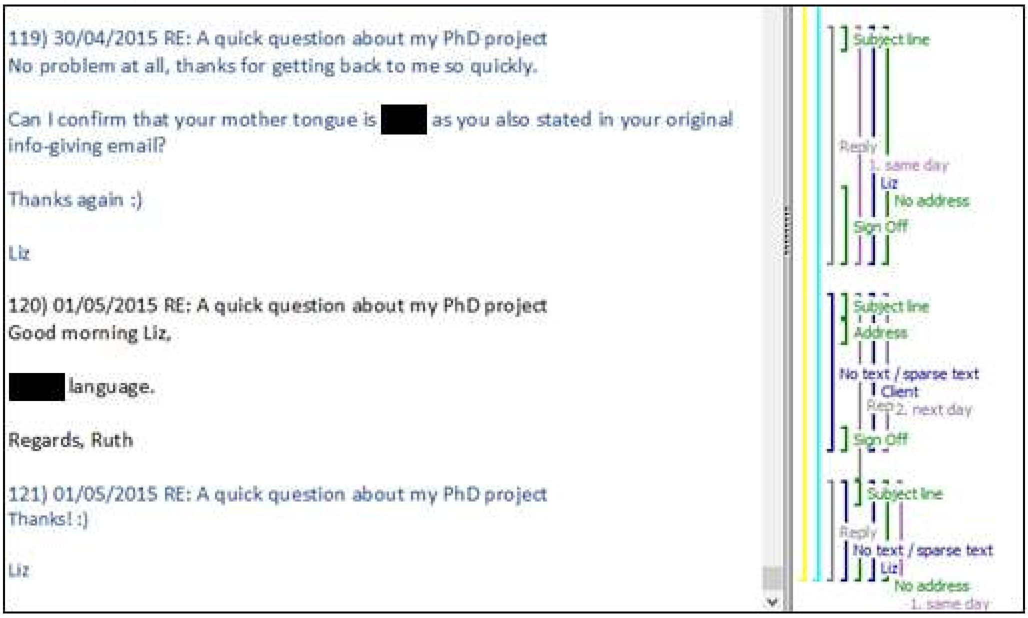

Figure 3: QDA Miner Lite coding example

By overlapping codes, as shown in the figure above (right-hand side), more complex retrievals were available, e.g. all sign-off terms, used by clients only, which were sent within year 2012. A query such as this could be recalled in the following way:

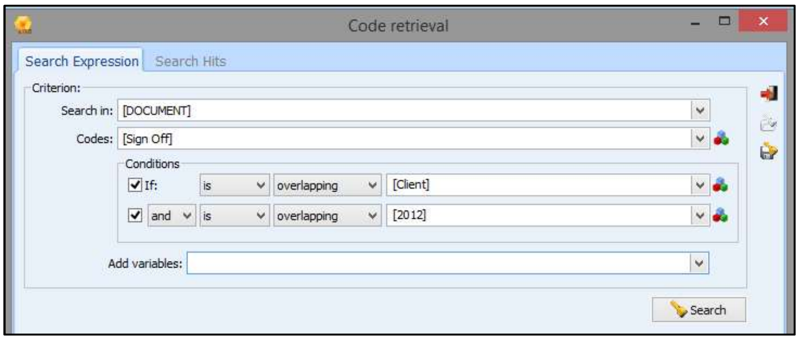

Figure 4: Example QDA complex code retrieval

As can be seen in Figure 3, many of the codes used were objective/structural, e.g. relating to specific parts of the email, the sender, date, whether reply or string email etc. However, *ad hoc* codes were also added which related to what the text was attempting to accomplish, the subject of the text, sentence type, politeness features etc. Any time I noticed an interesting feature, I returned to the texts which had already been coded to see if I had missed that feature. As Sacks sates:

> when we start out with a piece of data, the question of what we are going to end up with, what kind of findings it will give, should not be a consideration. We sit down with a piece of data, make a bunch of observations, and see where they will go (lecture 5, fall 1967) (Sacks, 1985, p. 27)

This is of course a subjective method, and I absolutely acknowledge that other researchers would discover many other features of the data, depending on their theoretical standpoint, personal background, and discipline of choice. Nevertheless, this method can be seen as replicable in the sense that once I had settled on a research question, as informed by my initial coding of the data, I was able to pursue this question systematically with the help of existing literature and my coding. I roughly followed Gibbs' (2014) methodology in that I first did 'open coding' taking an open-minded approach, followed by 'axial coding', where I began to look for themes in the open codes I had established, followed by selective coding once I had decided what the focus of my inquiry would be. As recommended by Willig (2013, p. 72), my research question did indeed "[become] progressively focused throughout the research process", and the final iterations can be seen in section 1.2.

Before I settled on this thesis' inquiry into how relationships are established via email, I explored many other options, again as guided by my initial data familiarisation and coding, however, I eventually settled on the relational aspects of my data, specifically those which could be considered to contribute to network tie creation, reinforcing, decay or destabilisation. I found these to be the most personally engaging and most likely to make a significant contribution to knowledge. However, I do intend to pursue some of my other areas of interest in future publications.

The focus on network tie theory came from my initial investigation into the first contact emails sent by clients and referrers (the first email in each conversation with each client). Having analysed these it was obvious that the majority of clients mentioned someone who had referred them to the service, or were in fact introduced directly by the referrer emailing Liz (as shown in Chapter 5, sections 5.2.3 and 5.3). This spurred my reading into referrals and network connections, and the creation and maintenance of relationships, creating the inquiry that would drive the entire thesis.

An excerpt from my coding diary/memos, just one month into my PhD study, shows the germ of this idea already in progress. At this point however, this was conceptualised as a possible interview question:

> *…with some participants who I have worked with on a long-term basis and met multiple times. I personally perceive there to have been a transition point in our relationship progressing from something purely formal to something a bit closer to genuine friendship… I'd like to ask a few select participants if they felt there was a similar change from their perspective.*

The above is of course a highly subjective observation, not supported by rigorous inquiry at the stage it was written; however, as shown throughout the thesis, there is unequivocal evidence that relationships were reinforced and transformed over time. This looking into referrals also led me to use another technique from (abbreviated) Grounded Theory[15], comparative analysis (Willig, 2013, p. 71). I realised at this point that I had coded a few disparate things as referrals, for example, statements such as "Mr Aditya Farooq [AFref] (School of Business Studies) referred me your name" [Meera: 1] were coded as 'referral' along with such disclosures as "I have commanded my friends to sent their assignments to you" [Hassan: 42]. These clearly related but different phenomena required splitting into smaller subcategories in order to be analysed effectively.

This chapter has demonstrated how the idea for the thesis' focus was developed through a detailed interrogation of the data, in an initially ad-hoc style and then with the help of the literature to investigate specific interesting features. Along the way, my investigation has also been influenced by conversations with my supervisors, and academic audiences at the LIAR IV (2016), IPrA 15 (2017) and SymPol11 (2018) conferences, to whom I am extremely grateful.

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[15] Full Grounded Theory involves moving between coding and collecting, and can only be used where data does not exist in advance. For any kind of historic data, the researcher must use the abbreviated version of Grounded Theory.

The following chapter begins the exploratory data analysis, giving insight into the composition of the network, the numerical makeup of the dataset and some demographic information about the participants. This sets the scene for the following qualitative analysis, which describe in detail some of the features which contribute to creating, reinforcing, maintaining, destabilising and decaying network ties.

Chapter 4 Exploratory Data Analysis

“He was constantly reminded of how startlingly different a place the world was when viewed from a point only three feet to the left.”
– Douglas Adams (2002, p. 221)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focusses on the structure and metadata of the dataset, such as relationships between study participants, statistics related to email length and response time etc. and a short quantitative analysis of mimetic behaviour. This information is valuable for two reasons: First, it paints a very detailed picture of the makeup of the data, including participant information, when emails were sent, length of emails, network formation etc. This information will allow this dataset to be accurately cross-compared with other datasets thus broadening research into email data and broadening the resources available to researchers in the field. It will also allow readers to form an impression of the dataset as a whole, before moving on to more micro-level analyses, thus giving more context. Second, this material informs the five further analysis chapters by providing broader contextual information on the emails studied e.g. by enabling subsets of the data to be compared with the entire dataset. This is crucial information as the analyses show that writers are highly influenced by contextual factors (which go beyond the subject matter of the prior email) when choosing what to include and what to leave out of their messages.

Regarding the first point, currently researchers using email data and wanting to compare the size and diversity of their dataset to previous research will find that in many studies this information is not readily available, making these kinds of comparisons difficult. Comparisons of participant and email numbers can only be undertaken for studies that actually list their participant numbers and numbers of emails collected, which several do not, making it difficult to decide how generalizable their claims might be. Another feature only occasionally listed is the cumulative length of all emails studied; this would be useful and interesting in order to cross-compare average lengths of emails across genres, years and countries, and to have a better idea of corpus size, but most studies do not mention it at all. Others give measurements which are difficult to quantify in terms of word count and which add little to one’s understanding of the dataset, for example; “Email exchanges, transferred to Word documents, ranged from 18 pages to 64 double spaced pages in length per student." (Gordon & Luke, 2012, p. 116).

Table 2 below is presented to show the extent of this problem. It shows studies used to inform the analysis in this thesis, along with the data that was specified regarding participant number, the dates of data collection, the number of emails analysed, the number of words in those emails and other relevant information such as the type of study, the types of data used and the countries that contributed the data.

Study Author(s)	Study date	Data from	Collection period	People in data	No. emails	No. words (emails)	Data type	Countries and languages	Study focus
Gimenez	(2006)	??	??	13	52	??	International business emails	Netherlands, Australia, UK, US, Mexico (English)	Structure and language use in embedded emails.
Goldstein and Evans Sabin	(2006)	??	??	2?[a]	280	??	Emails from the authors' personal inboxes	Infer US, but possible inter-cultural content (English)	Is email speech, writing, or a hybrid genre?
Kankaanranta	(2006)	??	??	103	282	??	International business emails plus ancillary and interview data	Finland, Sweden (ELF)	Identify email genres and describe how certain moves (salutation, closing, requesting) were textualised.
Whalen et al.	(2009)	2004?[b]	N/A	105	210	53122[c]	Solicited emails from young people "to a close friend"	83 Scotland plus Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand & US (English)	How non-literal language is used by young people in emails to friends
Cho	(2010)	1996	2 weeks	10	197	16569	Emails, written memoranda and questionnaires	Australia (English)	Comparing emails with written memoranda in terms of linguistic features.
Gordon and Luke	(2012)	??	14 weeks	9	224[d]	??	Emails from students to their supervisor during placement	US (English)	How professional identity development occurs in email
Incelli	(2013)	2010	10 months	7	88	??	International business emails and questionnaires	UK and Italy (English, ELF)	How writers accommodate to non-native speakers and what happens in instances of miscommunication.
Skovholt et al.	(2014)	2000-2001	??	8	611	??	Business internal Finnish-Swedish corporation	Finland, Sweden (Finnish, Swedish, ELF)	What functions are served by emoticons used in different contexts?
		2003	3 weeks	??	504	??	Business to consumer	Denmark (Danish)	
		2004	5 months	11	491	??	Business internal email	Norway (Norwegian)	
McKeown and Zhang	(2015)	2013	3 weeks	53	387	??	Business internal emails and emails to customers plus an in-depth email donor interview	UK (English)	How opening salutation and closing valediction vary in British workplace emails.
De Felice and Garretson	(2018)	2009-2013	4 years[e]	59	500	20632	Emails from Hillary Clinton to those she worked with while in office as Secretary of State	US (English)	Are there linguistic differences in emails sent up/down the hierarchy, between the genders, and between Clinton's inner and outer circle members?
Zummo	(2018a, 2018b)	2015-2016	5 months	5	155	??	International business-to-business email	Italy and Pakistan (ELF)	2018a: spoken discourse features of email 2018b: politeness and troubles talk

Table 2: Previous email studies

Table Key

?? *unknown.*

ELF *English as a Lingua Franca*

a *data stated as from authors' inboxes, but it is not stated if Goldstein and Evans Sabin are the only email writers or if emails written to them are included, and if so, from how many other writers.*

b *dataset collected and used by a previous study, published 2004; however, the specific collection date is unstated.*

c *estimate based on study's stated mean length per email*

d *estimate based on study description that each of the 8 students were supposed to send 1 email per week over 14 weeks (112 emails) which the supervisor would reply to (a further 112 emails). It was not stated if this pattern was followed perfectly or if participants deviated from it.*

e *emails are a subset from a 33,000 email corpus, collected between Jan 2009-Feb 2013, it is not stated whether subset emails span the entire 4-year period, or not.*

As can be seen in the table above, only Cho (2010) and De Felice and Garretson (2018) present the full extent of their data composition clearly, while for Whalen et al. (2009) much is deducible, though not all stated outright. The table above also illuminates another problem with prior email studies; for all studies with the exception of Skovholt et al., the number of collected emails is fairly small and data is often not longitudinal, meaning there is less opportunity to examine diachronic factors and network change.[16] As this is one of the strengths of my dataset, network formation and change over time is something this chapter examines in detail in section 4.3.

In order to make sure this thesis does not have the shortcomings of some prior studies, this chapter will:

- Present how the network between the participants is structured and how it changed over time

[16] It should be noted that the Enron email corpus has been used successfully to investigate such questions, although again, certain information is lacking. See section 4.3 and Appendix 11.3 for more detail.

- Enable the reader to have a deeper understanding of where the emails informing the qualitative analysis chapters have come from
- Allow the analysis chapters to avoid repetition by simply referring back to this chapter
- Create a really detailed description of the email data from many perspectives which will give future research a valuable baseline of comparison.

This chapter is structured as follows: first, the study participant data (as allowed within ethical guidelines) is presented giving an overview of who is in the dataset, how much they wrote, what service(s) they used, the business outcome etc. This will give the reader a better understanding of who the participants are. Second, the network formation is presented through a number of network diagrams. These visually represent when clients were contacted, how often, and which clients were in contact during which periods. In this section, network diagrams are also presented which show mentions of other participants by the clients and Liz, in this way the interconnectedness of some of the participants is shown. Third, statistics are presented showing some of the key features of the dataset, such as how quickly response emails were sent, how often strings of emails from the same sender occurred etc. Finally, a short summary of *The pragmatics of mimesis: A case study of intercultural email communication* (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017), a paper authored by me and my former first supervisor, is presented. This paper was produced during the PhD, using a slightly reduced section of the same dataset. It is relevant here because it bridges the gap between showing patterns by using statistics, and the analysis of relational work in the following chapters. By analysing mimetic behaviour in a quantitative way, it is shown how a statistical analysis can reveal relational features of the data.

4.2 The study participants

Table 3 presents data on the study participants:

Pseudonym	Region of origin	L1[17]	Academic area[18]	First-contact date	Type of work requested	Work done for client?	Met in person?	Total #msg	Client #emails	Liz #emails	Liz av. WC	Client WC
Abdessalam Shamekh (Abdel)	North Africa	Arabic, 89%	Business/Law	14/07/2013	Proofreading	yes	no	14	6	8	84	60
Alice Lam	Southeast Asia	ML, 8%	English Lit./Lang.	20/10/2014	Proofreading	yes	no	97[19]	57	40	76	71
Alya al-Badri	North Africa	Arabic, 89%	English Lit./Lang.	27/06/2013	Proofreading	no	yes	17	9	8	86	37
Avin Jaziri	West Asia	ML, 9% Arabic, 73%	English Lit./Lang.	24/07/2013	Transcription	yes	yes	56	29	26	78	53
Dana Hodza	Central Europe	NL, 88%	Business/Law	13/09/2013	Proofreading	yes	no	40	20	20	73	36
Hai Chen	East Asia	NL, 65% ML, 0.3%	English Lit./Lang.	09/12/2014	Proofreading	yes	yes	55	32	22	55	32
Hassan Maziq	North Africa	Arabic, 89%	Business/Law	30/03/2014	Proofreading	yes	no	62	31	31	48	36
Imran Malik	South Asia	ML, 10%	Business/Law	28/06/2012	Proofreading	yes	yes	73	34	39	71	49
Irma Biya	Central Africa	English, 31%	Health	29/05/2013	Proofreading	yes	no	37	18	19	84	43
Ivie Ezeli	West Africa	ML, 1%	Health	28/02/2014	Proofreading	yes	no	27	13	14	47	23
Lisa Grant	Northern South America	English, 87%	?[20]	29/03/2013	Proofreading	no	no	14	6	7	89	46
Lovemore Matongo	South Africa	NL, 70% English, 2%	Business/Law	05/10/2011	Proofreading	no	yes	5	2	3	120	65
Meera Khan	South Asia	NL, 8%	Psychology	30/06/2011	Proofreading	yes	yes	64	34	30	71	44
Miyako Kojima	East Asia	NL, 100%	English Lit./Lang.	06/08/2014	Proofreading	yes	no	8	4	4	92	79
Ruth Babangida	West Africa	NL, 32%	Health	25/05/2012	Proofreading and Transcription	yes	yes	121	62	58	63	59
Sofia Bonilla	Northern South America	Spanish, 97%	Engineering	11/09/2013	Proofreading	yes	yes	29	13	16	69	50
Supaksorn Sangprathum (Ploy)	Southeast Asia	NL, 30%	English Lit./Lang.	16/12/2012	Proofreading	yes	yes	147	72	75	82	102
Victoria (Huilang) Lee	East Asia	NL, 65%	Business/Law	30/01/2014	Proofreading	yes	no	60	29	31	50	48
Zétény B. Bathory	Central Europe	NL, 99%	English Lit./Lang.	29/03/2012	Proofreading	yes	yes	146	82	63	80	71
Averages									29	27	75	53

Table 3: Study participants

17 For languages spoken primarily in specific countries, a description is simply given, according to Ethnologue (2018). ML = Minority Language, NL = National Language or major language, percentage refers to percentage of total population who speak this language as L1.

18 These are deliberately non-specific in order to protect client confidentiality

19 For some clients, the total of Liz plus Client emails equals one less than the total of all messages, this is because some clients were introduced by a third party, who authored the first email in that client's dataset.

20 No work was ever completed for this client, and I did not ask about her discipline.

Due to space considerations, column titles had to be reduced in size, so, where needed, they are explained here:

Pseudonym: A name chosen by me that parallels both the nationality of the client and the format of their real name, e.g., a nickname, middle initial or alternative first name is provided where the participant used one in the data.

Region of origin: Participant's self-reported nationality, made less specific to protect their identities.

L1: Participant's given answer to "The language or languages you first learned to speak as a young child (your 'Mother Tongue')" anonymised, where necessary, to protect their identity. It was deemed necessary to anonymise where a client spoke a language spoken in few countries, it was not deemed necessary for languages such as Spanish, English, Arabic etc. which are very widely spoken.

Work done for client?: This column gives a yes/no answer regarding whether work was done or not.

Met in person?: Whether Liz and the client at any point met face-to-face.

Total #msg: This records the total number of emails; this may include messages from others such as mutual acquaintances of Liz and the client who initially put the two parties in contact with one another (referred to in the data as 'referrers').

WC: word count using the non-redacted email data in order to make totals more accurate.

While the table above represents those clients who responded and agreed to take part in this research, they represent just over half of the 34 people contacted. All but one of the others did not respond at all (as opposed to responding in order to opt out, as a single client did), and as Table 4 below shows, there are clearly a few factors which may have influenced their decisions as compared to those clients who agreed to become study participants.

I must here take the time to acknowledge a possible bias in my data. The conversations reproduced in this thesis, are by and large, exemplary of good client-business relations. This possibly represents a skewed view of Liz's interactions with clients in general, as those clients with whom relationships were not strongly developed may have been those who did not respond to my request for data. Of course, some clients may have changed their email addresses or there may be other reasons my request was not answered, but the data below do present a statistical difference between the responders and non-responders. I present below, rough and anonymised statistics on those who did, and did not, respond to my request to use their emails as part of my PhD data set.

Pseudonym	Last contact	PhD request email sent	Time gap (days)	Total no. messages	Met in person?
Alice Lam	25/01/2015	30/01/2015	5	95	no
Hai Chen	07/02/2015	20/02/2015	13	54	yes
Victoria (Huilang) Lee	11/05/2014	27/05/2014	16	60	no
Ivie Ezeli	09/05/2014	27/05/2014	18	27	no
Zétény B. Bathory	01/05/2014	19/05/2014	18	144	yes
Hassan Maziq	01/05/2014	27/05/2014	26	62	no
non-responder 3[a]	03/09/2014	19/10/2014	46	22	no
Supaksorn Sangprathum (Ploy)	11/04/2014	29/05/2014	48	147	yes
Miyako Kojima	17/08/2014	17/10/2014	61	8	no
Ruth Babangida	04/03/2014	27/05/2014	84	121	yes
Meera Khan	02/03/2014	27/05/2014	86	64	yes
non-responder 9	09/01/2014	27/05/2014	138	52	yes
Dana Hodza	12/12/2013	27/05/2014	166	40	no
Sofia Bonilla	21/10/2013	27/05/2014	218	29	yes
Avin Jaziri	29/08/2013	27/05/2014	271	55	yes
Alya al-Badri	07/08/2013	27/05/2014	293	17	yes
Abdessalam Shamekh (Abdel)	22/07/2013	27/05/2014	309	13	no
Irma Biya	15/07/2013	27/05/2014	316	37	no
non-responder 1	08/07/2013	27/05/2014	323	5	no
non-responder 8	20/06/2013	27/05/2014	341	16	no
non-responder 5	06/06/2013	27/05/2014	355	7	no
Imran Malik	02/05/2013	30/09/2014	516	72	yes
non-responder 11	08/11/2012	27/05/2014	565	21	no
Lisa Grant	09/04/2013	25/01/2015	656	13	no
non-responder 7[b]	14/04/2013	20/02/2015	677	16	yes
non-responder 13	24/03/2012	27/05/2014	794	3	no
non-responder 12[c]	15/03/2012	27/05/2014	803	9	no
non-responder 6	27/02/2012	27/05/2014	820	9	no
non-responder 4	10/11/2011	27/05/2014	929	9	no
Lovemore Matongo	06/10/2011	27/05/2014	964	5	yes
non-responder 10[d]	05/10/2011	27/05/2014	965	13	no
non-responder 2	30/09/2011	27/05/2014	970	33	no
non-responder 14	16/04/2011	27/05/2014	1137	3	no

Table 4: Study participants and non-responders

a Client got in contact again to refer a friend after my request
b Client got in contact again 26/10/16 to request proofreading
c My pre-PhD email was requesting payment, which was never responded to
d Mail delivery failure for request email

For clarity, non-responders are shaded blue. All clients listed above are arranged by the time gap between the final email sent by either Liz or the client, and the email sent requesting permission to be included in the thesis' dataset. A marked pattern can be seen where time gaps nearing one year in length may make clients less willing to help (or may mean that, as is the case with non-responder 10, they no longer have access to the email address used when they were last in contact). This unwillingness to help may also indicate network tie decay (Burt, 2001), a theme which is fully explored in Chapter 9. It is also clear that the blue-shaded clients are more likely to have had a shorter email conversation, the average length being 15 emails compared to 57 for study participants. They are also less likely to have met Liz face-to-face. All these variables factor into the presence of a stronger tie (see Chapter 6). Therefore, it is likely that ties between Liz and the study participants are more likely to be strong rather than weak, and functional rather than dysfunctional. This limits the investigation to these types of relationships, but means that data on reinforcing behaviours is very detailed and rich.

4.3 Network formation

In the literature on network formation, emails have occasionally been used to reveal ties between members of a network, see for example, Diesner et al. (2005); Hardin, Sarkis, & Pomona College Undergraduate Research Circle (2015) and Lin (2010). Each of these studies constructed network diagrams using the Enron corpus[21], with employees as nodes, and edges representing the emails sent between employees. In the Enron corpus – containing a large number of people within a single company – it was found that smaller communities were formed, some of whom had no links between their network and the network of others (in terms of emails sent) (Diesner et al., 2005, p. 213). Interestingly, during the period where the Enron company was in crisis and being investigated for fraud, Diesner et al. found that communication increased between dyads, perhaps suggesting that people were choosing to communicate less widely and only with their most trusted contacts (2005, p. 215). Through this qualitative approach to looking at where and how frequently communication was

[21] See Appendix 11.3 for a description of the Enron email corpus.

happening within the company over time, Deisner et al. concluded that “Over time, the communication structures appear to reflect changing environmental, legal, and social conditions in which business is done.” (Diesner et al., 2005, p. 224).

Hardin et al. (2015, p. 4) also used network plotting through emails sent to identify which persons within the organisation were more relatively important compared to others. This is particularly interesting to investigate as this kind of network mapping can reveal the functional importance of different employees, no matter where they appear in the management chain. Mapping clients in my dataset can have a similar function, it can show which nodes are connected to others, illuminate the key players in network expansion (in terms of introducing new members via referrals), and show when and between which participants communication was most frequent. To begin, I first explain the period over which emails were collected, then move on to mapping the connections between participants over the years.

As can be seen in Table 3, first-contact dates range from 30/06/2011 – 09/12/2014, a period of 3 years, 5 months and 10 days. The most recent email included in the dataset gives thanks to Ruth for responding to a request email asking for clarification of her reported nationality and mother tongue after I noticed some discrepancies in the data. This email was collected on 01/05/2015, though most data collection stopped around October 2014. The reason for this slow tail-off in data collection is that when request emails were sent out asking clients’ permission to be included in the study, some clients were still actively engaged in business, therefore these clients were asked for permission after the work was completed to mitigate the observer’s paradox. Other clients resumed contact after the permission email was sent, sending further work. Additionally, it took some clients some time to respond to requests for permissions, and for others these requests resulted in short conversations. For some clients contact was ongoing throughout the early stages of PhD data collection and research, for these clients, data collection was stopped around October 2014 as data needed to be compiled and tagged for analysis without constantly adding further emails.

To illustrate this build up and cool down of contact over the years, and to visually show which clients were in contact for the longest period and how the number of emails sent varied from year to year, the following network diagrams are presented. As participant names are too long to fit in the diagrams, the following initials are used:

AA	Alya al-Badri	Jref	John (former British client)
AFref	referrer Aditya Farooq	LG	Lisa Grant
AJ	Avin Jaziri	LM	Lovemore Matongo
AL	Alice Lam	MeK	Meera Khan
AS	Abdessalam Shamekh	MHref	referrer Mathew Hall
CBref	referrer Charles Bowie	MiK	Miyako Kojima
DH	Dana Hodza	MSref	referrer Mike Sullivan
EM	Elizabeth (Liz) Marsden	RB	Ruth Babangida
HC	Hai Chen	RSref	referrer Robyn Seller
HM	Hassan Maziq	SB	Sofia Bonilla
IB	Irma Biya	SS	Supaksorn Sangprathum
IE	Ivie Ezeli	VL	Victoria Lee
IM	Imran Malik	ZB	Zétény Bathory

The network diagrams are presented as follows. Participants are shown as circular coloured nodes, purple for Liz, orange for clients, blue for referrers.[22] Lines between nodes indicate emails sent in that year between those nodes (year in top left corner), raw numbers are given next to these lines,[23] and the line weight gives an instant idea of email number:

Example line	Line weight	Number of emails
	½ pt	1-10
	¾ pt	11-20
	1 pt	21-30
	1 ½ pt	31-40
	2 ¼ pt	41-50
	3 pt	51-60
	4 ½ pt	71-90
	6 pt	91+

Note that line length has no significance, and to ease the legibility of the graphs, all nodes remain in the same position relative to the centre, from each diagram to the next.[24] Where

[22] These are non-clients or British clients who acted only to refer other clients to Liz. Some of these referrers had an active role in the client's ongoing work (e.g. as their supervisor), hence repeated mentions of these referrers, and the occasional inclusion of them as CC recipients of emails. Others were friends or colleagues.

[23] Numbers are given clockwise from the line if connected to the central node "EM", and in the centre of the line if connecting two other nodes.

[24] Transitions and changes from one diagram to the next are clearer in animated form, therefore a video is available here: https://youtu.be/P_SpXGdHqbo

lines appear connecting client nodes, this indicates that an email was sent with multiple recipients, as no email in the dataset does not have Liz included as the primary recipient or CC (carbon copy). Where the line is shown in red (only for 2014 and 2015 diagrams) this indicates that contact was re-initiated via a request email asking permission for inclusion in this study. For some clients, as aforementioned, this was then followed by more work, or by some extended questions concerning the PhD. These diagrams were generated simply by counting the number of emails to and from Liz and others present in the dataset for each year. Email length (word count) is not factored into these diagrams, neither is speed of reply. Additionally, there is no discrimination made in these diagrams of which participant is the sender and which is the receiver (e.g. in Figure 5 below, 56 emails were sent between Meera and Liz, but it is not shown how many were authored by each). This information was deemed too complicated to show in these diagrams as some have many connections and nodes. It should also be noted that "2011" runs from June-December, and 2015, as aforementioned, contains only emails regarding supplementary participant information deemed necessary for this project – other emails were sent in some cases, e.g. where further business took place, but were not collected as part of the thesis' dataset.

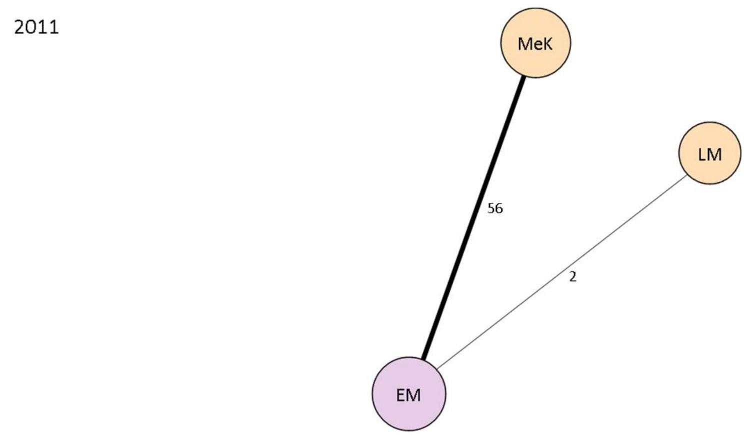


Figure 5: Emails sent in 2011

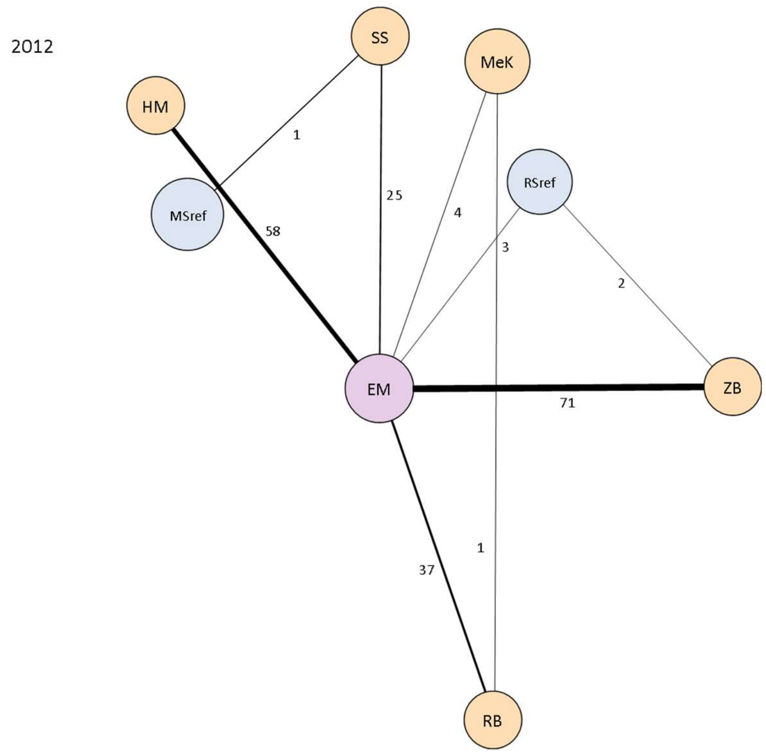


Figure 6: Emails sent in 2012

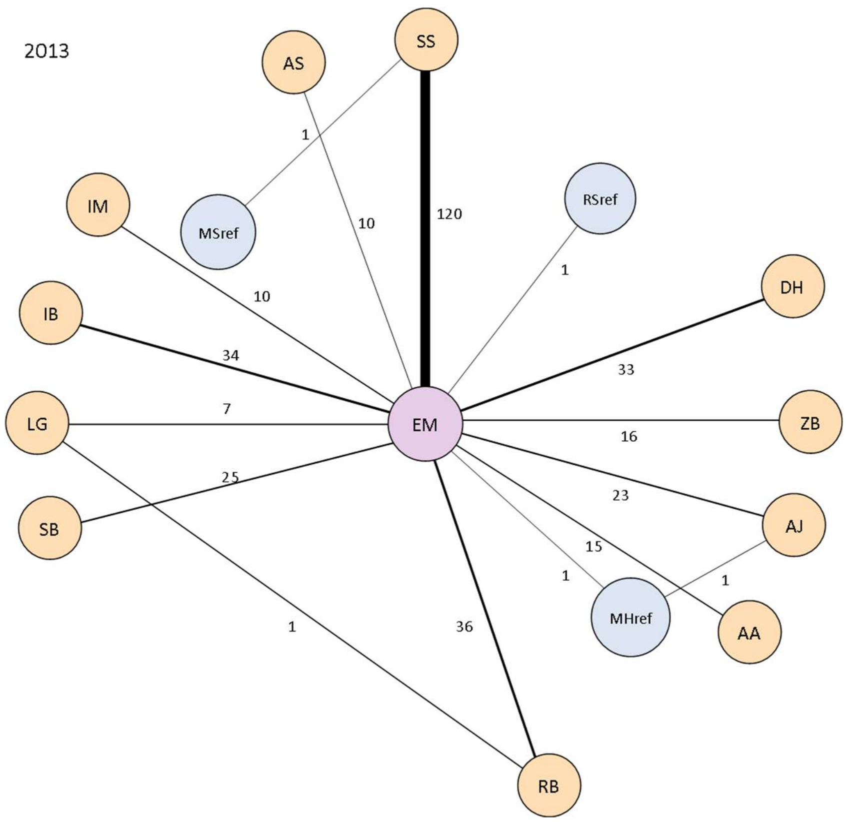


Figure 7: Emails sent in 2013

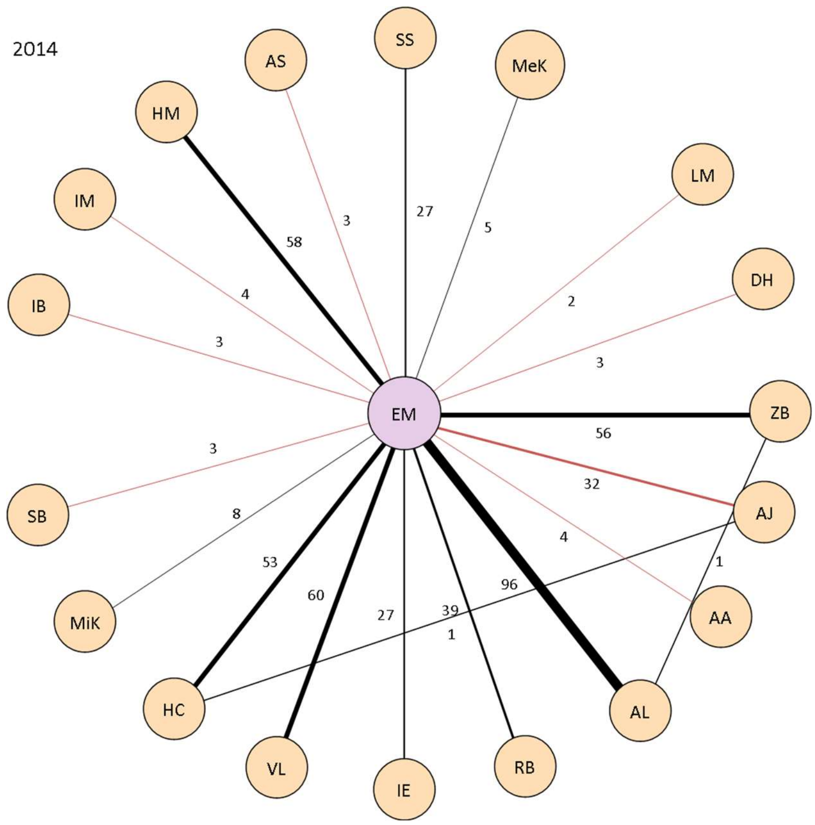


Figure 8: Emails sent in 2014

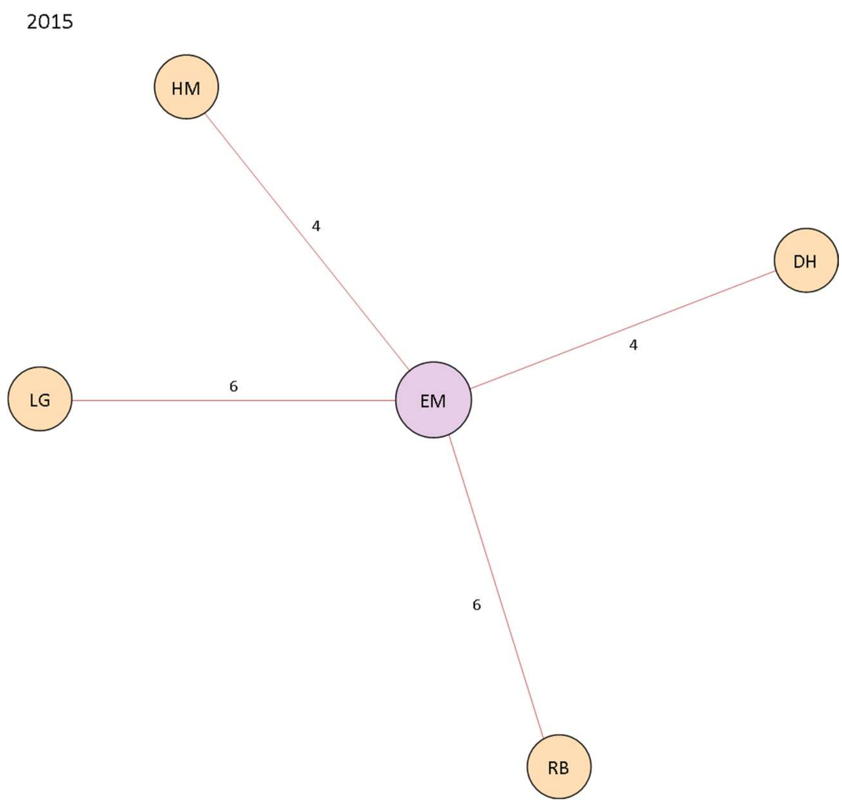


Figure 9: Emails sent in 2015

These five figures give a comprehensive view of periods of high activity within the email dataset and show when nodes appear for the first time and how they cease to be contacted over time. They also show interconnections between client and referrer nodes.

The number of participants who used the service based on a referral from a tutor or other client (16/19) shows the huge importance of interpersonal ties and networks for business. Looking at the first-contact emails in my dataset (examined in detail in the following chapter, section 5.2.3) it is remarkable how many people mention the person who pointed them towards Liz's service. These referrers all form part of Liz's social network, "a boundless web of ties that reaches out through a whole society, linking people to one another, however remotely" (Milroy & Milroy, 1992, p. 5). The University forms the basis of Liz's crucial weak functional tie network and it was her association with various departments and facilities that brought her more numerous weak ties, and gave information about her business more opportunity to pass to interested parties.

The departmental tutors on the other hand form a stronger part of her network. These nodes, CBref, MHref, MSref and RSref appear in the figures above, and those below. They are crucial bridges who made some initial introductions between Liz and some of her clients. The importance of these nodes as referrers is further explored in the following chapter, section 5.3.

The following figures show a relational aspect of the emails sent. While presented in the same format as the figures above, this time rather than lines, arrows are used, the arrow direction shows that the node where the arrow originates has mentioned by name the node at which the arrow is pointing. For example, in the style of this example from the data:

> I've deleted Mike's comments by the university computer. Please find the attachment. [Supaksorn: 24]

Here, Supaksorn mentions "Mike" (MSref in the diagrams), so this email would be counted as one mention of MSref by SS, shown as an arrow from SS to MSref with the numeral '1' beside it if this was the only email containing a reference to Mike from this year.

These figures show something of the complexity of the data, each dyad (Liz plus client) does not exist in a relational vacuum, but may be influenced by other nodes who are mutual acquaintances. Where arrows originate from the EM node, this indicates that Liz has mentioned a node by name while in conversation with another node.[25] Mentions are counted per email sent containing that node's name, **not** per mention of that node, i.e., some emails make mention of a name more than once, but these are counted as a single instance of mentioning.

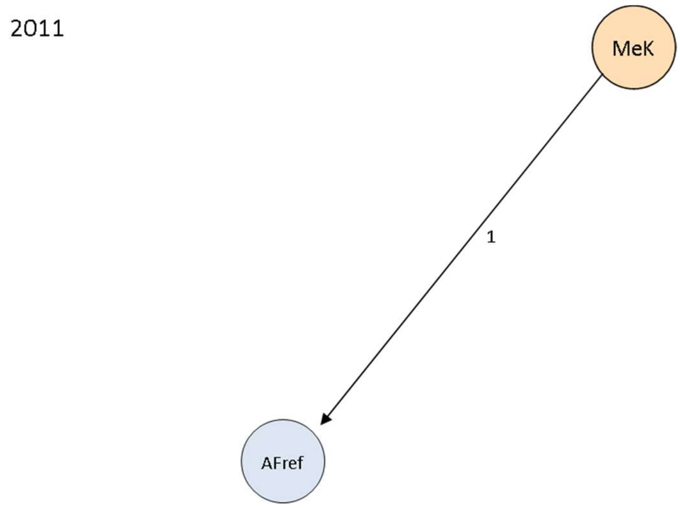


Figure 10: Mentions in 2011

[25] Not counted here, are mentions of the email recipient, e.g. an email beginning "Dear Ruth…" sent to Ruth, would not count as a mention of Ruth, however an email sent to Meera mentioning Ruth *would* count as a mention.

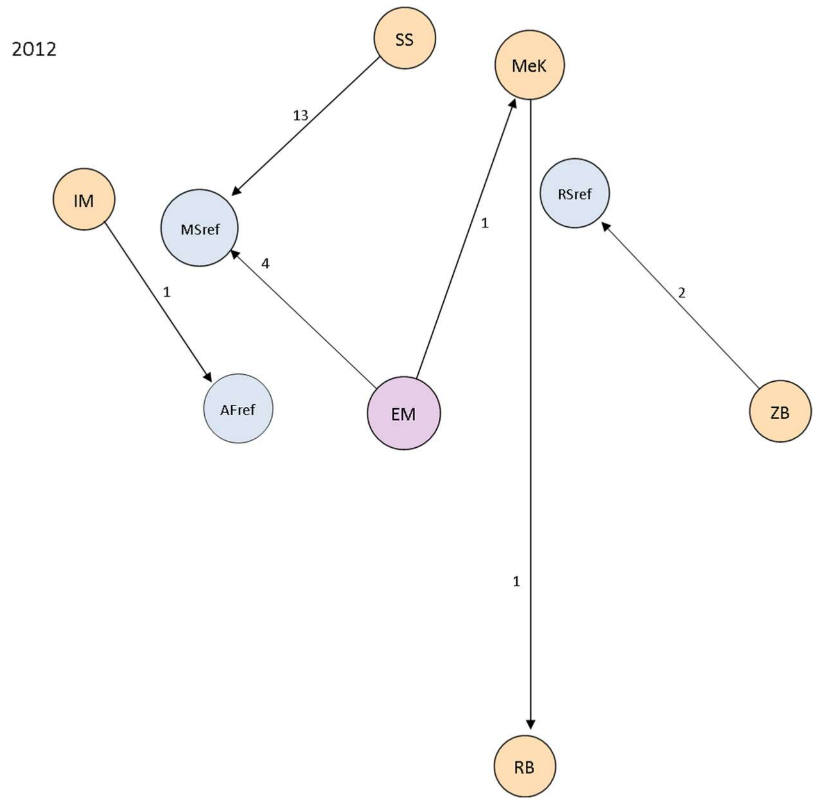


Figure 11: Mentions in 2012

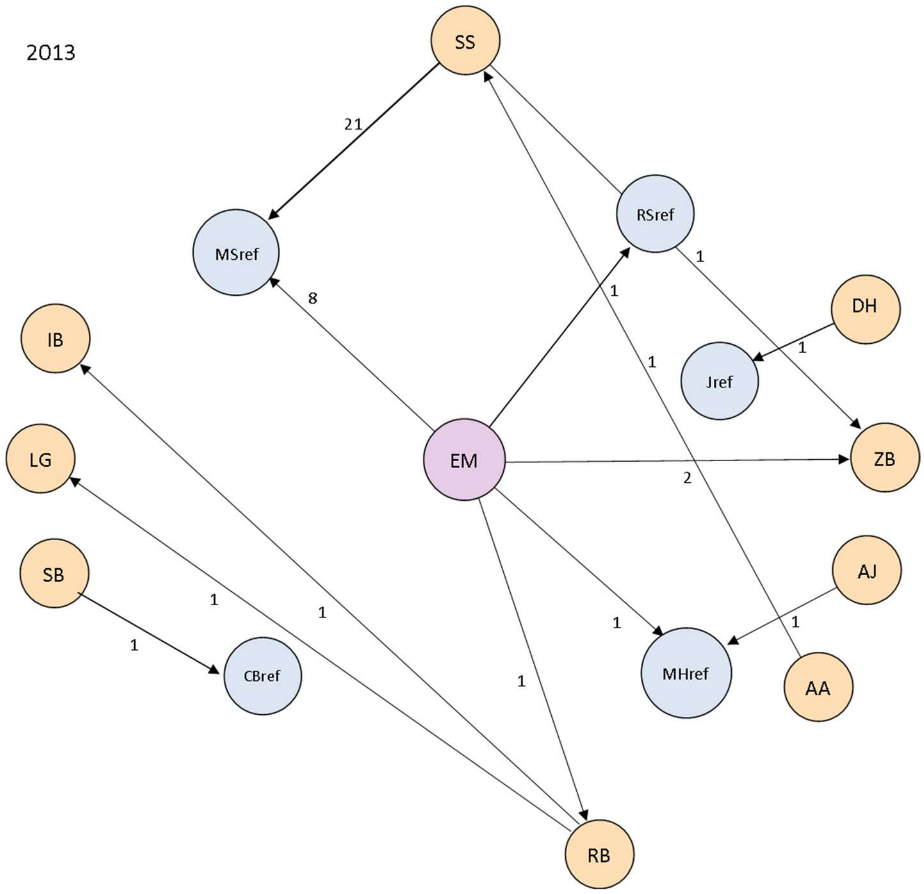


Figure 12: Mentions in 2013

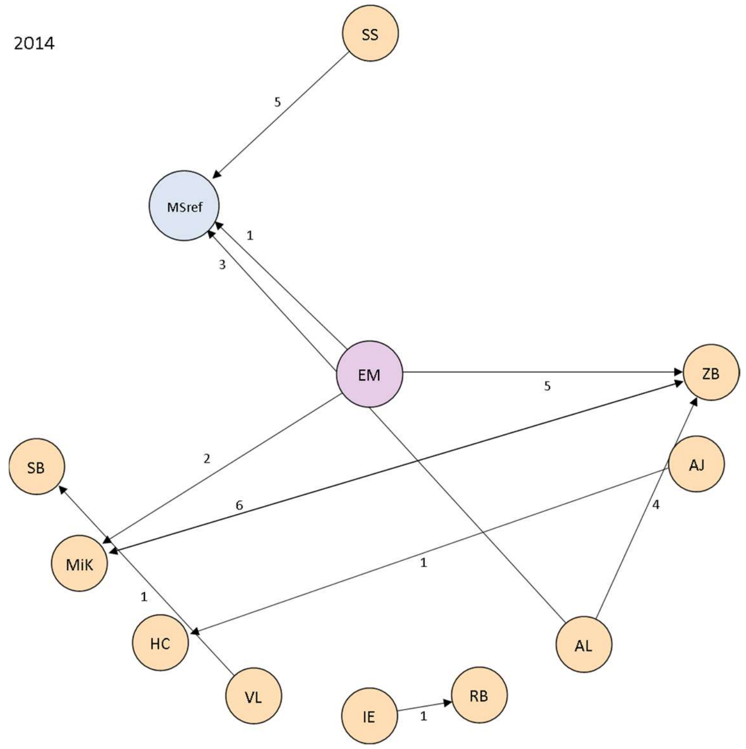


Figure 13: Mentions in 2014

In order to give an even clearer idea of who mentioned whom over the course of data collection, a composite image of Figure 10 to Figure 13 is included here:

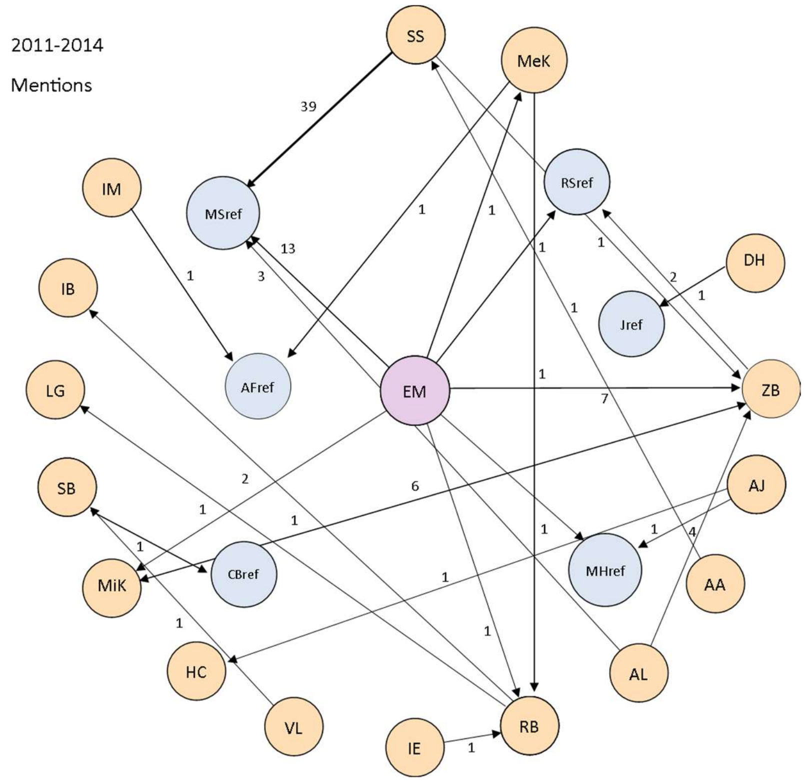


Figure 14: Mentions from 2011 to 2014

In Figure 14 it is clear that three client nodes are missing, indicating that these clients either do not know any of the other nodes, or simply had no need or desire to mention them to a third party. The clients in this category are Hassan, Abdessalam and Lovemore. The rest of the clients exist within one of several “webs” of interconnected contacts. It is clear here that Ruth and Zétény are mentioned, and mention others, frequently, showing that they are well connected within the network. Also illuminated is Supaksorn’s frequent mentioning of Mike, her supervisor, this close relationship can also be seen qualitatively as Supaksorn in her first email introduces herself as “Mike’s PhD student” indicating that her connection to Mike is an important part of her academic work and identity.

The structure of these network connections, in terms of who referred whom, is shown in Figure 15 below. However, relations which are non-referral-based, such as the relationship between Supaksorn and Zétény, or Alice and Mike, are not represented in Figure 15, and can be seen only in Figure 10—Figure 14.

As mentioned, showing how the clients found Liz’s service is a natural progression from here, as both the “emails sent” figures and the “mentions” figures show a number of interlinks between participants in the dataset. The figure below shows the progression of referrals from one client to the next. Arrows indicate that the originating node referred the destination node, or in the case of the ‘business website’ was simply the means by which the destination node became linked to Liz.

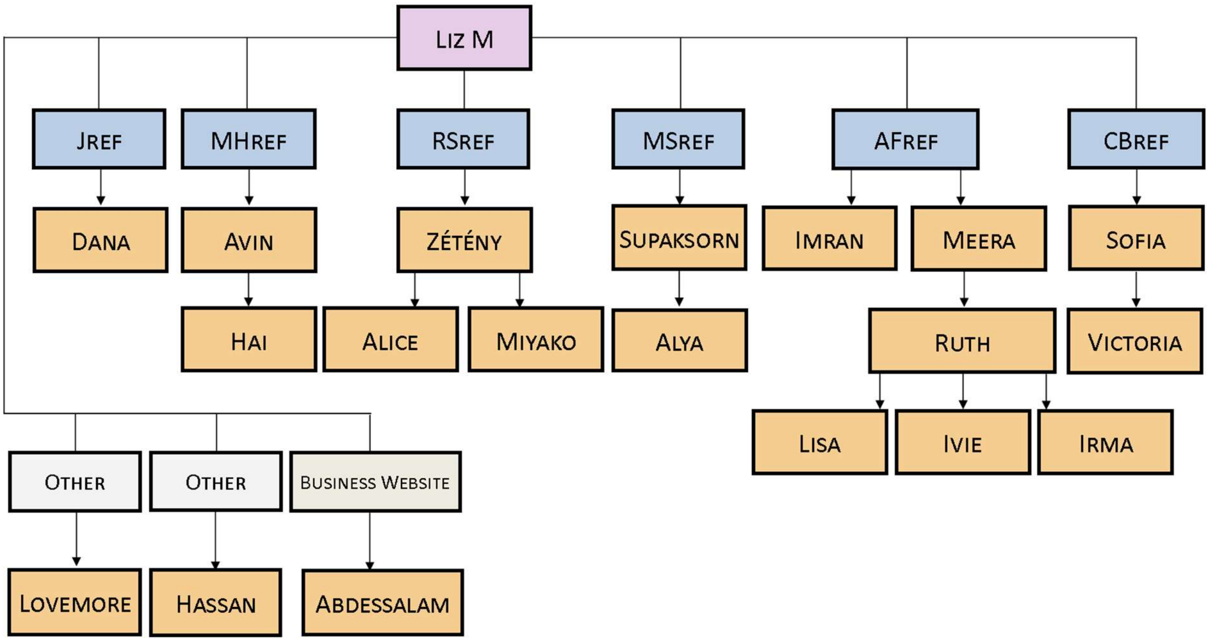


Figure 15: Client links to Liz

Figure 15 shows how client referrals can branch into multiple interconnected contacts. Aditya Farooq (AFref) is a PhD student who referred many clients to Liz before having his own thesis proofread. He is responsible for many more links than are shown above, as those shown above are only those who were asked and agreed to have their emails included in the study. Many more nodes would represent the true network of Liz's business, which would include British native clients (such as Jref, the referrer of Dana) and others not included in this study. The structure of referrals, including how they are phrased and whether or not the referrer takes an active role as an introducer, is analysed qualitatively in the next chapter. However, this graph provides a useful starting point and visual representation of some of the connections in the dataset.

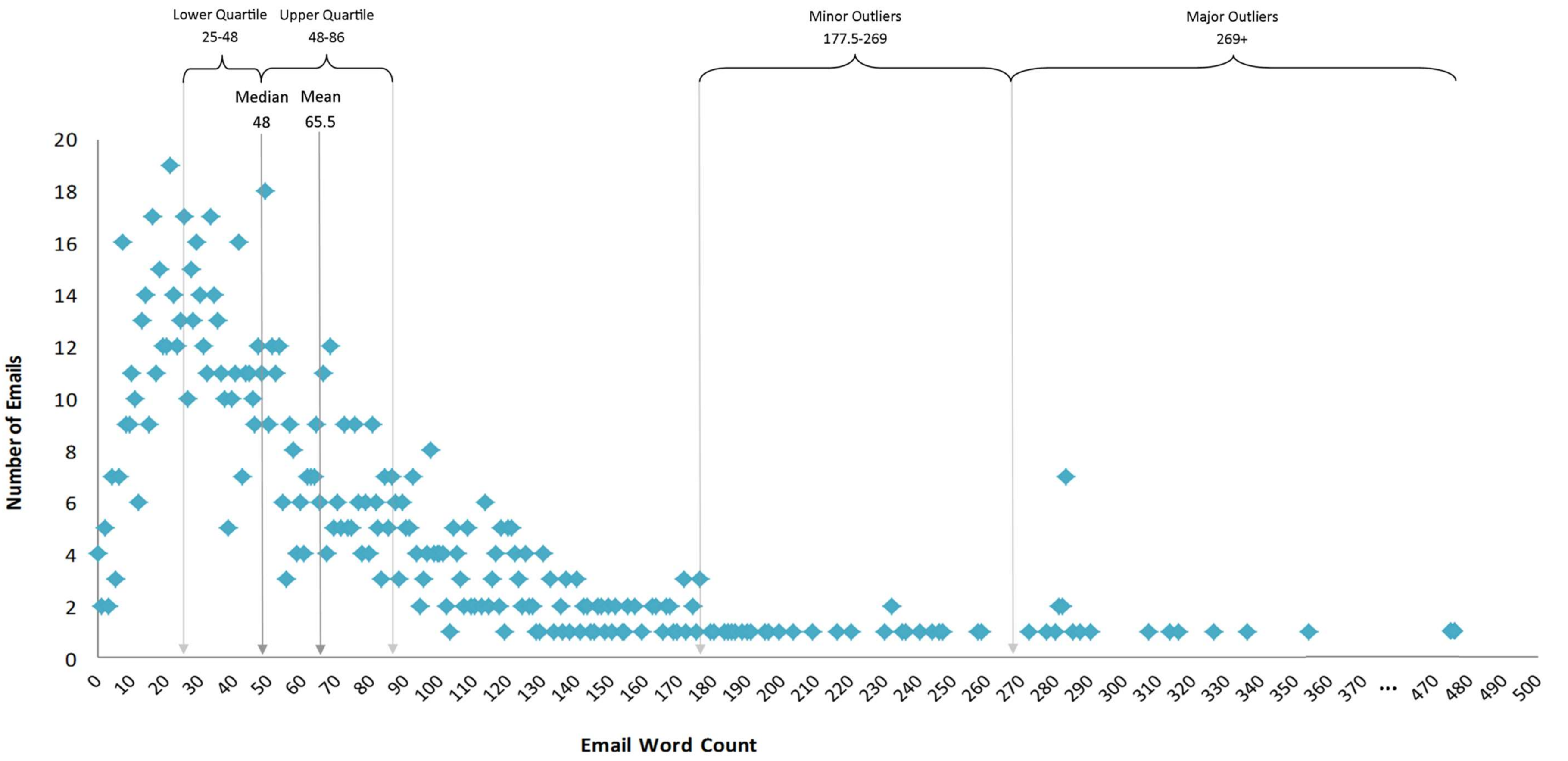
Having shown who the participants are, who they know, when there was contact and how much, I now present further statistics of the dataset as a whole.

4.4 Email features

4.4.1 Email length

Another useful piece of information is knowledge of how long the emails in the dataset are. This data has been used in the thesis to show email length variation as determined by the time gap between two emails (Graph 4, p. 84); to investigate mimesis in relation to email length i.e. whether longer emails are responded to with longer emails (see section 4.5); and as part of the investigation into what, if anything, is different in emails sent before and after a significant break in contact (see section 9.3).

The numbers in the following graph represent the *pre-cleanup* data, meaning that confidential information omitted from the final dataset was included for this numerical analysis. This was done so that accurate statistics could be obtained regarding email length as this was deemed useful not only for this project, but for any future research done using these statistics. In the graph below, subject lines, plus metadata such as sender's email, date, attachments etc., are not included as part of the word count. This counts only the email body text, as described in section 3.5.1. Subject lines were not included as they were so often a meaningless placeholder. Writers used the automatically-generated "Re: [previous subject line]" so often, and for so many emails in a row, that they often bore no relation to the body text. The same pattern was found in Zummo's investigation of similar intercultural email data (Zummo, 2018a, 2018b).



Graph 1 Lengths of emails in the dataset

N.B. the broken Y-axis showing two emails at 474 and 475 words long.

The graph is marked with the lower and upper quartile, within these bounds lie 50% of the emails sent. Minor outliers are also marked; these represent those emails falling within interquartile range multiplied by 1.5, plus the upper quartile. Anything higher than this boundary (i.e. any email over 269 words in length) is statistically a major outlier; 25 emails fall into this category, representing 2.3% of the total emails sent (but 5.5% of the dataset's total word count). The spike at 283 words, and small cluster around this point, are primarily composed of the PhD permission request emails, as I used a standard template for the majority of these.[26] The very long outlier emails falling after these request emails generally contain extensive excerpts of client work, cut-and-pasted directly into the email body, for Liz to check. Interestingly, one can see here that four emails were sent with no body text at all (length 0), the 'content' of these emails was composed of subject lines and attachments only.

Another parameter that quantitatively analyses the email dataset as a whole is the response time of one writer to another writer's email. This is looked at in the next section.

4.4.2 Sending and response time

This section helps to answer broad questions about emails, and builds a clearer picture of my data. One point that is mentioned either vaguely or specifically by many researchers is the frequency with which emails are checked and responded to:

> "The email supervisor answered each student email within 48h, in accordance with a well-known supervision research protocol" (Gordon & Luke, 2012, p. 116)
>
> "Eight subjects also reported using email either every second day or every day." (Cho, 2010, p. 8)
>
> "Today the Internet is used on a daily basis by over 70% of adult Americans and almost 60% use email on a typical day." (Goldstein & Evans Sabin, 2006, p. 1)
>
> "our readers… [may] have to cope with many messages per day." (Danet, 2002, p. 7)

[26] See an example PhD information request email in the Appendix section 11.7

> "Some faculty seem to feel as if they are 'on call' 24 hours a day because of the volume of email they receive" (Yates, Wood Adams, & Brunner, 2009, p. 309)

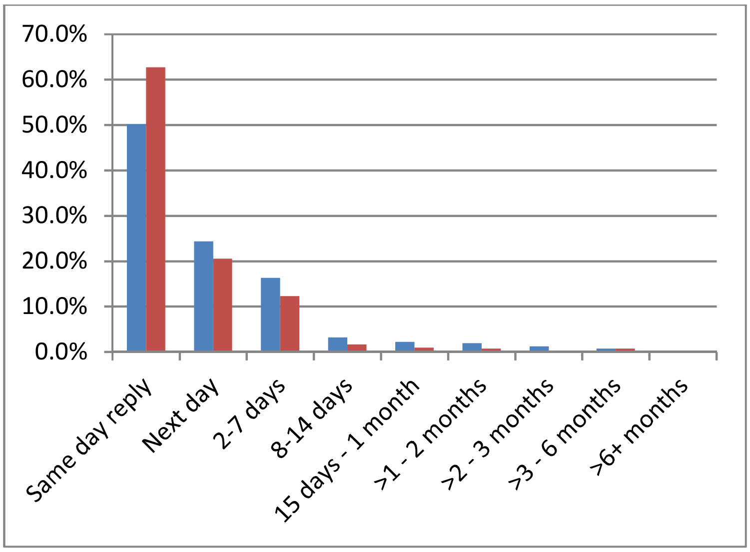
Which begs the question: 'how quickly are emails responded to?'. It is possible to present an answer to this question regarding my dataset, by looking at emails categorised as 'replies' i.e. those following an email from another participant (as opposed to 'strings', those emails which directly follow an email from the same participant). It should be noted here that reply emails may bridge a gap between two different conversational topics e.g. a business transaction may have been concluded with an email from Liz, and contact may then be reinitiated some weeks or months later by the client – this would still be categorised as a reply. Due to difficulties categorising sets of emails by topic due to fuzzy boundaries, a 'reply' email in this data simply refers to one which is part of an A/B/A/B conversational structure. For example, see the following sequence between senders A and B:

A	B	B	A	A
First-contact	reply	string	reply	string

Figure 16: Reply and string emails

First emails are not categorisable as strings or replies as they do not follow a prior email. The emails following the first are categorised dependant on context – whether they are sent by the same sender as the prior email (as defined chronologically), or a different sender.

The following table and graph show response times for reply emails, the graph is based on the table percentages in order for Liz and the clients' response times to be comparable (Liz sent 13 more reply emails than the clients). Liz is represented by the red bars, and the clients as a group by the blue bars:



Graph 2: Reply email response times

	C. %	C. raw	L. %	L. raw
Same	50.1%	206	62.7%	266
Next	24.3%	100	20.5%	87
2-7 d.	16.3%	67	12.3%	52
8-14 d.	3.2%	13	1.7%	7
15 d. - 1 m.	2.2%	9	0.9%	4
>1 - 2 m.	1.9%	8	0.7%	3
>2 - 3 m.	1.2%	5	0.2%	1
>3 - 6 m.	0.7%	3	0.7%	3
>6+ m.	0.0%	0	0.2%	1
Total		411		424

Table 5: Reply email response times

In the table, 'd.' stands for 'days' and 'm.' for 'months'. A month is categorised in this, and all following tables/graphs, as 31 days, regardless of the actual month in which the email was sent, in order that the boundaries between categories are less variable. 'Same' and 'Next' are abbreviated versions of 'same day' and 'next day'. A complete listing of all emails in the data and their exact time gaps measured in days showing which emails fall into which category is shown in Table 30, Appendix 11.1 p. 309, additionally in this section are graphs representing the response times (reply and string emails combined) using the raw data.

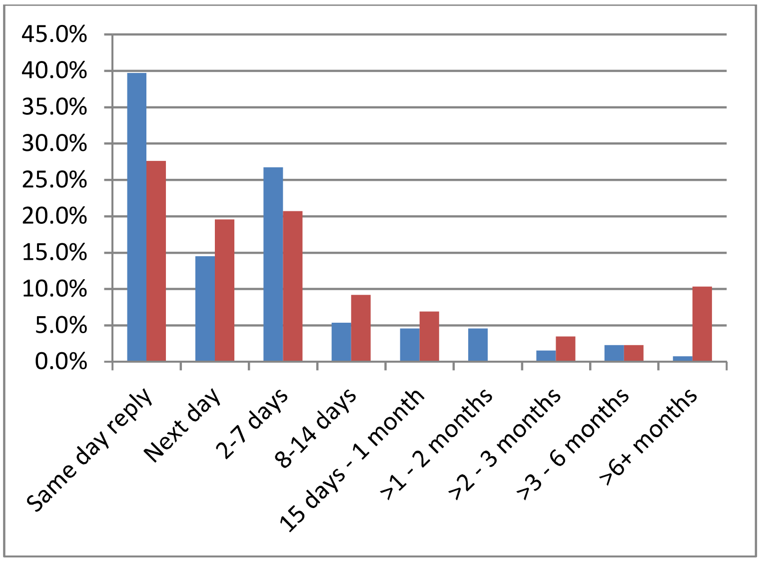
The graph shows that 56.5% of replies arrived the same day as the prior email was received. Including emails responded to within 48 hours, the percentage goes up to 78.9%, and up to 93.2% when also accounting for those replies sent within one week of the prior email. For the participants in this study then, it can be inferred that they check their emails frequently and are probably using email as one of their primary means of communication, or at least as an important subsidiary. In order to get an even better idea of how frequently participants might be checking their emails, I looked at sequences of four or more (S4+) emails sent on the same day (4 or more being the minimum needed to establish an A/B/A/B pattern). The table below shows the 16 dyads who sent one or more S4+ same day emails (clients not represented here are Miyako, Lovemore and Alya).

	Length of same day sequences present to and from each client	Total emails in sequences of 4 or more	Total emails sent	number of S4+ same day emails as % of total sent
Abdessalam	4	4	14	29%
Alice	4 5 5 5 6	25	97	26%
Avin	4 4 6 6 7	27	56	48%
Dana	4 6	10	40	25%
Hai	5 6 6 6	23	55	42%
Hassan	5 6	11	62	18%
Imran	4 5	9	73	12%
Irma	5	5	37	14%
Ivie	5	5	27	19%
Lisa	5 5	10	14	71%
Meera	5 5 5 5	20	66	30%
Ruth	4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 5 5 5 8	55	121	45%
Sofia	5 19	24	29	83%
Supaksorn	4 4 4 5 6	23	147	16%
Victoria	4 4 4	12	60	20%
Zétény	4 4 4 4 5 5 6 7 8	47	146	32%

Table 6: Same day emails sent in each conversation

This table shows the client names on the far left, with the ‘total emails sent’ column being the total emails sent between Liz, the specified client and any referrers for each row. The length of sequence shows how many S4+ same day emails were sent between each client and Liz, and the length of these sequences, with 19 being the longest. The final column shows the percentage of emails sent between Liz and each client made up of S4+ same day emails, coloured lighter or darker green for smaller and larger percentages. These percentages range from 12% to 83% showing that “quick-fire” sequences in the same day are quite common. This is significant as it shows that clients are, at least on some days, checking and responding to emails multiple times. For all S4+ emails, each participant within the conversation must check their emails a minimum of twice in 24 hours. Zummo hypothesised that this tendency towards faster responses was due to the advent of ‘push’ systems where an alert on a tablet or smartphone tells the user about an incoming message, allowing that email to be “read and answered within a short period of time” (Zummo, 2018b, p. 58). Understandably, when a deadline is tight and a reply is needed quickly, participants are far more likely to check their emails often, as shown by the sequence of 19 emails all sent on 11/09/2014 between Liz and Sofia, who had work that needed doing urgently and in a very short time frame.

Another feature of the email dataset is string emails: those emails that follow an email by the same writer, rather than an email from another participant. The following graph and table show the number of string emails in the data. As with replies, these may bridge a gap between two different conversational topics. Again, as with Graph 2, Clients are blue while Liz is red.



Graph 3: Time between string emails

Time	C. %	C. raw	Liz %	L. raw
Same	39.7%	52	27.6%	24
Next	14.5%	19	19.5%	17
2-7 d.	26.7%	35	20.7%	18
8-14 d.	5.3%	7	9.2%	8
15 d. - 1 m.	4.6%	6	6.9%	6
>1 - 2 m.	4.6%	6	0.0%	0
>2 - 3 m.	1.5%	2	3.4%	3
>3 - 6 m.	2.3%	3	2.3%	2
>6+ m.	0.8%	1	10.3%	9
Total		131		87

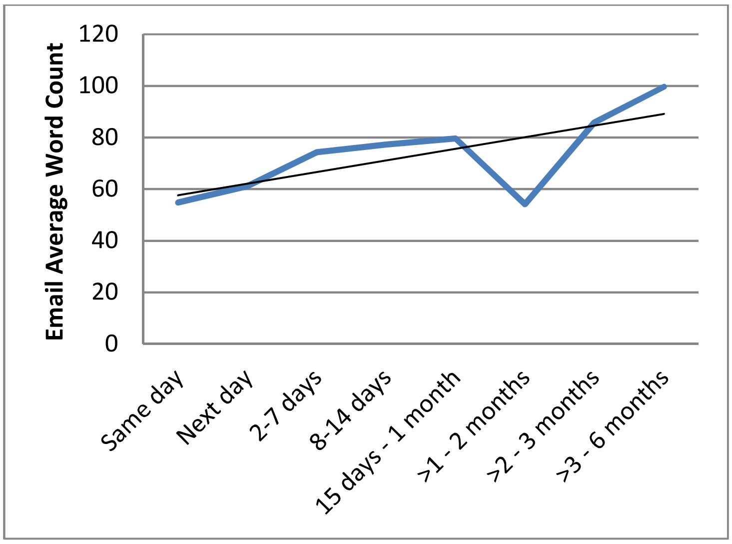
Table 7: Time between string emails

The graph and table combined show that not only are clients more likely than Liz to send string emails, but they are more likely to send them within the same day. The spike in Liz's string emails at >6+ months relates to the time at which she began reinitiating contact with former clients to get their permission for inclusion in the study, with these emails eliminated, the raw total for Liz in this category would be 1. Strings can represent supplementary or forgotten information relating to the previous email, requests for the other participant to respond (or reminders to the other participant), reinitiating contact after a break that culminated in an email from that sender, multiple emails sent on different subjects, and others. The longest sequences of contiguous emails by a single sender are five emails in length, there are two of these sequences, one each in the datasets from Hai and Alice. By far the most common length of string is a chain of two emails from the same sender; there are 152 of these in the dataset (or 304 emails).

An interesting parameter that links both email length and response speed is how email length varies depending on how long the participants have been out of contact. The following graph and table show how email length varies dependant on the time delay between emails. For this graph, emails have been grouped only by time and not by writer or type (i.e. Clients' and Liz's emails are grouped together as are string and reply emails). PhD information request emails have been eliminated, as these are all roughly 284 words long (following a standard template, see Appendix section 11.7) and often sent after a long period of no contact, as such they were appearing in categories with the least number of entrants and therefore raising the averages. In order to get a more accurate representation of normal business contact, emails responding to PhD request emails have also been eliminated – many of these were very long as questions were answered within the text of Liz's email, or very short, as some extremely succinct answers were given, e.g. [Hassan: 24]:

(1) 2-[North African].
3-Arabic
4- OK
best wishes

Neither of these options is representative of usual business talk, though of course, some very short emails do exist in the main dataset.



Graph 4: Email average wordcount variation over time

Time	Total Hits	Total Text	Av. word count
Same	519	28479	54.87
Next	210	12852	61.2
2-7 d.	164	12178	74.25
8-14 d.	32	2473	77.28
15 d. - 1 m.	22	1753	79.68
>1 - 2 m.	14	758	54.14
>2 - 3 m.	8	687	85.87
>3 - 6 m.	9	897	99.66
6+ m.	0		
Total	978	60077	

Table 8: Email average wordcount variation over time

Graph 4 shows an increase in email length depending on the time between the selected email and the previously sent one. Though there is a significant dip in length in the >1-2 months category, the trend line in black does show a rise overall. The influence of time on what and how much writers chose to put into their emails is explored in more detail in section 9.3.

The following section summarises the findings of Marsden and Kádár (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017) which uses quantitative methods to analyse whether Liz and the clients may be displaying mimetic behaviour in their usage of greeting and sign-off terms. Also included is some further exploration of mimetic behaviour not included in the paper. This discussion is presented here to demonstrate an intersection between pure data description, and relational interaction, bridging the gap between this chapter and the next. The section also explores and introduces the important idea of mimesis, which may be at play in many areas of email communication that are analysed in this thesis, such as the usage of CMC cues (Chapter 7).

4.5 Mimesis

This section summarises the findings of Marsden and Kádár (2017) which analysed a subset of the thesis' dataset in order to determine if mimetic practices were at play in greetings and sign-offs. This research is tangential to the main discussion of the thesis, but is nevertheless relevant, as mimesis is clearly, in some cases, a crucial factor in determining why participants are communicating in certain ways.[27] The paper also presented some qualitative analyses, though these are not discussed here. The data analysis focusses on whether Liz varies her greeting and sign-off term usage depending on the client with whom she is interacting and what preferences that client displays for greeting and signing off.

This question is important in terms of the thesis' aims of picking apart issues of tie reinforcing behaviours, as much research has shown that mimicry "is a critical part of human social interactions. It is intimately tied to relationships, liking, and empathy, functioning both as a signal of rapport and as a tool to generate rapport" (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 221). Though this does have some provisos – if the mimicker is very obviously an out-group member, or has a social stigma, their mimicry is likely to be received negatively (van Baaren, Janssen, Chartrand, & Dijksterhuis, 2009, p. 2383).

Adjusting one's language to accommodate the communicative partner is often cited as a way that native speakers can help non-native speakers to easily follow the topic of conversation, or be more easily able to navigate the culture (Hooker, 2008; Sweeney & Hua, 2010; Incelli, 2013). Unfortunately for those non-native speakers, all authors agree that this accommodation may be ineffective, partial, or only occasionally present. A problem may be the unconscious nature of this accommodation, "people often adjust their communication toward where they believe others are communicatively, rather than were they actually are." (Thakerar et al., 1982, cited in Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2016, p. 41). This may be in evidence in some of the data shown below, especially where usage of terms is very varied. The table below, reproduced from Marsden and Kádár (2017, p. 9), shows the usage of six

[27] For examples from the data where mimesis may be in play, see Table 17: *Client and Liz first-contact greeting and sign-off terms*, p. 113; Example (285), p. 237; discussion of the usage of exclamation marks, section 7.2.2, p. 183.

greeting terms across 12 clients,[28] and the different percentages of use for Liz with each of those individual clients.

Greeting Terms →	Hi (+/- name)		Dear		Thanks (+/- name)		No greeting		Name only		Other		Total emails sent	
Participant→ Client ↓	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L
Alice		**50%**	**89%**	48%	7%	3%			2%		2%		56	40
Avin	24%	**81%**	**69%**	15%				4%			7%		29	26
Dana	**80%**	**80%**		15%		5%	20%						20	20
Hai	**65%**	**74%**		4%	13%		26%	17%					31	23
Hassan	6%	39%	**71%**	45%	3%	6%	19%	3%		6%			31	31
Imran	9%	**77%**	**91%**	15%				8%					34	39
Irma	**78%**	**89%**		5%	11%	5%	6%				6%		18	19
Meera	33%	**70%**	6%	10%	17%	10%	14%	7%		3%	31%		36	30
Supaksorn	32%	**87%**	13%	3%	4%	5%	33%	1%	13%		6%		72	75
Ruth	31%	**64%**	10%	10%	15%	5%	34%	14%		2%	11%	3%	61	59
Victoria	10%	45%	**83%**	42%		13%	7%						29	31
Zétény	**83%**	**90%**	10%	5%	5%	3%	1%	2%			1%		82	63
Total Tokens	*187*	*328*	*172*	*75*	*33*	*21*	*72*	*21*	*10*	*4*	*27*	*5*	*499*	*456*
Correlation	0.71		0.77		0.11		0.44		-0.18		0.15			

Table 9: Greeting terms and correlation scores[29]

N.B. The asterisk after "thank" indicates that any form of 'thank' may be used i.e. 'thanks', 'thank you'.*

The final row of Table 9 contains a correlation score, which acts as an indicator of potential mimetic convergent behaviour. Scores near 0 show that Liz's use of each term varies largely at random, scores towards +1 show that as each client used the terms more, so did Liz and vice versa (convergence), while scores towards -1 show that as each client used a term more, Liz used it less and vice versa (divergence). The correlations for "Hi", "Dear" and "No greeting" are moderately/highly positive:

> Although Liz generally shows a marked preference for using "Hi" over "Dear," as seen in the "L" columns for these terms, she varies her usage depending on the client's preference, varying from using "Hi" 90% of the time with [Zétény] (whose use is 83%) to only 39% of the time with Hassan (whose use is only 6%). (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017, p. 10)

[28] Conversations with a total of fewer than 30 emails sent were excluded, as these may have given less accurate percentages.

[29] To obtain accurate correlation scores the raw numbers were normalised as percentages, enabling a like-for-like comparison across different email conversations and ensuring that correlation results were not skewed by some conversations consisting of more emails than others.

The use of “Dear” similarly varies. “Thank*” was found to have almost no convergence. It was hypothesised that this was due to “thank*” needing to be contextually relevant.

Writers were found to have their own preferences[30] for greeting term usage (‘Hi’, ‘Dear’ or ‘Mixed’), and Liz was able to vary her usage depending on the conversational partner. What was described in the paper was “partial convergence” (Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 38); Liz varied her greeting term usage based on the client’s preference, but did not completely abandon ‘Hi’ in favour of ‘Dear’, or vice versa, or match her partners’ percentages completely. It was not possible to assess client divergence/convergence as this would have required a set of emails from each client to different recipients – not Liz only – in order to assess if they were varying their usage with different partners.

The paper also took some steps to ascertain whether or not this convergence was due to the greeting term used in the closest prior email, or whether convergence perceived based on the conversation as a whole was simply serendipity. In order to do this, Marsden and Kádár looked for sequences within conversations where emails that were sequential had matched greeting terms, the table below presents their findings:

Client	**Client preference**	**Liz % usage of client's preferred greeting**	**longest sequence of identical greeting terms**	**% emails in S≥3 with matched greeting terms**	**Total emails in set**
Avin	Dear	15%	4	13%	55
Meera	Mixed	N/A	4	15%	66
Imran	Dear	15%	4	26%	73
Supaksorn	Mixed	N/A	6	30%	147
Ruth	Mixed	N/A	5	33%	120
Hassan	Dear	45%	5	37%	62
Alice	Dear	48%	7	38%	96
Victoria	Dear	42%	11	50%	60
Hai	Hi	74%	7	59%	54
Dana	Hi	80%	12	65%	40
Irma	Hi	89%	10	81%	37
Zétény	Hi	90%	38	83%	145

Table 10: Summary of sequences of identical greeting terms

Reproduced from Marsden and Kádár (2017, p. 14). *S≥3 = sequence of three or more.*

[30] Preference was described as using the same term 50% or more of the time. No client was found to use the same term 100% of the time, the highest usage was Imran’s use of ‘Dear’ 91% of the time. (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017)

The table shows that matched greeting terms occur in at least one cluster of 4 or more emails in all conversations. Some conversations such as Zétény's have a very high incidence of matched terms in sequential emails. The paper found that between Zétény and Liz, this even applied to terms neither participant used frequently, such as "thanks*" or "sorry", indicating a strong chance of mutual convergent mimetic behaviour.

The paper also analysed sign-off token usage by looking at the frequency of usage of component parts of sign-off phrases, e.g. 'best', 'regards', 'wishes' etc. The findings, in summary, found that though sign-off was more flexible than greeting (in that components could be combined in multiple ways, e.g. 'best' could be paired with 'regards' or 'wishes' or be used alone) three categories showed a positive correlation, "regards", "name only" and "wishes", indicating possible convergent mimesis. However, 'best', the most used category, had a negligible correlation score, possibly indicating that Liz was showing neither convergence nor divergence, but rather maintenance of her preferred usage (see Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 37), despite whatever her writing partner was doing. However, the positive correlation scores for 'regards' and 'wishes' may indicate a different explanation:

> This may indicate that… [Liz] varies what "Best" is combined with (i.e., "regards" or "wishes") based on the client's usage. This gels well with Donald's conception of mimesis, which emphasises that in imitating, the imitator may elaborate upon or creatively alter the source material (Donald, 2011). Additionally, this may be a case of partial adjustment, as described by Dragojevic et al. (2016). (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017, p. 16)

The table below, like Table 10 for greetings, shows sequences of three or more emails within each set containing at least one matched sign-off token (e.g. 'best wishes' followed by 'best regards' would count as a matched token).

	longest sequence of emails (≥3) using at least one matched sign-off token	% emails in sequences (≥3) with at least one matched sign-off token	Total emails in set
Meera	0	0%	66
Supaksorn	7	8%	147
Hassan	4	18%	62
Ruth	6	19%	120
Alice	8	26%	96
Irma	5	38%	37
Hai	4	39%	54
Victoria	10	40%	60
Avin	4	49%	55
Dana	10	63%	40
[Zétény]	21	67%	145
Imran	25	79%	73

Table 11: Email sequences with at least one matched sign-off token (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017, p. 18)

Not present in the Marsden and Kádár (2017) paper is an analysis of email length as indicative of mimesis. The following assessment uses only those clients where Liz and the client had each sent ≥10 emails, in order to give more valid averages. PhD permission request emails (see Appendix 11.7) were omitted for the same reason as given in the preface to Graph 4, p. 84.

Client	Liz av. word count (total 28858 words, 455 emails)	Client av. word count (29931 words, 510 emails)	Liz:Client word count ratio
Ivie	34.45	18.35	1.88 :1
Dana	47.82	37.61	1.27 :1
Hai	48.20	37.48	1.29 :1
Hassan	39.83	36.16	1.10 :1
Irma	73.11	39.41	1.86 :1
Meera	65.00	40.45	1.61 :1
Sofia	52.28	44.91	1.16 :1
Imran	57.11	47.81	1.19 :1
Victoria	41.55	45.62	0.91 :1
Avin	69.79	52.48	1.33 :1
Ruth	56.35	56.00	1.01 :1
Zétény	80.44	71.13	1.13 :1
Alice	72.42	71.72	1.01 :1
Supaksorn	80.00	99.43	0.80 :1
Average	63.42	58.68	1.08 :1
Correlation	0.766		

Table 12: Liz and Clients' average word count per email

As can be seen in the table above, the correlation score shows a fairly strong correlation between Liz and Client word counts, indicating that as the clients write more, so does Liz and vice versa. Liz's average word count is 63.42 words per email for the selected conversations. In the case of Ivie, who writes very short emails, even though Liz was writing emails far below her average length, she was still not writing as little as Ivie, whereas with Supaksorn, where Liz was writing far above her average, her ratio was still only 0.8:1. This may indicate that only partial accommodation is taking place (Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 38). Liz's behaviour with Irma on the other hand may be indicative of divergence; Liz is writing significantly more than her average, but not in order to mimic the client's email length. This can be seen in the ratio, where Liz's email length skews the ratio to 1.86:1.

One feature that is obvious when looking at Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12 is that Meera shows a large variation in how she signs off (see Appendix 11.2, Table 32, p. 313 for the statistics on signing off) and how she greets, additionally showing no visible convergence towards Liz or maintenance of her personal style. Her short email length also leads to the second largest ratio in the dataset for Liz:Client word count (1.61:1). One might assume that this would mean Meera's emails, and possibly also Liz's emails to Meera, display few reinforcing characteristics. However, when analysed qualitatively, there are many features indicative of affective writing, such as use of emoticons, exclamation marks, paying compliments and showing emotional involvement. All of these features of Meera's emails can be seen in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on the statistical qualities of the data, using these first to illuminate some of the shortcomings of prior email studies in terms of their methodological rigour in presenting their data. It is hoped that the statistics presented here will allow future researchers the ability to compare and contrast databases of their choosing. The statistical analysis shown in Table 4, p. 63, was able to show a possible bias in the data used for this thesis. By comparing parameters put forth as indicative of the presence of a stronger tie, such as frequent contact and knowing the person in different circumstances (i.e. by email and face-to-face) (Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009), the clients who were contacted, but did not respond to my request to include them in this project could be compared with the study participants. This showed the possibility that those who responded had a stronger functional tie with Liz than those who did not. This may have biased the study towards strong functional relationships, rather than weaker or dysfunctional ones (see relational network model in section 2.4).

On the theme of showing relationship building through statistical methods, the final section of the chapter, which focussed on mimesis, showed how participants may be adjusting structural elements of their emails, e.g. greeting, sign-off and email length in order to mimic their conversational partner. This mimicry has been shown in the literature to potentially lead to increased feelings of closeness and liking of the conversational partner (see Dragojevic et al., 2016; Giles, 2016).

The analysis of reply times and emails sent in a single day for each conversation gave a rough benchmark of how often participants are using and checking their emails, which is in contrast to a few studies in the literature which indicated email was only used once a day or every few days (e.g. Cho, 2010). This is useful for comparing the usage of email over time and assessing its importance as a communication medium in modern day business and academia.

The chapter's network mapping gives a visual guide which can be referred back to when reading the rest of the study to remind the reader who is related to whom and in what way. This relational mapping also showed who some of the key referrers in the dataset are.

In this thesis, different participants are shown to use differing individual strategies to indicate their liking or affection towards their writing partner. The absence or presence of a single feature cannot be used alone to indicate the presence or absence of affection/closeness/a strong functional tie. This is what the thesis hopes to achieve: showing that there are a multitude of ways in which participants can become close, and that individual written idiolect has a strong influence, alongside culture, on what strategies are chosen. The following chapter begins this investigation by looking at the initial emails sent between the Clients and Liz in order to show how ties are initially formed.

Chapter 5 Tie Creation

"What are the benefits of speaking to your fans via e-mail?
It's quicker, easier, and involves less licking." – Douglas Adams (2002, p. 101)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the qualitative analysis of the creation of the network between Liz and her clients, and how initial relationships are established; "relative location within existing networks influences the likelihood of tie formation; … [and] particular attributes of nodes … make ties more or less likely to occur" (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009). This discussion is expanded in the following four chapters, showing how the connections between participants are reinforced, maintained, repaired and decay (see glossary, section 2.4, p. 26). In reviewing the literature on network ties, I found few studies focussing on how connections and networks were developed (Shen & Chen, 2015, is an exception) as most focussed on behaviours and changes in networks that already existed, or in defining different types of networks (Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Burt, 2001; Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012). These latter studies paid much attention to how nodes in the networks were interacting, and what relationships existed between them, but did not investigate or speculate into how the network was formed and came to have its particular structure in the first place.

The upcoming discussion is therefore situated in a small amount of literature, the majority of which is not focussed on network tie theory, but rather describes the formation of relationships from other standpoints. For example, Goffman's *Relations in Public* contains much pertinent thought on the nature of creating a relationship between two previously unacquainted persons:

> In all societies there are "anchored relations" (or "pegged" ones) such that each end identifies the other personally, knows the other does likewise, and openly acknowledges to the other that an irrevocable starting has been made between them – the establishment of a framework of mutual knowing, which retains, organizes, and applies the experience the ends have of one another. (Goffman, 1971, p. 189)

This paragraph perfectly illustrates what this chapter establishes, and what the further analysis chapters go on to describe: it is this "irrevocable starting" and "establishment of a framework of mutual knowing" upon which this chapter focusses. As Milroy and Milroy state, "a fundamental postulate of network analysts is that individuals create personal communities that provide them with a meaningful framework for solving the problems of their day-to-day existence" (Milroy & Milroy, 1992, p. 2). This is certainly true of a business relationship, such as the ones in this thesis' dataset, which were established to achieve a particular goal of proofreading. As far as the creation of a community goes, Davies makes clear that this can be done through language: "Communities of practice characterize membership as being **created** and maintained through social practices (linguistic or otherwise) at a local level" (Davies, 2005, p. 557, my emboldening). Linguistic practices are, of course, especially important for my data, which explores network formation in a "dislocated environment" (O'Driscoll, 2011, p. 27) where participants rarely or never share the same physical space, thus making the language they share of the utmost importance.

The quoted sources have so far all focussed on face-to-face communication, though their findings and theories can be applied here. Others however have looked specifically at the process of forming relationships online (such as Saville-Troike, 2003; Huang & Shyu, 2009; Shen & Chen, 2015 etc.), explaining that patterned rules of communication, reduced cues and sometimes asynchronicity make this an effective medium for relationship creation, to which the proliferation of online dating websites is surely a testament.

As to how these relationships begin, whether online or face-to-face, both Gremler and Gwinner (2008, p. 316) and Fraser (2011, p. 103) state that establishing initial common ground, whether or not this is task-oriented (if indeed there is a task-based reason for the interaction) is crucial. Homophily, a.k.a. commonalities are cited as a factor in having a strong tie (Granovetter, 1973; Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005), and the presence of common ground is seen to influence the reaction of one node to another, making them more inclined to be lenient, generous and loyal (Gremler & Gwinner, 2008; Fraser, 2011). This reaction can be towards a company or brand, or towards an individual. To conclude, again with Goffman: "[A] relationship has...a natural history; it starts, develops, has turning points attenuations, and one of a small set of available terminations." (1971, p. 193).

In order to examine this relational history step-by-step, we begin at the beginning by looking at the first-contact emails between Liz and her clients. These first-contacts were made in two ways, either by the client getting in touch themselves (13 cases) or by the client and Liz being introduced by a referrer (6 cases). As each of these alternatives are significantly different in terms of relational historicity, i.e. referrers know Liz, while clients do not, they are examined separately.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, the client-initiated first-contact emails are analysed in terms of what details about themselves are initially presented to Liz, how they express their service needs, what clients' reveal about their pre-existing knowledge of Liz or her service and whether they mention a referrer, plus, how the relationship then proceeds. Secondly, the referrer-initiated first-contact emails are analysed in terms of the referrers' pre-existing relationships with Liz, what details the referrer provides to Liz and the client about the opposite party, and how the referrer directs the introduced parties to continue what has been initiated and what actually happens as a result. In these cases of referrer-initiated contact, the first emails from Liz and the client coming after those emails are also analysed to see how the initiated contact proceeds. Finally, some conclusions and comparisons are drawn. This investigation into first-contact emails was inductively derived; each subsection is informed by the data. Other first-contact emails in different datasets might introduce information that cannot be explained or fit into these headings, but all first-contact emails in this thesis' dataset can be explained this way.

5.2 Client-initiated first-contact

Client-initiated first-contact emails are interesting in that they offer a "punctuated" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, pp. 74–76) view of time: "a discrete, independent evaluative moment on the part of either the speaker or the hearer" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 271). By this, I mean that the writers are communicating with little or no prior knowledge or expectations of each other. Of course, unlike two strangers meeting in a café, in my data the clients at least know one thing: the profession of the business owner. Therefore, there is a certain amount of pre-defined knowledge. Given this small amount of pre-existing knowledge, and the fact that these are business, rather than personal emails, it is unsurprising that these initial emails follow a fairly similar structure in most cases. It is also noticeable that writers attempt to create a friendly relationship, establish common ground and begin to create an "emergent" view of time that is "mutually independent on the interlinked understandings of two or more participants" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 265). By this I mean that the first-contact emails set the scene for the continuing future relationship.

Taboada states: "speakers employ resources when building conversations. These resources contribute to overall coherence and cohesion, constructed interactively as speakers build on each other's contributions." (2004, p. xv) and this is the same for writers. In an email conversation, each email is used as a starting point for the next. This interlinking of the past with the present is described by Kádár and Haugh as "emergent"; "we can understand time as historicity; the ongoing linking of the here-and-now with the there-and-then (i.e. over time)" (2013, p. 76, original emboldening removed). In looking at first-contact emails one removes this historicity; the only knowledge the initiator has is limited to a personal recommendation or even simply a name and brief description, depending on how they have heard about the business. This is clear in the subsections below; the writers have only second-hand knowledge and aim to quickly build a personal relationship with the service-provider. In some instances, such as when clients initiated first-contact using the business website contact form, if no overt reference is made to how they heard about the business it is impossible to guess how much they knew about their reader.[31]

First-contact emails are all about self-introduction. Clients present their names, plus a range of information such as who they are, what they do, where they are from, who they know and what they know about the business. This can all be described as personal/self-disclosure, which can be defined as "open and appropriate information revealing" (Jandt, 2004, p. 45). As Walther suggests, the nature of the communication in terms of goals and how much one knows about the conversational partner and the desirability of that conversational partner can motivate "selective self-presentation" (Walther, 2007, p. 2545). The self-presentation analysed here is certainly "selective"; clients focus on their academic

[31] It should be noted that the website does not have a large online presence and is very unlikely to be a result on the first or even second page of search engine results if only general terms relating to proofreading are used. Thus, it can be assumed that clients who used the contact form did not find the website by chance, and have some pre-existing knowledge of the business, as is stated in Victoria's first-contact email.

credentials, and generally describe themselves in academic terms, as this is pertinent to the interaction. The initial tie that is created through these self-disclosures, and Liz's responses to them.

5.2.1 Making first impressions

The first impression one gets of an email interlocutor is what they have chosen to write in their subject line. This is "an informative header line." (Khosravi-Bardsirpour, 1999, p. 92) that "serves to set the scene" (Cheung, 2008, p. 171), and is the first thing the recipient sees before opening the email. This is seen along with the sender's name; this appears in the format in which they entered it when they signed up for the email service they are using – or in an institutionally designated format (if using, for example, a university email address).

The client-initiated first-contact emails appeared as follows:

	Client	Sender identification	Subject
(2)	Ivie	Ivie	(No subject)
(3)	Alya	Alya al-Badri [2008 student number]	a Phd research student
(4)	Abdessalam	Shamekh_1985@yahoo.co.uk	New Form Entry: Contact Form
(5)	Victoria	victorialee@gmail.com	New Form Entry: Contact Form
(6)	Imran	imran malik	Reques
(7)	Miyako	Miyako Kojima	Zétény Bathory's recommendation
(8)	Sofia	Sofia	I am student of [university] and i need proof reading
(9)	Meera	MK	Proof Reading
(10)	Irma	Irma Biya	Proof reading
(11)	Dana	Dana Hodza [2008 student number]	proof reading
(12)	Supaksorn	Supaksorn Sangprathum	Proofreader wanted
(13)	Hassan	Ahhm2012@yahoo.com	proofreading
(14)	Lovemore	Lovemore Matongo	Proofreading

Table 13: Client sender name and subject line

The subject lines "New Form Entry: Contact Form" (4) & (5) show that the client contacted Liz using her website. When this happens, the form entry is automatically forwarded to Liz, as if from the client's email account (but with the formatting and subject line imposed by the contact form retained) so that Liz can reply directly to the client's email address.

As can be seen in Table 13, emails (8)–(14) all used the subject line to state what service they required, instantly allowing Liz to infer that this is a business email, and giving her some idea of the type of request therein. These clients give a clear indication of what they want, and show their knowledge of the addressee's services; this begins to form a tie based on a clear business-client interaction.

Alya (3) (and also Sofia (8)) chooses on the other hand to define herself as the sender, in this case by her academic role. Alya may have many roles in her life but in this case it is her role as a student, and specifically a doctoral student, which she considers most relevant. Sofia also mentions her student identity, along with the university she attends. It may be that by mentioning this university Sofia wishes to show an immediate connection in common with Liz, as she (may) know Liz that has a connection with this institution. Similarly, Miyako's subject line "Zétény Bathory's Recommendation" emphasises an existing connection. It looks quite unusual because Miyako straddles the border between her first-contact being client-initiated and referrer-initiated, as Zétény had talked to Liz face-to-face, prior to this email, about Miyako's work and had told Liz to expect Miyako's contact. Liz had in Miyako's case agreed to do the work before first-contact was even initiated. Therefore, the subject line referencing Zétény is very pertinent as it was through him acting as an intermediary that the work was agreed.

A perhaps unintentional part of the clients' first impressions comes from their sender identification and email address. This is not decided on a case-by-case basis by the sender (in the sense that they cannot determine what ID they present to a designated recipient), but is a function of whatever email system they are using and what information they entered when signing up. Nevertheless, it impacts and informs the recipient. For example, Supaksorn's sender ID (12) is the only indication of her full name, as she only ever signs off emails as 'Ploy' which is quickly understood to be a nickname. The use of this nickname may then be interpreted as an intimate gesture.[32] For Alya and Dana (3) & (11) the inclusion of their student numbers (both beginning 08) informs Liz that they became members of the institution in 2008, while Abdessalam's inclusion of '1985' could be a clue to his age. All

[32] In this case, it was later made clear that nicknames were simply typical in Ploy's Southeast Asian country and it was normal to use one frequently. However, Liz initially did not have this knowledge.

these bits of information, together with what is contained in the main body of the email, begin to build a picture of the client, forming the basis on which the tie will be built.

Next, the chapter examines the main body text to see how the clients constructed themselves, what roles they chose to emphasise, and how they named themselves.

5.2.2 Personal details

As discussed further in section 6.2.1, self-construction is the starting point of forming a relationship. Getting to know someone's name, and in the case of business, who they are and why they have got in touch, are often the very first details disclosed which help form the initial tie.

In the table below, the client-initiated first-contact emails have been broken down into their component parts to show what was disclosed by different clients in terms of their name and any personal details not relating to their work, service needs or recommendation, all of which are discussed later. In terms of the names clients gave themselves, in the table numbers (17)–(23) were only named in their sign-off and by their sender ID as shown in the last section. Participants (15) & (16) both used the website contact form which has a 'name' field, therefore they provided their names here and in their sign-offs. (24)–(27) all chose to introduce themselves in the main body of their emails, and then signed off with their names. For clients (15), (16) & (24)–(27) the name box has been split to show the different ways their names were given in the different parts of the text.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Name</th><th>Self-construction</th></tr>
<tr><td>(15)</td><td><code>contact form</code>
Name
Abdel Sham</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
I look forward to hearing from you soon
Kind Regards
Shamekh</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(16)</td><td><code>contact form</code>
Name
Huilang Lee</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
Sincerely
Victoria</td><td>I hold lloys bank. I live in [city].</td></tr>
<tr><td>(17)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Ibie [misspelt)</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(18)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
THANKS
Best regards,
Imran Malik</td><td>I am doing PhD from [university] Business School.</td></tr>
<tr><td>(19)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Looking forward to yr reply. Ploy</td><td>I'm Mike’s [MSref] PhD student in pragmatics. My nationality is [Southeast Asian].
++ About me and my research topic: [Blogspot link]</td></tr>
<tr><td>(20)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Meera</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(21)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Thank you,
Sofia Bonilla</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(22)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Thank you.
Best wishes,
Dana</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(23)</td><td colspan="2"><code>sign-off</code>
Thanks ever so much
Kind regards
Irma</td><td>I am a PhD student at [university].</td></tr>
<tr><td>(24)</td><td>I am Alya al-Badri</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
I look forward to hear from you</td><td>a [North African] student in my last year. ++
I am studying in the [subject] department</td></tr>
<tr><td>(25)</td><td>I am Hassan Maziq</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
Hassan Maziq</td><td>master student</td></tr>
<tr><td>(26)</td><td>My name is Lovemore</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
Kind regards,
Lovemore Matongo,</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>(27)</td><td>Please let me introduce myself. My name is Miyako Kojima</td><td><code>sign-off</code>
With best wishes,
Miyako</td><td>I am an MA student ++ Zétény told me that he will sort out the financial details of the proofreading with you (and that he will get in touch with you about this in a minute).</td></tr>
</table>

Table 14: Client-initiated first-contact emails – self-construction

The table above can be understood to present information on three different things: the clients' self-naming, their manner of signing off, and any information they gave which was purely about self-construction. As Locher states:

> there is a straightforward link between relational work and identity construction (Locher, 2008). Interactants take their face needs…into account when using language. The work they invest, i.e. the choices they make in interaction in situ, is what we term relational work, and the result of their choices is identity construction. (Locher, 2013, p. 146)

Taking first the self-naming, those clients who introduce themselves, or sign their names using their full name, (examples (18), (21), (24), (25), (26) and (27)) may be showing their cultural values regarding the expected degree of formality in a business or first-introduction email. This could of course be personal, rather than culture-based, but whatever the writer's reason, the effect on the British reader is to increase the formality of the email, whereas those with single name introductions appear more informal. When referring to (in)formality here, the existing literature provides a guide of what features of emails can be taken as indicative of writing being more or less formal. Generally, formal email writing uses both openings and closings, specifically opening with "Dear" (Waldvogel, 2007, p. 472; McKeown & Zhang, 2015, p. 95) and closing with "regards" or "best" (McKeown & Zhang, 2015, p. 95). Additionally, grammar, syntax, layout and word choices are standard as opposed to colloquial or grammatically incomplete (Keila & Skillicorn, 2005, p. 184; Stanley, 2015, p. 242) and the recipient may be addressed using titles and their full name, though this varies by culture (Murphy & Levy, 2006). On the other hand, informality is expressed through personalised and more speech-like writing (Gimenez, 2000; Cho, 2010), missing address or closing terms, or use of terms such as "Hi/Hey/Hello" or "cheers" (McKeown & Zhang, 2015, p. 95), non-standard punctuation and CMC cues may be present (Cho, 2010; Skovholt et al., 2014; Teh, Rayson, Piao, & Pak, 2015), the lexicon is more casual, there is less careful editing, humour/sarcasm may be present, and first names are commonly used (Baron, 1998, p. 147).

Taking these clients' greeting and sign-off (shown in Table 17, p. 113) into account, all but Alya and Lovemore greet with "Dear", which was shown by McKeown and Zhang (2015) to increase email formality. So it is not just full name usage which constructs the introductory email as formal. Hassan and Imran also choose to include Liz's full name when addressing her – as does Victoria who also uses “Dear”, which also adds to formality. Formality can be seen as an important part of politeness, especially in Eastern cultures, as shown by Murphy and Levy (2006), which does appear to correlate with those clients who used more formal features (“dear”, “regards”, full names of themselves or Liz). These clients’ broad nationalities (Alya, Hassan, Miyako, Lovemore, Abdessalam, Victoria, Sofia and Imran) can be found in Table 3, p. 61. Miyako’s introduction stands out as different from the others, and it may be in this case that ‘let **me** introduce **myself**” is a reference to the fact that she has already been introduced by Zétény to Liz in a circumstance where she was not even a bystander and therefore had no input. This may then reflect that she wishes to form her own tie with Liz, independent of Zétény – although she does at the same time reaffirm her tie to him with her supplementary information about Zétény’s responsibility for the payment of the work.

Ivie’s introduction is also notable in that she has misspelled her own name. Liz is unaware of this, and in her next email uses this variant spelling to address her. This misspelling may indicate the haste of message writing on Ivie’s part, or support the assertion made by Baron (1998, p. 140) that writers do not pause to edit their emails before they send them, behaving as if they were “ephemeral”. This assertion is also supported by Keila and Skillicorn who state that “Although the potential for editing email exists, anecdotal evidence suggests that this rarely happens” (2005, p. 184).[33]

As for signing off procedures, examples (17), (20) & (25) choose name only, while example (24) does not include a name at all and all the others use a name plus sign-off phrase. An interesting thing to look at here is whether this usage is typical for the client or not. For this discussion, please refer to Table 31 in the Appendix which lists clients’ greeting term usage for all clients who sent above 30 emails. For those clients above who sent sufficient emails, the normalcy of their chosen sign-off when compared to their sign-offs across the whole dataset is as follows:

[33] This is not the only example in the data of the writer misspelling their own name or the recipient’s name (or indeed, accidentally substituting the recipient’s name for their own), e.g. “Lkisa” [Lisa: 5] “Dear Loz” [Avin: 35] also see email [Liz to Ruth: 89] example (328), p. 270. These mistakes cannot be blamed on not knowing how to spell these words, therefore they must be attributed to a lack of proofreading.

	Client	First-contact sign-off	Typical sign-off?
(28)	Dana	Thank you. Best wishes, Dana	Yes: Best (45%[34]), wishes (45%), thank* (40%)
(29)	Hassan	Hassan Maziq	Second most used category after 'your faithfully' at 32%. Name only (29%)
(30)	Imran	THANKS Best regards, Imran Malik	Yes: Best (100%), regards (59%), thank* (21%)
(31)	Irma	Thanks ever so much Kind regards Irma	Yes: Kind (89%), regards (89%), thank* (33%)
(32)	Meera	Meera	Yes, style very mixed, but name only is client's most frequent category (36%)
(33)	Supaksorn	Looking forward to yr reply. Ploy	No: name only (64%) most frequent.
(34)	Victoria	Sincerely Victoria	No: best (84%), wishes (45%) most frequent.

Table 15: First-contact versus usual sign-offs

Examples (28)–(32) show these clients using their default, or at least often-used, sign-off behaviours. At this point, they have no ability to tune their language to Liz's in terms of sign-off term usage, formality etc. (see section 4.5 on mimesis) as they do not have a sample of her writing to use as reference, therefore they may use a term they are comfortable with, or one that they produce by rote. Examples (33) & (34) on the other hand show clients using terms which do not reflect their typical usage across their email dataset. For Supaksorn, the sign-off is contextually appropriate as it is the 'reply' which she is awaiting that will show that a relationship has begun and a tie has been established. The use of 'looking forward' may also be a tactic to induce Liz to reply by emphasising that this relationship is positively anticipated. Victoria on the other hand perhaps uses a formal sign-off as the relationship is only just beginning and she cannot yet gauge how formal/informal Liz expects these emails to be. Gimenez (2000, p. 242) noted that first-time contact in emails was less informal compared to language between those with established contact. Additionally, the use of 'best' in a signing off reflects Liz's most frequent usage and it may be that Victoria later alters her signing off behaviour to mimic Liz's as a signal of their reinforced tie and her approval of Liz; "when we are more concerned with others, depend more on them, feel

[34] For an explanation of how these percentages were derived and how to interpret them, please see the original and exhaustive table in the Appendix, section 11.2.

closer to them, or want to be liked by them, we tend to take over their behaviour to greater extent.” (van Baaren et al., 2009, p. 2382).

Even small elements such as finishing an email and introducing oneself begin to form a picture for the recipient and establish the interaction as formal or informal, friendly or professional. To take probably the most extreme comparison between the clients, compare Supaksorn’s conversational style, high level of self-disclosure, personal questions to Liz and informal spelling “Mike said, you run a business in proofreading. Is it still yr full-time job? I don't mind if you have your teamwork under yr name as far as you can control the quality.” to Abdessalam’s very formal and respectful style and succinct business focus “I am writing to you with all respect wondering If you could do proof-reading to my first year report.”. Supaksorn’s style gives the responder far more potential to write about themselves and their opinions in detail than Abdessalam, thus giving greater opportunity for a stronger tie, if desired, to form. Abdessalam on the other hand employs tactics of conventional politeness (statement of respect, request phrased as a question – conventional indirectness (Pilegaard, 1997)). While this does not give much opportunity for an initial strong functional bond to form in terms of moving the relationship towards friendship and away from simply business concerns, it does allow business to proceed smoothly by giving enough information and establishing that this relationship will be based on mutual working towards a common goal. The reason for this may be cultural, Supaksorn, who is Southeast Asian, states in an email “**We are so nice, patient and value long-term relationship**” [Supaksorn: 146, bolds original] when referring to “**foreigners of collective culture**”. Therefore, relationship building and forming strong functional ties may be conceived as an integral part of business. Abdessalam on the other hand may value, or think that Liz would value, direct communication that is to-the-point and allows work to progress quickly. Supaksorn-style communication is the focus of Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, while Abdessalam-style communication is described in Chapter 8.

In terms of self-construction used by the clients in their first-contact emails, Table 14 shows that not all clients provide this additional detail beyond talking about referrers and service wants. Some however choose to, and it is interesting to note the information they share here. Around half of the clients give some additional information. This includes: nationality (Alya and Supaksorn), study level (Imran, Supaksorn, Irma, Hassan and Miyako), academic department/supervisor (Supaksorn, Alya, Imran, Irma), place of residence (Victoria) and further information about research topic (Supaksorn). At this stage, which is not the case later, (as seen in the next chapter, where participants may talk about their holidays, cultures etc.), the information given can all be seen as business related. Victoria's disclosure of place of residence was part of a payment discussion; stating nationality may indicate that the clients' first language is not English which may affect proofreading requirements; study level gives an indication of assignment length and level of English knowledge. These details are relevant, and build upon an increasingly detailed picture of who the client is, which is helpful for forming a stronger tie.

Next, I look to the clients' disclosure of received recommendations. Stating these referrals and what information was disclosed about the business and by whom starts to illuminate common ties between business owner and client, thus reinforcing the relationship (Granovetter, 1973) and allows the clients to pass on second-hand compliments. It is also part of self-construction in the sense that the client defines themselves, or their "social identity" by their relationship to others (Spencer-Oatey, 2002, p. 9).

5.2.3 Pre-existing client knowledge

Those clients who did not have their referrers write to Liz directly (referrer-initiated first-contact, section 5.3) were often motivated to mention their referrers in their emails. This serves multiple purposes: Liz knows that the client is genuine – by linking themselves to someone Liz already knows they reassure her of the honest nature of their request, and, if the referrer is a trusted contact of Liz's, the client may gain some of that trust by association: "The higher the level of customers' credibility-based trust relationship with a provider, the more willing they will be to provide referrals." (Law, 2008, p. 675).

Mentioning of a referrer may also signal in-group membership, by claiming a mutually-known person as a friend or acquaintance, the client shows that their network connections overlap Liz's network connections, showing them both to be part of a wider social network.[35] This can be seen visually in the network and mentioning diagrams, pages 67-73. An assertion, or suggestion, of in-group identity may also be considered important for obtaining favourable treatment. As Yun Kim suggests, we are likely to be subjective and favour the in-group whilst discriminating against the out-group (2012, p. 86). Leider et al. (2007, p. 25) also found in their investigation using games to test altruistic behaviour that "decision-makers do not treat friends of friends significantly more generously than strangers. Yet the corresponding comparison of estimates of partners' expectations show that partners expect friends of friends to be almost twice as generous as strangers". This is interesting, as mentioning a referrer may reflect a belief that this will make the business owner more generous, as the client is claiming a friend-of-a-friend relationship, when however, no such generosity/preferential treatment is actually forthcoming.

From the customers' perspective, hearing referrals from friends and colleagues who have heard about or used the service is useful. These potential customers "use WOM word-of-mouth referrals for reassurance or confirmation that they are making the right decision… or to sort through multiple alternatives" (Dobele & Lindgreen, 2011, p. 272). Regarding why a customer would choose to recommend a business in the first place, customers will endorse firms based on a number of factors, such as the strength and functionality of the network tie between them and the business, and having shared values (Law, 2008, p. 674). As Shao et al. state, "Traditional customer referral is a kind of informal and non-commercial communication of products or service between customers for the purpose of sharing consuming experience, increasing self-identity and sense of belonging." (2014, p. 169). Therefore, even when a business does not offer financial rewards or other benefits for making referrals (as Liz's does not), customers are motivated to refer for philanthropic and friendship-based reasons. By referring, they are not only reinforcing their own network ties, but those of the business to the wider consumer base as well, therefore everyone benefits. The same is true for the referrer-initiated first-contact emails in section 5.3.

These links, through referrals, between clients and other clients, or members of the wider network can also be seen graphically in Figure 10—Figure 15 (pp. 71-75). These figures show

[35] From a Brown and Levinsonian point of view, this positive politeness of "giving H the feeling of being in-group" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 70) can count towards undoing the damage of some face threat. If the client therefore perceives that their requesting Liz to do work is face threatening, this may be a way of redressing the damage.

that while some mentions are just in the context of a referral, i.e., they happen once, for others the third party has a greater role in the dyadic relationship between Liz and the client. See for example, the frequent mentions of "MSref" (Mike) by "SS" (Supaksorn) in Figure 13. Mentions of recommendations in emails directly from clients were phrased as follows (all emboldening added):

(35) **Ruth** gave me you e-mail address. [Ivie: 1]

(36) **my friend Ploy** has told me about you [Alya: 1]

(37) I received your e-mail address from **Zétény Bathory** who told me that you would be willing to help in the proofreading of my dissertation [Miyako: 1]

(38) **my friend Aditya Farooq** gave me your email. [Imran: 1]

(39) **Charley Bowie** give your contact because i need someone who make to my dissertation proof reading [Sofia: 1]

(40) **My colleague** recommended you. [Irma: 1]

(41) You are the person **Mike** firstly recommended; / he trusts in your langauge ability. ++ I don't mind if you have your teamwork under yr name as far as you can control the quality. [Supaksorn: 1]

(42) **Mr Aditya Farooq (School of Business Studies)** referred me your name for proof reading of my work with some reasonable rates. [Meera: 1]

(43) **My colleague John** suggested you as the right person for proof reading. :) [Dana: 1]

(44) **My friend Sofia** recommended me that you are perfect at proofreading. Definitely my friend is **one of your client** and she got the first class last year. Hence i aware of choosing you must a good choice. [Victoria: 1]

Missing from the above examples are Hassan, Lovemore and Abdessalam who did not mention any referrers. As can be seen above, Irma (40) is the only client who mentions a referrer, but not by name. All the others who mention a referrer give the full name, given name or nickname. Mentioning referrers by using their names illuminates existing network ties between mutual acquaintances, therefore, it is important to make clear who your referrer is. When her clients accomplish this, Liz becomes more connected to the client, and may project certain positive elements of the referrer onto the client by association ('the friend of my friend is my friend' mentality (Pujari, Vinay, & Vishal, 2013, p. 89)). The mentioning of a name builds an immediate emergent connection, by talking about someone Liz is familiar with, the client and business owner instantly have something in common beyond the need to do business.

As well as making the referrer's identity clear, about half of the clients provide some indication of their relationship to that referrer e.g. friend or colleague. These differing terms may serve to indicate the closeness of relationship between the referrer and referee. As mentioned above, having a closer relationship with someone who Liz likes and respects may reflect positively upon the customer who that person referred.

As can be seen in examples (41)–(44) four clients included complimentary information about Liz and her business; this is another tactic for making a good first impression. As Incelli states, in business emails "the language is adeptly chosen to create a favourable business relationship" (Incelli, 2013). These compliments all address Liz's ability to carry out her services, which is understandable in the context of punctuated communication where knowledge of the addressee is limited. Additionally, these compliments are also all second hand.[36] The knowledge which informed these compliments comes from the person who referred the client to Liz, i.e. Mike, John, Aditya and Sofia. These compliments effectively list the qualities upon which the client has made the decision to choose Liz as their service provider "you are the person Mike firstly recommended, he trusts in your language ability", "reasonable rates", "the right person for proof reading", "you are perfect at proofreading. Definitely my friend… got the first class last year.". These assertions of good service provision and good results could have a tangible effect on the outcome, as Bargh et al. (2002) state:

> Believing that one's partner possesses such idealized qualities also has a way of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy; it is well-established that treating one's partner with such expectations and assumptions has the effect of producing those very behaviors and qualities. (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002, p. 45)

Bargh et al. (2002) are writing specifically about CMC interactions. They found that the projection of idealised qualities onto one's conversational partner helped to establish close relationships over the internet, and was "facilitated by the absence of the traditional gating features that dominate initial liking and relationship formation" (Bargh et al., 2002, p. 45) in face-to-face conversation. This suggests that the medium itself is helpful in helping clients build an impression of Liz as an idealised business-person. Nevertheless, her actual

[36] See more second hand compliments that occur later in the email conversations in sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3.

interactions and how she continues the relationship may confound or confirm these assumptions. This links to Law's assertion that giving referrals can be risky, as the referrer is responsible for the accuracy of the information (Law, 2008, p. 670).

Having discussed the clients' first impressions, self-construction, connection to a wider network and knowledge of the business in terms of second-hand compliments, the next section discusses the services the clients seek to obtain from Liz.

5.2.4 Service and information needs

Interestingly, though there are nineteen individual participants, their requests for information and action are similar. They generally cover four topics: Liz's availability, the time needed to complete the job and the possibility of meeting face-to-face and the cost.

Below are listed the clients' service requests:

(45)	Abdessalam	I am writing to you with all respect wondering If you could do proof-reading to my first year report. my work is around 5700 words. Could you please let me how long does it take for to finish it and how much does it cost
(46)	Victoria	Today i contact you that i have two essays need proofreading. My deadline of submission is at 13th. Jan. 2014. I would like to know that do you have enough time to help me proofreading. Because i am not sure if you are on vacation due to christmas holiday. In addition, i would like to know the price of proofreading for two essays. One is 4000words and another is 5000words. And could you help me to do plagiarism check?
(47)	Ivie	I wonder if you can proof read my essay please.
(48)	Imran	I want to do a proofreading of my thesis
(49)	Supaksorn	We are looking for the thesis proofreader. ++ Do you have available time in October - December? Please check my English in the attached file. Also, please offer the rate of price and the length of time you need (per 10 pages for example, or whatever from your experience) This information would be useful for our decision-making.
(50)	Meera	for proof reading of my work with some reasonable rates. Can you please let me know in case you can help and tell me about how much do you charge
(51)	Sofia	because i need someone who make to my dissertation proof reading. I would like to know if you are available today to talk price and how long it take.

(52)	Dana	I'm about to finish my thesis and need somebody to check grammar etc. I was just wondering if you are interested and have time to do so.
(53)	Irma	I will like u to proof read my thesis. The work will be forwarded to u around the 19 - 25 of June. Please do send me some info re: costings.
(54)	Alya	so please I need to meet you to explain to you
(55)	Hassan	I have an easy nearly 5000 thousand wards I need proofreading. so please tell me what is the price for each paper and how long does it take?
(56)	Lovemore	am enabling to ask how much it will cost for proof reading an assignment?
(57)	Miyako	Zétény Bathory who told me that you would be willing to help in the proofreading of my dissertation (he told me that he mentioned this to you, and that you agreed to do this after 11 August).

Requests for price are phrased similarly throughout (see: (46), (49) & (55)). These requests usually have a politeness marker such as 'please' close or adjacent to the request, or the request is phrased as a declarative or interrogative making it less direct. These features ensure the transaction runs smoothly; by behaving in a politic manner (Locher & Watts, 2005), misunderstandings or inferences of rudeness are avoided. In fact, only one participant, Lovemore (56) does not preface his request for prices with some form of mitigation or "'polite" formulaic utterances" (Watts, 2003, p. 1) like 'please'. Example (56) shows fairly deviant English due to the unusual use of the word 'enabling'; however, as Incelli found in her data, in the process of conducting business, recipients of such emails tend to ignore such unorthodoxies[37] for the sake of completing the transaction (Incelli, 2013). This can be seen in Liz's reply:

(58) HI Lovemore,

the price depends on the length of the document as I charge per 100 words. It is also dependant on the quality of the writing. [Liz to Lovemore: 2]

This reply proceeds in the way expected for a usual business transaction. Here the deviant language is treated as a non-issue, it is not so deviant it is incomprehensible and correcting it or commenting on it would serve no purpose. It is not only polite to ignore it (nothing would be gained by humiliating a client), but commenting would add needless extra words to a normally concise medium and would not serve to facilitate the business transaction.

[37] I have chosen to use the somewhat uncommon term 'unorthodoxies' here, as alternative terms such as 'incongruencies' or 'infelicities' connote clumsiness and impropriety and I do not want to fall into the trap of labelling non-standard English as bad or wrong (or worse, the product of laziness or insufficient care).

Understandably, as well as price, participants are interested in knowing the duration of time needed to complete the job, and the service provider's availability. These requests for information are again phrased fairly similarly across the board, see (45), (46) & (49). These requests are again very polite, there are no demands, all clients are very understanding; Victoria (46) even mentioning that she knows it is a holiday period. Again, this fosters an atmosphere of mutual understanding, friendliness and compromise; business goes both ways, and though this is not a business-to-business interaction, these emails still mark the beginning of a two-way relationship.

As for clients giving details about their work, some requests such as Alya's (54) are very vague, not even giving details of what type of work is required. Others state only the type of work that needs proofreading "essay" (47) "my work" (50) "assignment" (56). These vaguer requests do not necessarily have a negative or positive effect on the tie being created; they may simply indicate the clients' inexperience at using such a service, as more information (such as stating deadlines and assignment length) enables Liz to assess more easily if she can do the work on time. The effect the vaguer requests do have is in the length of reply Liz must write, and a possible delay in getting work started as more information has to be established before the job can be accepted.

Other clients assume a certain amount of shared knowledge, stating their degree level (see Table 14) "Phd student"(19) & (23) "MA student" (27), and then the type of assignment e.g. "thesis" (48), (49), (52), (53), "dissertation" (51), (57) etc. Use of these academic terms enables the participants to construct "particular conversational worlds – and, broader communities of practice – together" (Gordon & Luke, 2012, p. 119) as Gordon and Luke found in email exchanges between students and their supervisor. Use of specialist jargon helped both parties establish their professional identities, as it does here. By using such terms, participants imply their understanding that Liz is specifically an academic proofreader, and allow her to demonstrate whether or not that knowledge is accurate.

How Liz addresses these requests is the subject of the next section.

5.2.5 How does the relationship proceed?

Liz's replies generally get straight to the point, addressing any questions the client has asked and/or requesting further information about assignment length and deadline if this information has not already been provided. Any compliments given are not usually addressed, and in nine of thirteen cases, Liz's reply does not include any phatic writing such as 'thanks for getting in touch'.

Irma's email response is somewhat different from the others as she sends a string email two days after her first-contact to request a reply. This sequence necessitates some form of apology, which Liz provides "Sorry for taking a while to get back to you, I have been visiting family and not checking my emails as regularly as I normally do." [Liz to Irma: 3]. This apology also includes some personal disclosure from Liz, which may help to form a stronger tie with Irma, after this slightly more difficult start.

Regarding the clients who gave second-hand compliments in their emails, as seen in section 5.2.3, Liz's responses to such complimentary writing, and to contact in general, was generally formulaic and business-like. Compliments were rarely addressed or even acknowledged directly:

(59) Thank you for getting in touch / ++ I look forward to hearing from you soon. / Best regards, / Liz [Liz to Abdessalam: 2]

(60) Dear Miyako, / It's really nice to hear from you ++/ Best regards, / Liz [Liz to Miyako: 2]

(61) Hi Ploy, / Firstly, please pass on my thanks to Mike for the recommendation ++ / Best regards, / Elizabeth Marsden [Liz to Supaksorn: 2]

(62) Hi Victoria, / I would be pleased to help you ++ / Best regards, / Liz Marsden [Liz to Victoria: 2]

The responses above do not specifically confirm Liz's possession of the qualities listed in the compliments, but nor do they baldly reject them. Whilst thanks are not given for compliments themselves, Liz indicates that she has enjoyed the interaction thus far "it's really nice to hear from you" and that she anticipates this pleasant interaction continuing in the future "I look forward to hearing from you soon".

The lack of direct thanks for these words could be explained by the fact that though the customers are the 'animators' of these words, they are not the 'principals', (Goffman, 1981,

p. 167), therefore thanking them directly might seem odd. Liz therefore uses another tactic; where Supaksorn has passed on a second-hand compliment, which comes from Mike, Liz asks Supaksorn to relay her thanks.

Liz's responses contain much writing which could be described as a rote interaction. Apart from the departure shown above to thank Mike (61), the responses contain many "formulaic sequences" (O'Halloran, 2007) – chunks of writing that can be processed as an entire unit, for example "Best regards". In Chapter 8, section 8.3, this type of rote writing is described in more detail using examples from the entire email database. It is hypothesised that this kind of polite but formulaic writing helps to maintain weak functional ties by doing as much politeness as is expected and necessary, but not introducing features which start to build a stronger tie, e.g. disclosing personal details, using informal writing practices etc. A quick N-gram analysis of Liz's responses to client-initiated first contact emails using AntConc (Anthony, 2014) shows the following exact phrases appearing multiple times:

N-gram	Frequency in 13 emails
"I have attached my terms and conditions"	5, 4 with the addendum "to this email"
"Best regards, Liz Marsden"	4, 1 omitting "Marsden"
"I can give you"	4
"I need to know"	3, 2 followed by "a few"
"All the best"	6

Table 16: N-grams in Liz's first-contact emails

These N-grams (contiguous sequences of text) were found by searching for sequences with a minimum length of 3 words, maximum length of 10 which occurred a minimum of 3 times in the uploaded text sample. In total, nine replies include the attachment of Liz's terms and conditions, which may help to construct her image as a genuine business-person.

As there is little contained in most first-contact mails as a basis for building a relationship, I return, as with the analysis at the end of Chapter 4 to mimetic behaviour. Matching the style of the other participant can be an easy way to show approval (van Baaren et al., 2009) mimicry ""binds and bonds" people together, serving as a social glue" (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 227) it also affects their social orientation making them feel closer to others and making them more likely to help them. Although Chapter 4 analysed mimetic trends across the whole dataset (see section 4.5), here I simply look at greeting and sign-off tokens in the first-contact emails and Liz's replies:

Client	Greeting		Sign-off	
	Client	Liz	Client	Liz
(63) Ivie	Hello Liz,	Dear Ibie,	Ibie	All the best, Liz
(64) Alya	hi Liz	Hi Alya,	I look forward to hear from you	all the best, Liz
(65) Hassan	Dear Elizabeth Marsden	Dear Hassan,	Hassan Maziq	Best regards, Liz Marsden
(66) Miyako	Dear Liz (if I may),	Dear Miyako,	Thank you very much in advance for your help. With best wishes, Miyako	Best regards, Liz
(67) Supaksorn	Hi Liz:	Hi Ploy,	Looking forward to yr reply. Ploy	Best regards, Elizabeth Marsden
(68) Lovemore	Hi Liz,	HI Lovemore,	Kind regards, Lovemore Matongo,	Regards Liz Marsden
(69) Abdessalam	Dear Liz	Dear Shamekh[38],	Kind Regards Shamekh	Best regards, Liz
(70) Victoria	Dear Liz Marsden	Hi Victoria,	Looking forward your reply Sincerely Victoria	Best regards, Liz Marsden
(71) Meera	Hi Liz	Dear Meera,	Meera	Kind regards Liz Marsden
(72) Irma	Hi Liz,	Hi Irma,	Thanks ever so much Kind regards Irma	All the best and hope to hear from you soon, I have attached my Ts and Cs for your reference. Liz
(73) Sofia	Dear Liz,	Hi Sofia,	Thank you, Sofia Bonilla	Best regards, Liz Marsden
(74) Dana	Hi Liz,	Hi Dana,	Thank you. Best wishes, Dana	All the best, Liz
(75) Imran	Dear Lizmarsden,	Dear Imran,	THANKS Best regards, Imran Malik	All the best, Liz Marsden

Table 17: Client and Liz first-contact greeting and sign-off terms

[38] Shaded blue because at this stage it was not obvious to Liz that this was the client's surname.

Blue shaded boxes represent where the name format i.e. first name only or first name plus surname matches between the client and Liz. Purple text represents where a matched greeting or sign-off token was used. For a description of how tokens were decided for sign-offs, please see the Appendix, section 11.1.

Table 17 shows a lot of matching in name format; in all cases in signing off where a client has given their full name, Liz also provides her full name. However, she never does this for greeting, which may be a feature of written idiolect. Matching the naming style the client uses is a form of communication accommodation (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Accommodation is also shown in use of greeting terms, which as the frequent use of purple font shows, are often matched (9/13 cases) whether 'Dear' or 'Hi' is used. Convergence in sign-off token usage is observed less often, and what may be seen here is more likely to be maintenance, in other words, sustaining a default communicative behaviour without accommodation (Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 37), as regardless of what the client does, Liz uses some variation of 'all the best'/'best regards'.

Although the accommodation is not totally convergent and is not present for all conversations, for those in which it does occur it is likely to be evaluated positively, as it may be interpreted as indicative of greater interpersonal involvement, intelligibility and competence, and may help to build rapport (Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 48).

However, an interesting sign-off pair, which may indicate divergence is that between Liz and Supaksorn (67). It is one of only two instances in the entire dataset where Liz chooses to sign-off as 'Elizabeth' – the other instance is part of an email signature which Liz used for a short time which displays her name as 'Elizabeth (Liz) Marsden'. This usage with Supaksorn may indicate a possible disapproval of her informal writing style and an assertion that this is a business transaction and should therefore be conducted in a more formal manner. In fact, Liz's reply diverges from Supaksorn's style throughout: though it is a similar length it uses no contractions compared to Supaksorn's six, and sentence lengths are almost doubled. This significant divergence in style may also serve to show Liz as professional in order to mitigate her inability to give Supaksorn a clear timeline, as her email states:

(76) As far as available time goes, I have just been accepted for an interview for a full time job - if I were to get this job, I would have some spare time from now until approximately the end of October. If I am rejected, spare time will not be a problem. I will hopefully know the outcome of my interview by Monday 17th September and will get back to you as soon as possible. [Liz to Supaksorn: 2]

The above passage contains significant personal disclosure, which Liz might possibly deem inappropriate at this stage in the relationship. Therefore, the formal language without the addition of any contractions or CMC cues (see Chapter 7) may attempt to increase the business-like tone of the message.

Another example of non-accommodative behaviour by Liz is her reaction to requests to meet. These requests are not always responded to with acceptance and enthusiasm. I can state anecdotally that, certainly in the early years of business, I was not keen to meet clients face-to-face as I saw it as a waste of time and a loss of a paper-trail to refer back to and by which to verify terms, dates, price quotes etc. However, this may have precipitated something of a cultural clash. Taking a very broad view, and using the theory of high/low context cultures, Hooker illustrates a potential difference in understanding:

> In… low-context countries, my hosts normally send someone to meet me on the platform, partly as a gesture of hospitality, but also because they are accustomed to providing information through a social context rather than impersonal signs. I am much less likely to be greeted in a German airport or station, not because Germans are inhospitable, but because they transmit information in a different way. (Hooker, 2008)

Spencer-Oatey and Xing (2003) also illustrate this difference in their analysis of two British-Chinese business meetings. Where they had an opportunity for “small talk”, the Chinese perception was that the meeting had gone much better, whereas the British business people valued efficiency and an a focus on business matters, perceiving the small-talk as “primarily a gap-filler to avoid embarrassing silence”. However, the Chinese perspective delegation valued this “opportunity for relationship building” seeing it as “a positive and valuable component of the welcome” (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003, p. 11). Some clients therefore may have wished to meet in order to build a stronger relationship from which to do business. By spending more time together, and knowing each other through another medium (i.e. face-to-face as well as remotely, see Burt, 2001, p. 622 on the importance of contact opportunities to relationship maintenance) the relationship could have been managed in such a way as to produce a stronger tie. It may also have been the case that some clients felt they could express themselves more effectively in speech than in writing, and were hesitant to try to explain what they required via email for this reason. In contrast, Liz, as stated above, wanted to have things in writing and did not consider meeting to be part of her remit.

Due to the reasons above, when clients made requests to meet, they were ignored or offered an alternative:

(77) so please I need to meet you to explain to you [Alya: 1]

Usually I conduct all of my business by email, so if you would prefer, feel free to email me letting me know what services you need. If you would prefer to meet, then I am free before 11am or after 3.45pm tomorrow (Friday 28th) or any time Monday next week (1st July) but then I am going away for a week so I wouldn't be able to come into the University. [Liz to Alya: 2]

(78) Please send me information that how I can meet you. I shall be very thankful to you. [Imran: 1]

Dear Imran,

I would be very happy to proofread your PhD thesis for you providing that you can give me enough time to do it. For a peice of work around 40,000 words, I will need AT LEAST eight days.

I have attached my terms and conditions which detail pricing, timings and what services I provide.

All the best,

Liz Marsden [Liz to Imran: 2]

In the above requests, for Alya, Liz offered an explanation of how she usually conducted business and gave Alya only two possible days to meet, perhaps hoping that she would decide that email communication was adequate. Imran's request on the other hand was completely ignored and not even referred to, though his other requests were addressed. This could be potentially tie damaging for the client (see Chapter 9, section 9.2) and for Liz, as Liz could see meeting as an imposition while the client could see Liz's hesitance or complete ignoring as impolite.

Generally, it can be said that Liz's responses are succinct, to-the-point and contain minimal or no phatic talk, but rather directly address the business at hand. Her response to Hassan who inquired about the time needed and cost of editing 5000 words is a perfect example, as he provided enough information for her reply to be very short:

(79) *2) 30/03/2014 RE: proofreading*
Dear Hassan,

For 5000 words I would need at least four working days. 5000 words would cost £20.

Best regards,

Liz Marsden

Responses are similarly succinct even to those who do not provide enough information for Liz to make an immediate assessment of whether or not she can do the requested work. These generally contain questions to the client requesting further details:

(80) *2) 13/09/2013 Re: proof reading*
Hi Dana,

I'm definitely interested, but I need to know a few things from you first:

1. How long is your thesis?
2. When do you need proofreading to be completed by?

Once you have given me this information I can let you know if the work is possible within the specified time and can give you a quote estimate on the cost of the proofreading.

All the best,

Liz

The conversation continues from there, with Clients responding to Liz. Most clients give further information if requested (e.g. Ivie, Supaksorn, Irma, Dana, Imran), while others immediately send their work (e.g. Hassan, Abdessalam) or accept the terms Liz has laid out (e.g. Miyako, Victoria, Meera). Lovemore's contact ends here, with him never getting back in touch for work, while Alya's reply, in its entirety, is the very brief "are you in university today can i meet you at 3 and where just for 10 mins" [Alya: 3] sent the next day. Sofia's response however is interesting, as she finds herself in the difficult situation of needing a lot of proofreading in a very short time period:

(81) *3) 11/09/2013 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading*

Elizabeth thank you for your kind reply. I am in diffucult situation because my proffesor yesterday say my final draft and he suggest me to find a proofreading,

> the problem is that I have to submit early morning in the friday[39], so please let me know how you can help me in this special situation.
>
> My work is about 20,980 words, it is a engineering school department dissertation. I know that mayb is too much for a couple of days, but I able to discuss how many words can you help me to profreading.
> Thank you for your kind reply
>
> Sofia

This email parallels the second email in Hai's dataset which is analysed at the end of the next section, as he too finds himself pressed for time, see example (108), p. 128. There is a large amount of personal disclosure in this email as Sofia outlines her problem, describing her situation as "difficult" and "special". She, like Hai, puts some of the blame for this situation on her "professor" who has let her know at a very late stage that proofreading is required. This troubles telling (Jefferson & Lee, 1980, p. 3) is designed to elicit sympathy in the hopes of getting a favourable response from Liz. Sofia also states that she is aware of the difficulty of proofreading this much in a short time; by showing her understanding of Liz's situation should she accept the work, and by providing Liz with an inbuilt excuse as to why she cannot do all of the work "too much for a couple of days" she implicitly tells Liz that she will accept such an excuse and this will not be a difficult point of negotiation. This consideration allows the business transaction to continue smoothly and more quickly, outlining Sofia's expectations and needs clearly so that Liz can help her most effectively.

Though there is variation, as illustrated in the entire section above, client-initiated first-contact emails, and the continuing email conversation between the participants, generally follow something of a standard pattern and are responded to in a similar way. Referrer-initiated first-contact however, is rather more varied as there is an existing relational history between Liz and the referrer. These emails are analysed in the following section.

[39] Email sent on a Wednesday

5.3 Referrer-initiated first-contact

As Fuerst states, the ideal entrepreneurial network consists of strong and weak ties (2012, p. 347) and Liz's is no exception, as can be seen in the six first-contact emails where an existing client or former tutor of Liz's has got in contact to refer a potential client. The tutors form part of a strong network, they have known Liz, in most cases, for five years or more, and have on occasion socialised with her outside of an academic setting, therefore they know her both personally and professionally. As Granovetter states:

> Most intuitive notions of the "strength" of an interpersonal tie should be satisfied by the following definition: the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie. (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361)

While this network of former tutors could not be said to be as strong, or to have undergone as much reinforcing as one between close family and friends, it is not a fleeting and casual relationship. The tie between Liz and her clients who act as referrers is perhaps less strong; they have a relationship that is business-based without a face-to-face socialising element. However, it should be noted that at the time these referral emails were sent, Ruth was the only referrer who had not been met face-to-face.

The emails from these referrers are analysed in terms of the historic relationship between Liz and the referrer, what information is disclosed to Liz about the referee and to the referee about Liz, and how the relationship between the three parties continues after the initial introduction email.

5.3.1 What is Liz and the referrer's historical relationship?

To contextualise the following discussion, it is important to present the historical relationship between Liz and the referrer at the time the referral email was sent. For clients who acted as referrers, the number of emails that had been sent at the time the referral was made are also included.

Client	Referrer	Nature of relationship between Liz and referrer	Liz and referrer relationship length (approx.) & emails sent (if client)	Met face-to-face?
(82) Avin	Mathew (MHref)	Mathew taught Liz for one voluntary module (1 term) MA level	3 years 9 months	Yes
(83) Lisa	Ruth	Business-client	11 months (40 emails)	No
(84) Zétény	Robyn (RSref)	Robyn taught Liz from undergraduate to MA level (5 years)	5 years 6 months	Yes
(85) Ruth	Meera	Business-client	1 year (59 emails)	Yes
(86) Hai	Avin	Business-client	1 year 5 months (56 emails)	Yes
(87) Alice	Zétény	Business-client	2 years 7 months (146 emails)	Yes

Table 18: Historical relationship between Liz and referrers

As can be seen in the table above, and in the cases of Ruth, Meera, Avin and Zétény, shown graphically in Figure 5—Figure 9 (pp. 67-69), these are all established relationships, most of which fulfil the criteria of knowing through multiple channels or in multiple ways, all of which are important factors for determining tie strength (see Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992). In this dataset, these kinds of referral emails are sent only by contacts with whom there is significant relational history.

Having established that there exists a significant historic relationship between the referrers and Liz, let us move on to a discussion of the referrer's first impressions, i.e. their subject lines. Compared to the subject lines used by client-initiated first-contact emails (see section 5.2.1), these are very similar, generally emphasising, or implying, the work needed:

(88) RE: Re- Proof- reader? [Meera to Liz and Ruth: 1]

(89) Re: Proofreader contact [Ruth to Liz and Lisa: 1]

(90) little job for you? [Robyn (RSref) to Liz and Zétény: 1]

(91) Alice's Thesis [Zétény to Liz and Alice: 1]

(92) Re: Transcription [Mathew (MHref) to Liz and Avin: 1]

(93) Dear Liz [Avin to Liz and Hai: 1]

Though none of these are part of a longer conversation between Liz and the referrer, three contain 'Re:' indicating that they are a part of a longer email chain between the referrer and the client. Zummo notes that it becomes more and more common for 'RE' to be present in subject lines as conversations progress, leading to "a [subject] line with no relationship with the content/ function of the message-body.” (Zummo, 2018a, p. 51). In her data, and this study’s data, 75% of subject lines from the entire dataset contain ‘RE’.

The non-specific subject lines “little job for you?” (90) and “Dear Liz” (93) indicate Liz’s long running relationship with Robyn, one of her former university tutors, and with Avin who Liz, by this stage, had met in person on multiple occasions. Avin’s subject line “Dear Liz” is atypical in terms of first-contact emails as it in no way indicates the content of the message. The only possible explanation I can offer for this is that it is fairly typical of her written idiolect, and is a type of subject line she has used before (e.g. “Hi Liz” [Avin: 29]). Example (91) is the most indirect work reference as it follows on from a conversation Zétény and Liz had face-to-face regarding the possibility of her proofreading for Alice.

As can be clearly seen in Table 18, there is some overlap in the client and referrer columns. This may indicate that for some clients, when they have a friend or colleague who needs Liz’s services, they are more likely to write an introductory email if one was written for them. This may be the case for Zétény, Avin and Ruth all of whom were referred directly by their referrers, and then went on to write their own referral emails. Although, evidence from Ruth’s referrals of both Ivie and Irma indicate that she also makes word-of-mouth referrals which her friends/colleagues then follow up independently.

5.3.2 What details are given about Liz and the Client?

Having briefly explained who the referrers are and their historical relationship to Liz, it is now pertinent to look at how they made their introduction, as this is the information on which, at least the early stages, the relationship between Liz and the Client is based. This parallels section 5.2.2 which analyses the information clients gave about themselves.

	From:	**To/CC**	**Information given about Liz**	**Information given about Client**
(94)	Zétény	To: Alice and Liz		Alice is completing her thesis and she needs some proofreading; her English is excellent, so hopefully the stylistic things in her work are quite minor.
(95)	Meera	To: Ruth CC: Liz	I am copying Liz in this email, She can explain her work and details to you. Please do get in touch with Liz, she is really good!!	Ruth is our second year PhD student and wants you to review her work for proof reading
(96)	Avin	To: Liz CC: Hai		he is my collegue here at the research room and needs you to profread his thesis. he wants to meet you and discuss that with you?
(97)	Ruth	To: Lisa CC: Liz	She's really good and was highly recommended by one of our PhD students. I have used her services and was satisfied.	I have a friend who's in need of your service, her name is Lisa and a PGR student here at [university name].
(98)	Robyn (RSref)	To: Liz CC: Zétény	I have told him that you were one of our excellent graduates from the BA and the MA - which is only the truth!	a new colleague of mine? His name is Zétény Bathory - he is a [Central European] national, and a polyglot (he speaks [two East Asian languages, as well as English and a Central European language]!) - so his written English is of a high standard! However, he would like a native speaker to read the manuscript ++ It will be approximately 60 thousand words
(99)	Mathew (MHref)	To: Liz and Avin	Liz is the English MA graduate I was telling you about who does transcription. Her website is [web address].	Avin has a two-hour interview with the contemporary novelist [novelist name] that needs transcribing.

Table 19: Information given by referrers

The small amount of description about Liz in the majority of these emails, or indeed in the cases of (94) and (96), no description at all, probably indicates that discussions about Liz and her services have already taken place between the referrer and client. In fact, (95), (97), (98) and (99) show this to be the case in their email text by indicating that discussions have already taken place. For (95) and (97), this is in the form of an email from the client to the referrer that is included underneath the referrer's text. In (95) Ruth states "I'm sending this email in respect to our discussion a couple of weeks ago regarding the proof-reader you promised to introduce to me", clearly referencing a historic discussion. Likewise, Lisa in (97) asks Ruth "If you don't mind, please send me the contact for the proofreader". Given this pre-existing knowledge of Liz, it is perhaps for Liz's benefit, and for the reinforcing of ties between the triad, that compliments of Liz's abilities and qualifications are included in these referral mails.

Through the act of referral making, referrers are showing their faith in the service they recommend (Law, 2008), and given previous discussions have taken place, it is probable that assessments and descriptions of Liz's abilities have already been given to the client. Thus these compliments are not really for the clients' information – at least not always. Rather they are probably intended to encourage a positive response from Liz in accepting the work. This may be important to the referrer, as by making the referral, not only are they telling Liz that they are referring a genuine client, but they are telling the client that Liz provides a good service; if either of these prove to be untrue, they may experience tie decay with the injured party. Therefore, making remarks that encourage positive interaction between Liz and the client is in their benefit.

Taking this into account, the purpose of these emails seems more to introduce the client to Liz, along with their service needs and other pertinent information than to introduce Liz to the client. Accordingly, and similarly to the client-initiated first-contact emails, information is presented about the clients including their study level, what work they need doing, and their relationship to the referrer. What differs here from the information given in client-initiated emails in the cases of (94) and (98) is the descriptions of the client's writing ability. It is initially not obvious why "her English is excellent…" is anything more than a compliment of Alice's ability (as she is also a recipient of this email); however, in the context, this is an assurance to Liz that this will potentially be a fast and easy job. The description of Zétény, "his written English is of a high standard!" gives the same effect, assuring Liz that this work will not be difficult, but also paying a compliment to the other email recipient at the same time.

5.3.3 How does the relationship proceed?

To assess how the relationship continues, let us first look briefly at who was addressed in the emails, who was asked by the referrer to take action, and what action was taken by whom. These details are presented in the table below:

From:		**To/CC**	**Who was addressed in-text?**	**Who was asked to take action?**	**Who responded?**
(100)	Zétény	To: Alice and Liz	"Hi Both"	Alice: "Alice, please liaise with Liz"	Alice emailed Liz (same day)
(101)	Meera	To: Ruth CC: Liz	Each individually: "Hi Ruth" followed by "Hi Liz"	Ruth: "Please do get in touch with Liz"	Liz emailed Ruth (same day)
(102)	Avin	To: Liz CC: Hai	"Hi Liz"	Liz: "I will be happy if you can arrange that and work together."	Liz met Hai in the office
(103)	Ruth	To: Lisa CC: Liz	Each individually: "Hi Liz" followed by "Lisa,"	Liz: "Could you contact her and let her know the services you render"	Liz emailed Lisa (same day)
(104)	Robyn (RSref)	To: Liz CC: Zétény	"Hi Liz"	Both: "perhaps you and he could negotiate the fee, if I copy him in here?"	Liz emailed Robyn and Zétény (as 'To' addressees, on the same day)
(105)	Mathew (MHref)	To: Liz and Avin	Both: "Liz, meet Avin; Avin, meet Liz."	Both: "now I've introduced you. Feel free to discuss this directly with each other"	Liz emailed Avin (same day)

Table 20: Who did referrers address and what action was requested?

All emails are sent to both parties (Liz and the client) though the manner and hierarchy of address is different. In email etiquette, generally it is expected that the 'To:' recipient is requested to act, whereas the 'CC:' recipient(s) is(are) being sent the email simply for their information (Kallos, 2011), they are ratified bystanders rather than addressees (Kádár & Márquez-Reiter, 2015, p. 240), which may contribute to the outcome. Table 20 shows how this rule was applied in each email. Ruth's email is the only one where participants are emailed using the "wrong" application of 'To' and 'CC' as Liz was 'CC' yet asked to take action. Meera's email's outcome (101) of Liz emailing Ruth despite being the 'CC'-addressed recipient and not being asked to take action, may simply indicate Liz's eagerness to get business done quickly; she has Ruth's address, so emails back the same day.

In cases of referrer-initiated first-contact, the first contact between the client and Liz can be emergent because there is something to refer back to that is now part of their shared knowledge and shared history. This is the case for all referrer-led emails, as these, without exception, are sent with Liz and the client both as recipients. Thus, referrer-initiated first-contact, and the emails that follow between Liz and the client, displays more features of historicity and intertextuality. This can be seen in the email below (106), the first that Zétény received from Liz (in which he and Robyn were in the 'To' field, but only Robyn is directly addressed in text). Zétény is in effect a ratified participant in this interaction (Goffman, 1981, p. 131), he is not directly addressed either in Robyn's initial email or in Liz's reply, and is referred to in the third person. However, Zétény has implicitly been given permission to both read and comment on the interaction between Liz and Robyn, which directly concerns him as the topic of their talk:

(106) Hi Robyn,

> Lovely to hear from you and thankyou for thinking of me. Yes I'm still doing freelancing - working for several copywriting firms at the momnet and also doing some proofreading on the side. I would be very happy to read over Zétény Bathory's manuscript, especially as I'm lucky enough to have six weeks off in the summer (that's assuming I'm still working in the café by then and haven't got another job).
>
> For 60,000 words I would charge about £400 - but this is negotiable.
>
> Thanks again,
>
> Liz [Liz to Robyn and Zétény: 2]

This email contains many features which reflect an emergent view of time; references back to Robyn's email are abundant 'lovely **to hear from you**', 'I'm **still** doing freelancing', 'I **would be very happy to** read over **Zétény Bathory's manuscript**', '**for 60,000 words I would**

charge about £400' everything in bold assumes prior knowledge and shows how texts can be highly condensed by reference to the there-and-then (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Despite Robyn asking Liz and Zétény to negotiate between them, Liz's reply to Robyn is the only case in which the referrer is copied in; this may be due to Robyn addressing this email to Liz only. While Robyn is the addressee, by virtue of Zétény being a ratified bystander in this interaction, he is privy to some self-disclosures from Liz, which may help to reinforce the relationship between them. He is also a witness to the interaction between Liz and Robyn – seeing them address each other familiarly and share compliments. As already explored, these second-hand compliments may help to build a positive impression of Liz and her business and thus help reinforce the tie. This was shown in a study of mothers' personal research into healthcare providers, regarding recommendations, the mothers preferred to receive them from trusted sources. "This trust was based on a perception of neutrality; the referral sources were not paid, were not employed in the industry, and did not receive benefits from passing on their recommendations", the mothers also evaluated source trustworthiness based on "experience, recency of motherhood, and relationship with the source provider" (Dobele & Lindgreen, 2011, p. 277)

Robyn's email clarifies her relationship with Liz, and her experience of working with her, in her email (see Table 19). Although her question "Are you still freelancing?" may indicate to Zétény that they have not interacted very recently, which may make him judge her recommendation as less reliable. However, it is not possible to know what details Robyn and Zétény have already discussed, as Robyn indicates they have already talked about Liz "I have told him that you were…" [Robyn to Liz and Zétény: 1].

Similar features reflecting an emergent view of time, can be seen in the first email between Ruth and Liz. However, in this case, because Meera provided fewer details than Robyn about the nature of the work Ruth wanted done: "Ruth is our second year PhD student and wants you to review her work for proof reading" [Meera to Liz and Ruth: 1] Liz's email must create meaning in the here-and-now. This is accomplished by describing to Ruth for the first time the nature of her business and providing supporting documentation.

(107) Dear Ruth,

> Meera has contacted me regarding some proof reading work you want done. I have attached my terms and conditions for both my proofreading and copy

editing services (this is a slight change since I worked with Meera). If you read them both you can decide which service is best for you. They both explain how long it will take me to edit a piece of work and what is involved in the process.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me,

best regards,

Liz Marsden

Academic Services [Liz to Ruth: 2]

As Liz's knowledge is limited to knowing Ruth's name, that she requires proofreading, and that she knows Meera: these are the only pieces of information that are emergent. Though she does not know what Meera and Ruth have discussed, Liz also uses the line "this is a slight change since I worked with Meera" which refers to the there-and-then. The implication here is that information given by Meera may not have been correct according to current practice.

Liz's reply to Avin also follows this pattern, referring to the transcript Mathew mentioned and asking its length, how fast Avin needs the completed work and attaching her terms and conditions. Liz's reply to Lisa includes a proviso of whether she can do the work or not "I am currently in the process of reading two other PhDs, so whether or not I can help you will depend on the amount of work you need proofread and the time in which it needs to be finished." She follows this with "I would love to help as I always need more work, and I want to prove myself worthy of Ruth's shining recommendation!" [Liz to Lisa: 2], which indicates that she is not reluctant to take on new work, but rather is a 'victim of circumstance'. This may help reinforce ties with Lisa, and assure Lisa that Ruth's recommendation was reliable (see Dobele & Lindgreen, 2011), as Liz shows an explicit wish to prove the truthfulness of Ruth's assertion about the quality of her work.

The second emails in Alice's and Hai's conversations are somewhat different. Alice is the only client to reply to Liz directly after the referral email (as she was instructed by Zétény). Her email is strikingly similar to the client-initiated first-contact emails analysed in section 5.2. It includes a reference back to the recommendation she received "I heard you are an excellent proofreader", then describes the work which needs to be done and requests the pricing details. Interestingly however, though Zétény referred to "Liz", Alice addresses her email to "Ms Marsden" a formality which is only broken when Liz gives explicit permission in

[Liz to Alice: 37]. This honorific address may be indicative of Alice's Southeast Asian culture, though the other clients from East Asia/Southeast Asia (Hai, Supaksorn, Victoria) do not use this form, so it may be a feature of Alice's written idiolect.

Hai's first few emails are very different from the others analysed in this section, as Liz meets him in person, so the email record does not show their discussion of the work that must be done. In fact, the next email is from Hai to two other proofreaders (with Liz as CC), as he needs more work done than she can manage alone in the time allowed. This email reiterates what Liz already knows from face-to-face discussion, and at least some of what the other proofreaders know from Liz having already contacted them by email. This email is an interesting example, as like Sofia, Hai is in a very time-pressured situation so his emphasis is on this difficulty (see example (81), p. 117 for Sofia's email):

(108) *2) 12/12/14 Proofreading [sent to one of Liz's recommended proofreaders, Liz as CC]*

Hi there,

My name is Hai and Liz recommended you to be the proofreader of my thesis. I really appreciate that. As far as I know, she has explained my situation to you. Basically, I need to submit my thesis by the end of Jan.15, but I have only got my feedback back from my supervisor two weeks ago after waiting for a year and half. Unfortunately, there is a big change in my analysis and I am really stressed out because the time left for me is ridiculously short. Anyways, I might not be able to finish anything before the 20th Jan or later, so that leaves me very little time to get the whole thesis proofread. Liz has agreed to read my analysis and one of my friends is happy to proofread some for me too. So I wonder if it is ok to send you the rest of my thesis they can't cover by the end of January. I am really sorry that I might only be able to afford to give you a few days before my deadline for the job. Thanks indeed!

Best wishes,

Hai

Hai does a huge amount of personal disclosure in this email, as Sofia does in hers, which may indicate that in difficult situations there is a need for ties to be reinforced quickly in order to obtain favourable treatment. This may be best accomplished through provoking sympathy in the reader. As Fraser states of her study participants (immigrants and police officers in Victoria, Australia) "The main linguistics strategies used to build rapport were: volunteering information; empathising or sympathising; displaying solidarity…" (2011, p. iv).

Hai not only seeks to elicit sympathy, but also apologises for these difficult circumstances, in turn showing empathy for the workload he is asking of his proofreaders, again potentially reinforcing his ties with them. As with Sofia's email, the amount of detail about Hai's situation and his service needs and expectations allows the business transaction to flow smoothly and gives all parties enough information to know what is expected.

This section has illuminated how referrers introduce Liz to their friends and colleagues who need to use her services, including what information they deem Liz should know about these referees, and what these referees should know about Liz. Through textual investigation, it has become clear that for the majority or all of these referrals, some discussion has taken place outside of the parameters of this data collection, between the client and the referrer about Liz's service, as few referral emails explain Liz's work in detail, and some not at all. Her business occupation is treated as given information. This section has also shown that a relationship must be well established between Liz and a referrer for them to make a referrer-initiated first-contact (at least in this small number of examples).

5.4 Conclusion

Although this chapter has presented many ways in which first-contact emails are similar, ultimately the relationship trajectory was different for each client: some ties grew stronger and increasingly functional, as examined in the following two chapters, and for others a weak functional tie was maintained, as shown in Chapter 8. Thus the question is, can these introductory emails shed light on what will happen next? As the dataset is small, and some of the data on tie longevity is unavoidably anecdotal (i.e. it relates to what happened after data collection ceased, or recalls face-to-face interactions), this bears further investigation. However, it appears that being directly introduced by a referrer is significantly beneficial for tie strength. In terms of choosing to stay in touch, the following applies to the listed clients. Where the name is preceded by an asterisk, the client was introduced by a referrer (see also Table 28, p. 287):

*Alice: 12 emails sent between 01/16 and 09/16 purely social, followed by relationship decay.

*Avin:	100s of emails, both business and social, sent since data collection finished, in almost daily contact via text messaging and WhatsApp, frequently socialise face-to-face, relationship ongoing.
*Hai:	Connected on Facebook. Very infrequent phone contact, but usually for advice giving, not social purposes.
Meera:	Connected on Facebook and LinkedIn, occasional (yearly) exchange of social messages.
*Ruth:	Connected on LinkedIn, but never used to send social messages.
Supaksorn:	Connected on Facebook, infrequent exchange of social messages.
*Zétény:	100s of emails, both business and social, sent since data collection finished, also in infrequent contact via phone/text, occasionally socialise face-to-face, relationship ongoing.

Those clients listed above are only those with whom some contact method apart from email exists, or with whom social emails were exchanged after any business was concluded. While all but two of the ties above can be described as decayed or weak at the time of writing, there does seem to be a significant skew towards referrer-introduced clients maintaining contact for longer and through diverse means, these clients also sent an average, or above average, number of emails. Another uniting factor for five of the above clients is disciplinary, as they all study in the language/literature area (see Table 3, p. 61), as does Liz, indicating that homophily probably also has a strong influence[40].

The above, and the entire chapter, represent a significant original contribution of the thesis. Very few studies have looked at relationship formation and its trajectory to decay (but see Shen, Monge, & Williams, 2014, for one example), and cannot offer insight into how networks came to contain their component nodes or connections between those nodes. Additionally, because of the presence of two types of first-contact in this dataset, it is possible to look at how the process of introducing a new node works both when that node introduces themselves, and when they are added to the network by a previously established connection. By looking at these processes side-by-side one can see the difference in punctuated versus emergent views of time (Kádár & Haugh, 2013), i.e., how a relationship can grow when both parties have historicity in the form of a third-party introduction, and how it works when this is not the case.

[40] However, two further clients are also within this disciplinary area, and ties with them decayed rapidly.

The chapter has illuminated how, in all cases, a self-image of the client is constructed, whether by themselves, or by their referrer, which invariably focusses on their academic credentials and/or their existing network, whether narrow (referring to a specific person) or wide (mentioning the university or department they are part of). The academic credentials legitimise their business request, while mentions of the wider network (as also shown in Figure 5—Figure 15, pp. 67-75) establish them as already connected to Liz. These may also attempt to construct them as part of the same 'in-group' or 'community of practice' as Liz in order to gain friendly/preferential treatment and to construct themselves as a competent and knowledgeable client, thus "demonstrating orientation to and understanding of the joint enterprise, and acting (and speaking) in ways that are consistent with the community's repertoire" (Gordon & Luke, 2012, p. 114) . This is important for cohesion and identity construction as a node within a network.

Another initial reinforcing method is paying compliments. This language is aptly chosen for the specific context of making a new business connection; this is again part of identity construction. By showing what elements of Liz's business the client finds praiseworthy, the client reflects back to Liz a picture of her and her business that is favourable (Jandt, 2004, p. 45). As Spencer-Oatey states, "We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles" (2002, p. 9), and when a favourable description is provided for some other, that other may have a desire to fulfil or "earn" that description (Bargh et al., 2002, p. 45).

By looking at the initial stages of these relationships, and following them through the processes of reinforcing, maintenance, decay, destabilisation etc. this thesis builds a rich picture, supported by real-world data, of how such relationships can develop. This allows the study of (im)politeness and other phenomena to be contextualised (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 47). Although the dataset is relatively small, and as such, any generalisations must be made tentatively, this email study can illuminate potential interesting trends and avenues for further research, as this chapter has regarding the different ways that clients can find a business, and the potential influence these differing introductions can have on the relationships as they progress.

The following chapter focusses on the process of relationship management by looking at various tactics the clients and Liz use to reinforce the ties between them. The chapter focusses on the positive transformation of relationships, looking at progression from a weak functional to a strong functional tie, not looking at destabilised, dysfunctional or static relationships, which are explored afterwards.

Chapter 6 Tie Reinforcing

"We cannot tell the precise moment when friendship is formed. As in filling a vessel drop by drop, there is at last a drop which makes it run over; so in a series of kindnesses there is at last one which makes the heart run over."
– Ray Bradbury (1967, p. 99)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the core analysis of the thesis, as it shows how ties can be reinforced after initial contact has been established, and in this dataset, this is the primary form of relational transformation (see glossary, section 2.4, p. 26).[41] While tie maintenance, which is explored in Chapter 8, is important, this merely puts the relationship into a sort of polite stasis; the relationship neither reinforces nor decays, in fact, it undergoes little change. This is important for convivial and effective relationships, especially where the goal is the completion of some task. However, it does not illustrate how a relationship can change over time. It especially cannot show how a task-driven relationship can become something more. This chapter aims to show those writing techniques that can be used to reinforce established ties. Before analysing these, it is important to define what a strong functional tie is, in order to understand how these techniques contribute towards their formation. In the literature, a 'strong' tie is always described as a functional tie (strong dysfunctional relationships, as described in section 2.4 are not considered) which connects people:

1. who are members of an in-group or shared community (Granovetter, 1973; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; De Meo et al., 2014),
2. who share interests, hobbies or jobs (McPherson et al., 2001; Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005; Shen & Chen, 2015),
3. who commit a lot of time to each other (Granovetter, 1973; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009)
4. who trust each other and emotionally support one another (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005; Law, 2008; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011; Fuerst, 2012; De Meo et al., 2014),

[41] Possibly due to data bias, see Table 4, p. 63

All except the final point (which points to a functional tie) also align with this thesis' conception of strong ties, as described in the glossary (section 2.4, p. 26). These descriptions have primarily been used to describe those who interact face-to-face. However, in 'dislocated communication' (O'Driscoll, 2011, pp. 27–28) (e.g. telephone, letter, CMC etc.), there may be some difficulty assessing the writing partner's membership in certain groups (as stated as important in point 1). For example, it may be hard to assess whether the conversational partner is part of your in-group (sex, age, ethnicity etc. may be hard to assess without awareness of the other's appearance and voice), or whether they share your hobbies (which could possibly be assessed by the wearing/displaying of certain items such as graphic t-shirts or charity pins/badges). So how are closer ties formed in CMC? This chapter will go some way towards providing an answer to this question by showing the specific ways this is achieved in this thesis' dataset.

When interacting with a previously unknown other for business purposes, in a smooth and efficient interaction where work is done quickly, without issues, and under ideal circumstances, stronger ties may never develop. This is also the case if the interaction "fizzles out" with no work ever actually being done. In these cases, a tie is established, but often remains weak. In a weak functional tie the level of politeness is simply maintained, and the tie eventually decays over time rather than through any kind of conflict (see Chapter 9 for further discussion). Price and Arnould (1999) characterise this type of relationship as "characterized by fairly explicit individual rights and "tit for tat" reciprocity, limited in emotional investment, and maintained for as long as their benefits to self exceed their costs" (1999, p. 40). Relationships of this kind are discussed in Chapter 8. This chapter however, deals with those conversations which gradually move towards greater intimacy in several ways, such as: through adversity; through reciprocal self-disclosures; by paying or passing on compliments; etc.

Throughout the literature, the process of continuing to have a relationship with another is described. However, the terminology differs, with authors referring to it as 'growth' (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009) and 'change' (Goffman, 1971; P. V. Marsden, 1990; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). This thesis however uses the term 'reinforcing' to indicate the positivity of the relationship, and to imply a process for creating a tie that is both strong and functional. Once a relationship has reached a certain degree of strength (consider for example, close friends who have been in your life since childhood, or university) decay becomes very slow. Burt (2001, p. 632) nicely explains this slow decay idea when he states “There is an inertia to decay in which relations that have lasted for a long time are more likely to survive into the future”.

This chapter begins by looking at non-salient politeness. By this, I mean those politeness features that are integral to rapport building such as self-disclosure, emphasising similarities and sharing jokes. Considered later in the chapter are those features typically described as polite (here described as salient politeness) such as thanking, complimenting etc. However, those salient features considered here are specifically reinforcing rather than maintaining. In other words, they go beyond what is deemed merely appropriate in the given situation and actively seek to improve the relationship by thanking/complimenting etc. *inventively* and in a way which is tailored to the recipient.

Considered in the following chapter is a discussion on CMC cues and textual modifications. These features can contribute towards both salient and non-salient politeness, and can be a feature of recipient design (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) whereby language is tailored based on the writer’s consideration of the recipient e.g. to disambiguate language, aid interpretation, aid comprehension etc. While this is a somewhat difficult feature to evaluate, given that there is no post-event interview data to assess how these emails were interpreted when received, one can see that such cues and modifications as emoticons and all caps are being used in systematic ways.

6.2 Non-salient politeness

This section examines writing that aims to form bonds by increasing intimacy in such ways as revealing personal details, showing empathy and solidarity, doing favours and sharing aspects of culture. The politeness phenomena analysed in this thesis largely, though not exclusively, fit into the category of non-salient polite behaviours. These are types of relational work that contribute towards network tie strengthening by for example: mirroring your conversational partner (mimesis through speech, sign or writing [Blackmore, 2007; Donald, 2013]); displaying homophily (shared likes and beliefs [McPherson, Smith-Lovin, &

Cook, 2001; Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine, Govindan, & Naaman, 2011; Shen, Monge, & Williams, 2014]); reciprocating/collaborating (Granovetter, 1973; Shen et al., 2014); familiarity/closeness/emotional disclosure (Goffman, 1971; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011) and lasting and frequent contact (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009; Fuerst, 2012; McMeekin Sullivan, 2012; De Meo et al., 2014). These ways of using language are not immediately salient as politeness features, but they do go beyond (especially in a business context), what is needed to simply 'get the job done'.

6.2.1 Self-disclosure

Liz and her clients sharing personal information with each other about their circumstances, hopes, troubles and cultures is a hugely important aspect of tie reinforcing, because it provides each conversational partner with a look into their partner's life and gives them ways to express empathy, sympathy and commonalities with each other. Bargh et al. (2002, p. 35) note that "several theorists and researchers in the area of close relationships have noted how the development of friendship is related to an increase in self-disclosure (e.g., Altman & Taylor, 1973; Derlega et al., 1993)". This is a fundamental aspect of building a strong functional tie, in order for someone to become a "close friend" (De Meo et al., 2014, p. 78) or "a person to go see your favorite sci-fi movies with" (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005), they have to first "offer emotional support and intimacy" (Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011, p. 2). This cannot grow without the foundation of a historical relationship, with intimate knowledge of the conversational partner, and mutual trust. As Goffman puts it, "license to penetrate another's informational preserve, especially in regard to secret information about self" (Goffman, 1971, p. 192). Additionally, Price and Arnould state that reciprocal self-disclosure is specifically important in business and can "contribute positively to commercial exchange satisfaction" (Price & Arnould, 1999, p. 38). This section therefore reveals those intimate and personal details that were shared and how these began to build stronger ties and a greater feeling of mutual care between the participants. These themes are also explored in other sections within this chapter, though most examples of personal and cultural sharing are examined in the following section 6.2.2 on pictures, videos and music.

An important way to share culture is through religious celebrations and holidays. References to and descriptions of such holidays can be made simply for the joy of sharing the experience (see Alice and Liz's exchange of Christmas photos, p. 151) or these references can crop up in relation to troubles tellings (usually related to delays in work). Below are some examples, plus the conversational partner's response:

(109) The very same Best Wishes for you to the New Year. And thanks for asking, I had a great Christmas, spent with the wider family in [Central Europe]. I hope you also had great Christmas. [Zétény: 91]

Thanks for the reciprocal wishes - I also had a great Christmas in the south of the UK, splitting the time between my family and my partner's (there was a lot of driving, but the good company more than made up for it). [Liz to Zétény: 92]

(110) Please enjoy yourself first while I write. Another year without Christmas /New Year celebrations for me. [Alice: 48]

I'm sorry, you're not the only PhD student I know who is working very hard over Christmas :(I wish you could have some time off to celebrate too. [Liz to Alice: 49]

(111) I hope you won't find me rude to send you this on New Year's Day. You will probably (and should) start to work on it later. It's auspicious for me in a sense to send you this because it's the first day of new year. 😁 [Alice: 57]

Thanks for the chapter, I'll get started on it as soon as possible. [Liz to Alice: 58]

These holiday references go beyond a simple positive or negative description by including talk of family and family location, ideas of what is "auspicious", and celebration activities. The examples prompt positive responses such as reciprocal tellings and expressions of sympathy. These are important for building a relationship which is strong and functional on both sides. This reciprocity is crucial as it shows both partners that their trusting and liking of one another is mutual (Bargh et al., 2002, p. 40).

Alongside sharing of cultural celebrations, participants share a huge amount of personal information, from discussions of family and holidays, to talk about supervisors, illnesses, visa issues, writing problems and current and future jobs. "Providing personal information… could help to build rapport and foster positive relations between interactants" (Fraser, 2011, p. 102), and while Fraser here is referring to face-to-face interaction, in these written emails it seems to have much the same positive effect. A selection of personal disclosures has been presented below. Many of these are tied to the ongoing business interaction, but crucially, they add more detail than is needed. For example, in example (112), “I’m currently away” would be sufficient for Hassan to understand Liz’s slowness in returning work; nevertheless, she chooses to make a disclosure about where she will be.

It should be noted here that some participants engage in self-disclosure and troubles telling far more often than others. In raw numbers, Liz followed by Supaksorn have by far the most disclosures, but when averaged across emails sent, Supaksorn, Miyako, Lisa, Alice and Dana disclose the most.[42]

(112) Just to let you know, I'm currently away at my uncle's wedding and will return on Friday, I will download your assignments then as I currently only have mobile internet on my Blackberry. Depending on the length of the chapters I should have the ones you've sent back to you by next Tuesday/wednesday. I'm sorry that's not as fast as my usual turnaround times. [Liz to Hassan: 43]

Ok no problem . Enjoy your time [Hassan: 44]

(113) Let me know what works for you. I also have a driving lesson at some point one morning, but I have forgotten which day! I'm still at my parents' house so I don't have my diary with me.

Happy new year and see you soon [Liz to Imran: 62]

No response

(114) I'd offer to come in and help you, but I've got a horrible cold, I don't think I'll be going to work tomorrow (but I can still get your formatting done). [Liz to Hai: 34]

I am so sorry to hear that! It’s freezing these day!
++
Thanks indeed!
Hope you get better soon!
Hai [35]

(115) No problem about the conclusion, I can wait, and I won't be able to start until Friday anyway as I'm attending my brother-in-law's graduation on Thursday. [Liz to Alice: 71]

[42] While this is a rough measure, and gender is not a concern of this thesis, it may be noted that of the 10 participants who disclose the most, only one, Hai, is male. However, this may be a feature of the data (males wrote many fewer emails than females and there is greater diversity of female writers) and cannot be a generalizable conclusion. However, it does support many authors (and folk theories) who claim that females are more skilled at rapport building and empathising (Tannen, 1990; Herring, 2011). Also see McKeown and Zhang’s (2015, p. 101) email study finding “the results of variable X5 [gender] would suggest that within the community examined in this study the respective genders behaved broadly in line with findings in the literature i.e. women more affiliative: men more assertive”. This would be an interesting area for further investigation.

Well, it's good you're celebrating again. Congratulations to your brother-in-law! [Alice: 72]

The examples above show self-disclosures, all of which are relevant to the ongoing conversations in that they affect timings of work and arrangements to meet. What is interesting is that participants are quite specific about the appointments and events they need to attend, disclosing family engagements and personal activities (learning to drive and seeing the doctor). As shown by example (113) these disclosures do not always elicit a response; however, (112) & (115) show that these can be used as an excuse for well-wishes, when the event is something positive.

In example (114) it is Hai's addition of "It's freezing these day!" which personalises this message and shows an additional level of personal attention. His use of exclamation marks and an intensifying adjective 'so' also serves to emphasise the message. Had the message been sent without these elements, it would likely have appeared rote and impersonal. Hai's response is tie reinforcing as it shows personalised sympathy for Liz. Illness is a topic also tackled in the following extracts:

(116) Hi Elizabeth,

sorry for late reply. I had a GP appointment today. I hvae been avoiding to use the computer due to being unwell. Please see attachment for Chapter 5 [Irma: 22]

I'm very sorry you've been ill, right close to your deadline is the worst time for that to happen. [Liz to Irma: 23]

(117) *129) 08/08/2013 Re: Post-viva proofreading*
My mother is sick, Liz, she has a drop of hormone and my father has kidney disease.
I has to nurse both of them and find the cabable doctor.
I think you can accept and do other customers' work until the end of September, please alert me one more time.
Yep, I will ask Mike by email one more time.
Ploy

130) 08/08/2013 Re: Post-viva proofreading
Hi Ploy,
I'm so sorry, I hope they both get better soon.
Don't worry about anything, I wasn't urging you to hurry, simply working out my schedule.

Best wishes to you and your family,
Liz x

Here the fact that the writer or writer's family are unwell is made clear, with the repercussions of these illnesses clearly described. In both cases (116) & (117) Liz responds with sympathy using intensifiers "very sorry", "so sorry", and in Supaksorn's case where the illness is an ongoing event, rather than a past one, Liz adds well-wishes and reassurances that this will not affect their work (see p. 168 for a further analysis of features in this example). In Irma's case where the illness is past, Liz offers her sympathy about the timing of this illness. In both cases this is effective tie reinforcing as Liz effectively puts herself in 'her clients' shoes' adopting their perspective and seeing how these events could affect/ have affected them.

Taking another example of personal sharing, the following sequence from Supaksorn and Liz contains a huge amount of self-disclosure, which deviates completely from the topic of business. The emails here are reproduced as fully as possible, with one omission due to the size of the data[43]. The omitted text concerned Supaksorn's work only:

(118) *56) 25/02/2013 Re: From Mike to Liz [attachment - completed work]*
Hi Ploy,

Here is the most recent finished piece, ++

As always, any questions/comments just email me.

All the best

Liz

P.S I was talking to my grandfather (who writes and marks TEFL papers) about your thesis, as he is very interested in language and he said he'd really love to read it, I of course would not send it to him without your permission and I was wondering how you would feel about him reading it.

57) 25/02/2013 Grandpapa

Certainly, Liz. You've got my permission.

Is yr granpapa a teacher?

[43] As is the case throughout this thesis, ++ is used to designate omitted text, as ellipses are used by some email writers.

Actually, my thesis is not very academic. For me, it is my point of view about the data I have.

It is like you have some ingredients in the kitchen, you have to cook something to serve yr customers(Mike + Examiners).

I don't claim it is always true for every case.

I am not the linguist in nature. Being with the thesis, I realize more and more.

[blog web address]

I believe about work and happiness (F rule : fun, friends, finance, fame, and future).

After I graduate, I plan to work in fictions/travel articles (hopefully, bestsellers in [home country]),

but I will also teach at the univ for my job security.

Anyway, tell yr grandpapa, feel free to correct and comment my thesis. His ideas are welcomed.

Also, I wish to host you for a dinner or lunch when we meet for the payment.

Thanks for the attachment.

See you soon.

Ploy

58) 26/02/2013 Re: Grandpapa

Hi Ploy,

Yes, my Grandpa was a teacher, he used to teach music and was a head teacher at a primary school, but always had a deep interest in language, which I think has really influenced his choice to go into TEFL. He certainly fueled my passion for language at a young age, and I'm sure he would be very happy to give you feedback if and when he has time to read your thesis.

Thank you for sending my that link to your online CV/blog, the amount and diversity of what you have accomplished is incredible, I am in awe and certainly somewhat envious, I would absolutely love to work abroad and be so well-traveled. I love to learn about other cultures, which is one of the reasons I'm enjoying your thesis so much!

I understand what you mean about the non-academicness of your thesis - as a postgraduate I often proposed ideas for essays which my tutors dismissed for being too non-academic and opinion-based, but I certainly think your thesis has scientific methodology and that its claims are verifiable, so it certainly seems academic to me.

I would love to go to lunch with you and learn more about you and your experience writing this thesis, perhaps you could even give me some advice on my own career/ life aspirations.

All the best, and I look forward to the next section

Liz

59) 27/02/2013 Ploy's Chapter 2_PART 3 [attachment - work to proofread]
As attached, Liz. (Chapter 2_PART 3_last part)
I am happy that you accept my invitation, and we can talk more, including about yr grandpapa and your language interest :)

Ploy

The sequence above is an extreme but excellent example of the sort of exchange that can deviate completely away from business and into talk simply for phatic purposes. A comparable sequence is [Alice: 52-56] (excerpts shown in example (125), p. 150 and example (140), p. 162).

The relational sequence in example (118) starts with a postscript which is a potential CMC cue (as discussed later in section 7.2.9). This sections the talk about Liz's grandfather away from talk about business, and cues that something different is happening here. This particular postscript is discussed in more detail later, so I do not describe its specific components here. Suffice to say that here it triggers a discussion that takes over the main body of the email and becomes, for a short time, the main reason for Supaksorn and Liz to communicate.

This is a tie reinforcing sequence which involves accommodative moves towards an informal and non-task-driven mode of talk. Supaksorn in her reply orients not towards Liz's email body text, but to the new information introduced in her postscript, putting her reply into the body text and thus making it the main topic of the email. This is an affiliative move as it shows Supaksorn's approval of Liz talking about her work more widely and being eager to share it with others, which is usually desirable for academic texts, though may not be when the text is in an unfinished state, hence Liz's request for Supaksorn's approval. Supaksorn's discussion then turns to her analysis of her own writing and her life goals. This is a huge self-disclosure and probably indicates a high level of trust in Liz and a possible consideration of her as a friend rather than just a collaborator in her PhD project. Though it may also be cultural, as Supaksorn later states in relation to her culture "**We are so nice, patient and value long-term relationship.**" [Supaksorn: 146, bold original]. She ends email [57] with an invitation for Liz to join her for a meal once the project is complete; this may be a further indication of her increasing closeness to Liz, or again could potentially be an invitation which is considered appropriate (or essential) in her specific Southeast Asian business culture. Due to the cultural mismatch between the participants, and the fact that Supaksorn was exposed to British culture while studying in the UK, it is impossible to tell.

Liz's reply email [58] contains a similar level of disclosure to Supaksorn's. What is interesting about this email is how much it accommodates towards the themes expressed in Supaksorn's email, and how it emphasises the similarities between the two participants (McPherson et al., 2001). Liz shows that she has also had problems with projects being judged as non-academic, but, where Liz cannot show she is similar, she instead compliments these aspects of Supaksorn's experience showing that these characteristics are desirable. For Supaksorn's life plan, Liz implies she thinks this plan has merit when she suggests Supaksorn could give her some advice when they meet; regarding Supaksorn's blog and her desire to write 'travel articles' Liz states a desire to travel and learn about other cultures. In every respect, this reply is highly affiliative, complimentary and emphasises homophily in shared interests, and "similarity breeds connection" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415).

Like talk of mutual interests, as indicated above with Supaksorn's comment about her thesis being "not very academic", troubles also have the potential to be something that triggers a display of sympathy, reassurance, homogeneity (in that the recipient has experienced the same or a similar problem), offers of help, or in some cases a humorous response. Many troubles receive no response from the recipient, they are either simply dealt with or are seen as information giving that does not require a response. Some on the other hand have a less sympathetic response, e.g. that despite whatever problems the writer may have, the reader expects business to carry on as usual or for pre-arranged deadlines to be met. These somewhat more conflictive troubles are discussed in Chapter 9, Tie Decay.

The literature on troubles has overwhelmingly focussed on face-to-face interaction, with little attention on CMC (but see Smithson et al., 2011; Park, 2016). This is problematic as descriptions of how troubles are dealt with generally take the whole conversational sequence into account (Jefferson & Lee, 1980; Jefferson, 1988) expecting the "teller" to lead up through various moves, after which the listener gives an immediate response. This does not happen in email, though the following proposed steps of troubles-telling may still stand:

1) attending to business as usual

2) gradual movement towards an attention to the trouble

3) intense and uncontaminated focus on the trouble

4) moving back to attending to business as usual

(adapted from Jefferson & Lee, 1980, p. 3)

However, in email, all steps by the teller are taken at once, then the responder takes all their steps (if indeed there is a response). To exemplify this, I am using a sequence between Ruth and Liz:

Steps from Jefferson and Lee (1980)	[Ruth: 67] `19/12/2013 RE: When is ok to drop off`	[Liz to Ruth: 68] `19/12/2013 RE: When is ok to drop off`
attending to business as usual	Hi Liz	Hi Ruth,
moves gradually towards an attention to the trouble	I've just been going through recordings and it's bizzare I do not know what happened.	
arrives at an intense and uncontaminated focus on the trouble	It's very haphazard and will be very difficult to put together. I'm sorry to put you through all these unnecessary ... I'll see if I can do them my self.	I'm so sorry, it's horrible when technology fails like that or just seems to be trying to make things difficult. If you still want to give me the files I could get my boyfriend to look at them - he's amazing with technology and might be able to work out what happened.
moves back to an attending to business as usual	But will still be bringing in my 6,000 words for proof reading in the New Year. Do have a great Christmas Kind Regards, Ruth	6000 words in the New Year is no problem. *I really hope you can get the recordings sorted - whichever one of us is going to transcribe them!* If you need me, I'm at the cafe from 10:30-3:00 tomorrow. All the best, and Merry Christmas, Liz

Table 21: Ruth and Liz troubles telling

And again, even more clearly, with Liz and Zétény:

Steps from Jefferson and Lee (1980)	[Zétény: 97] *29/01/2014 Re: Heckling paper*	[Liz to Zétény: 98] *29/01/2014 Re: Heckling paper*
attending to business as usual	Hi Liz, Thank you so much for doing such a quick and thorough work – I added your name to the acknowledgement section!	Hi Zétény, No problem at all, I will look out for the fee and notify you if it doesn't reach me in a couple of weeks.
moves gradually towards an attention to the trouble	Also, thank you for the comments, which are really helpful/ I will be careful of the distinctions you mentions.	
arrives at an intense and uncontaminated focus on the trouble	I must admit that loose vs. lose is an evergreen problem source for me…	I also regularly misspell 'lose' as 'loose' - in my opinion the spelling of 'lose' is stupid - but I'm not sure there's much that can be done about that!
moves back to an attending to business as usual	I have requested my colleague to get the fee transferred to the account mentioned in the invoice. As things can be slow with finance, may I ask you to drop me a note, should this sum not reach you in two weeks time? Thank you. I will get in touch when there is a new paper. Best wishes, and thanks again, Zétény	Looking forward to the next paper, Liz

Table 22: Zétény and Liz troubles telling

Though I cannot claim that all email troubles tellings follow this pattern, there is good evidence that troubles are at the very least, bracketed by a greeting, a sign-off or both, which constitute ‘normal’ email writing. Jefferson and Lee also noted that:

> The interactants start out at a distance appropriate to their routine conversation, become gradually closer, arrive at an intense intimacy as the trouble is focussed upon, and then return to a more distant relationship as they re-engage with business as usual (Jefferson & Lee, 1980, p. 3)

This move towards greater intimacy can certainly be seen in Table 21 and Table 22. Liz’s response to Ruth is serious and empathetic, and she also offers a possible solution to the trouble, her response to Zétény is again empathetic but is also humorous. These differing responses are likely to relate to the seriousness of the told trouble: a “technology is stupid” type comment is unlikely to be well-received by Ruth who is by her own description facing a “very difficult” task. Zétény’s trouble on the other hand is comparatively minor, but nevertheless Liz offers solidarity with him, perhaps intending to make him feel better by the assertion that she (as a native speaker and proofreader) also has this problem (see Park, 2016 “Affiliation Through Troubles-Talk”). The responses in the tables are clearly affiliative; in both cases, Liz shows she understands the problem and sympathises with it, elaborating upon her emotional involvement with “it's horrible when technology fails like that or just seems to be trying to make things difficult.” [Liz to Ruth: 68], “in my opinion the spelling of 'lose' is stupid - but I'm not sure there's much that can be done about that!” [Liz to Zétény: 98]. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, an important aspect of these responses is that they are tailored; they are not generic platitudes, but rather they show genuine empathy, and this is what enables them to reinforce the tie, rather than just maintain it.

To examine this emotional involvement between troubles-teller and reader, some further examples of affiliative responses to troubles are shown below. These are shown without the rest of the email text in order to save time and space:

(119) Sorry if you have received two rather similar emails. I don't understand my new iPhone yet. [Alice: 91]

Yes I did receive both, if it helps, they made me amusingly confused by being both similar and different! [Liz to Alice: 92]

(120) I undertake my thesis correction and Mike still keeps quiet without any reply to me. [Supaksorn: 134]

I'm sorry Mike hasn't got back to you yet - he was always terrible at deadlines, I remember that problem well from when I was a student! I really hope he gets back to you soon. [Liz to Supaksorn: 135]

(121) I can't really make it much sooner as I have a big Phd commission at the moment and the guy is really messing me about so it's taking a lot of time... [Liz to Meera: 29]

No problems, Friday is very much fine for me. Thank you so much. [Meera: 30]

As above, the responses display various degrees of seriousness depending on the importance of the problem. In (119) Alice’s problem of not being able to work her phone, leading her to send Liz two similar, but not identical emails (having typed the second thinking the first had not successfully sent) is responded to with humour. Liz understands that Alice may find her phone frustrating and attempts to alleviate these negative feelings by implying that Alice had inadvertently "played a joke" upon Liz by sending her these "amusingly confus[ing]" emails. In this case, the trouble is neither sympathised with, nor is advice offered, but rather it is minimised and the non-serious nature of her problem, and its humorous repercussions, are emphasised. It should be noted that Liz and Alice had by this point, established a relationship characterised by occasional deviations into joking and banter. Therefore, while the impact of this tactic on Alice cannot be known for sure, it is likely, given their history, and Alice's joking comment in her following email: "It is strange that neither my phone nor my computer shows that my two messages have been sent ! (Why?!)" [Alice: 93], that this joking minimisation of her problem did not cause offence, but rather served to strengthen solidarity.

Example (121), like (119), solves part of the problem simply by responding to it. In example (121) a difficult customer is affecting Liz's ability to do Meera's work in good time. Whilst Meera's response does not show sympathy for the situation with the other client, it does minimise the problem by showing that the delay is not an issue. While it could be argued that this is therefore not tie reinforcing, but simply tie maintenance, in this case Meera adds extra affective language. She does not simply say it is not a problem but emphasises "Friday is **very much** fine for me". By doing this, and adding an emphatic thanking, she not only accepts the situation, but emphasises the non-problematic nature of this situation to Liz, designing her response so that Liz will not worry that she has inconvenienced her. In other words, this looks like more than mere polite acceptance, but rather appears to genuinely take Liz's feelings about the situation into account.

In example (120) Liz is able to fully empathise with Supaksorn as she has experienced the same problems in the past. Supaksorn presents an unsolved trouble, that of Mike's non-responding to her messages. Here Liz is able not only to offer her sympathy "I'm sorry ++ I really hope he gets back to you soon", but also to reinforce her tie with Supaksorn by empathising through a common experience "I remember that problem well from when I was a student!". Although this does unfortunately imply that Supaksorn's problem may not be solved soon, due to Mike's consistent non-meeting of deadlines, it does offer solidarity with her predicament.

As shown, there are a number of ways to make an affiliative and tie-reinforcing response when faced with a trouble telling, the problem can be minimised, sympathised with, or empathised with through common experience. Each of these involves a tailored response to the specific troubles-teller, rather than a formulaic response such as "sorry to hear that", which shows the troubles-teller that the recipient is thinking of them and is dedicating time to reinforcing their relationship.

As well as providing personal information through self-disclosures and troubles telling, which in turn allows the recipient to show understanding, homogeneity and to offer sympathy, writers can also provide personal information through sharing personal and cultural artefacts, such as pictures, weblinks, videos etc. as shown in the next section.

6.2.2 Pictures, videos and music

A very direct way in which a writer can connect more deeply with their recipient, using more than text only as a means of communication, is by attaching multimedia content. The items in this category include hyperlinks/urls (to video and text-based content) pasted directly into email text, hyperlinks concealed in parts of the text (i.e. by selecting a specific word and adding a hyperlink to it), and pictures, photos and music attached to the email as an extra downloadable file or embedded within the text. Kress and van Leeuwen see the importance of images not only in what they depict specifically, but in "the way in which these depicted people, places and things are combined [with text] into a meaningful whole." (1996, p. 1). Hence, here I examine what impact the inclusion of these urls and attachments have on the email text as a whole, again in terms of the relationship between reader and writer.

In my dataset, multimedia is sometimes used to encourage networking through multiple channels such as via social media. Though in this dataset this usage is infrequent, larger businesses, which rely more on consumer engagement across multiple social media channels, might use it more in this way. This would benefit from further investigations.

Only Liz seems to use this multimedia in this way, occasionally having her email signature include links to her professional work website.

(122) Liz Marsden

Academic Services

[contact details, website address]

Many of Liz's emails include this kind of multimedia, with links to her website, Facebook business page, and at some points to her Twitter account or academic advice blog included in the text, and also in her invoices (see blank example invoice Appendix, section 11.6). Creating more ways for clients to keep in touch potentially reinforces her tie with these clients. As Milroy and Milroy (1992, p. 20) state, ties can be reinforced by creating multiple relationships between nodes (e.g. in the present day context: client, Facebook friend, Twitter follower etc.) and by knowing people in multiple contexts. Offering other networks through which clients can communicate can create further intimacy, and more "contact opportunities" (Burt, 2001), making total decay less likely.

Another usage of multimedia, which is always client-initiated in this dataset, is cultural/personal information exchange, this includes photos, videos and music sent to share experiences, and cultural artefacts. Sharing culture is an important aspect of personal sharing in that "Culture, by influencing the psychological make-up of individuals, shapes their behaviour. Apart from affecting people's value constructs and ways of thinking, cultural experience also conditions the formation of the self" (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2011, p. 240). In the following email from Supaksorn, she makes her intentions very clear:

(123) *64) 17/03/2013 Pictures*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RXNKNAH3Yc

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDV_LeSkF6c

The story about a Japanese soldier and a Thai girl during the Second World War, from a historical novel, คู่กรรม, to TV series. In that time, Japan came and used Thailand as the military base, but the Thai girl and her father worked for Alliance; they saved a British key hostage. The marriage was arranged to avoid suspicion by the Japanese army in Thailand. Anyway, it is true love across cultures between the soldier and the girl(finally loved with the enemy) in the wartime.; the Japanese guy died at the end.

Then you can imagine about behaviours and cultures in our zone.
Just for fun and experiencing the differences, my friends in the research room really like this story.

Ploy

Although the several emails before this one were purely on business matters, Liz had previously expressed an interest in learning more about other cultures:

(124) I would absolutely love to work abroad and be so well-traveled. I love to learn about other cultures, which is one of the reasons I'm enjoying your thesis so much! [Liz to Supaksorn: 58]

Therefore, Supaksorn's email can be seen as a potential response to this, and as an initiation of cultural sharing, something she had also expressed an interest in, both personally and through her academic work. Supaksorn here constructs herself and her culture for Liz, showing "behaviours and cultures in our zone", by which, given that the story shared is a cross-cultural romance one can infer she means East and South East Asia as a whole.

This is not an isolated incident, as Supaksorn shares some of her home country's music in one of her later emails. Through this sharing, Liz is invited to appreciate and learn more about Supaksorn's Southeast Asian culture. This may in theory make their interactions more successful, as cultural awareness is an important part of avoiding misunderstanding:

> … people from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations in their email communication (e.g., how they expect to be addressed and greeted). As a result, they may feel uncomfortable when a correspondent does not conform to their expectations. (Murphy & Levy, 2006, p. 8)

However, it is unlikely that Supaksorn shares to avoid misunderstandings, as expressed in her email, she is interested in sharing "Just for fun and experiencing the differences". In this way, she reinforces ties with Liz by encouraging more closeness by engaging in "fun" non-business-related talk.

Supaksorn is not the only client to send Liz personal/cultural artefacts, as Alice and Victoria also engage in this type of sharing:

(125) `52) 30/12/14 Re: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year`

Dear Liz,
I was thinking about your celebration of the New Year in the UK as well because I have just sent the chapters 1-5 to Prof Zétény, etc., short of Chapter 6. I will be sending it to you tomorrow, though I am not sure at what time. * Once you return it to me after you have revised it, I will send it to Prof Zétény, etc.

I haven't taken a few days off yet, but will do so tomorrow night because I follow the Occidental calendar usually.
++
Here's wishing you a very happy and successful new year 2015!!!

Alice
P.S. The photo shows my door decoration. It's Japanese.

The omitted part of the email was talk about work. This email was accompanied by this picture as an attachment:

Figure 17: Alice's door hanging

Alice's email mentions her thinking of the UK new year celebration and includes a new year's salutation. The tie reinforcing aspects of this friendly email are intensified by the picture's inclusion, which gives Liz a more intimate look into the life of someone she has only communicated with via writing. She therefore reciprocates this intimate gesture, "I have attached in return a picture of the lovely candle house decorations made by my mum, she did a really lovely job decorating this year." [Liz to Alice: 53]:

Figure 18: Liz's Christmas candle decoration

Both pictures are met with compliments from the recipients "Your door decoration is beautiful, do the different parts have symbolic meanings?" [Liz to Alice: 53] "Thank you very much!!! Your Mum's an artist!!! The picture you sent is a real Christmas card !!!" [Alice: 54]. In these instances, text descriptions would not have been able to convey the appearance of decorations easily and effectively and would not have had the same impact on the recipients, thus leading to much less effective tie reinforcing. Additionally, as mentioned above, this additional mode of knowing each other, gives each participant a new way of viewing their conversational partner's life and experiences thus increasing intimacy. Additionally, this sharing of pictures/music/video may signal a relational change (cf. Goffman, 1971, pp. 192–203). Goffman (1971, p. 203) gives examples such as "penetration into the other's personal space, initial use of familiar forms of address, and so forth." as signs the relationship is changing. In my conceptualisation, the participants are now, due to multiple expressions of intimacy as well as this cultural sharing, on the path between having a weak functional and a strong functional tie (see Figure 1, p. 37).

Like Alice, Victoria also chooses to show Liz photographs, though these are not so much a cultural exchange (Victoria is East Asian, the photos are from a trip to Italy) but are definitely a detailed look into an experience she has had, which again would be laborious to convey via text. Victoria's photos are sent as a response to a friendly email from Liz thanking Victoria for giving her permission to be included in Liz's research. In response to Liz's initial request, Victoria mentioned "I am having a vacation on abroad right now. I will answer your question two days later when I come back to uK." [Victoria: 51], after she replied to Liz on her return, Liz responded "Thank you so much Victoria, / I hope you enjoyed your travels - where were you visiting? (you don't have to tell me, I'm just curious!)" [Liz to Victoria: 54]. Victoria responded:

> (126) I am so sorry to forgot telling your my travels. I just came back from Italy. I visited Milan, Venice, Florence and Rome. The whole travels took me 9 days. By the way, i shared some pics with you. Italy is really beautiful. [Victoria: 55]

She attached 12 photos to this email and 6 to a following email with no text. The images showed many historic landmarks, though no photos included Victoria herself:

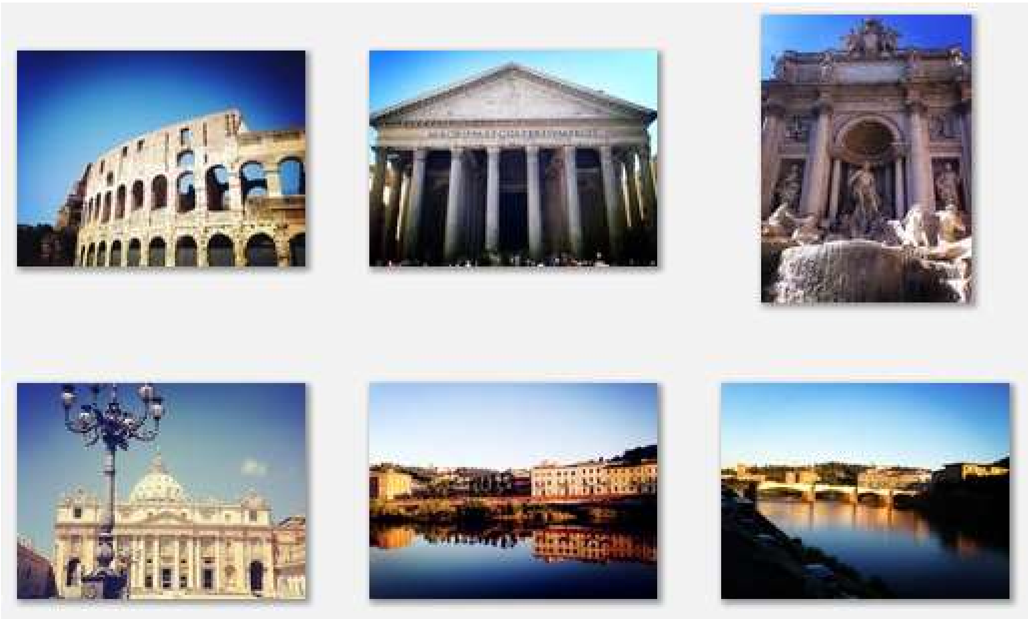


Figure 19: Sample of Victoria's photos of Italy

Though Victoria lists the places she visited and states that "Italy is really beautiful" the effectiveness of her message is enhanced and verified by the photos above, which also provide much detail missing from the text, e.g. the weather, which landmarks she saw and how she chose to view and compose them. These images are considerably tie-reinforcing as they go above and beyond what is typically expected of a response to this kind of enquiry – no other client in the data attaches holiday photos like this, although a few give brief positive accounts of their holidays, such as "PS: Italy was amazing and guess what, so so so warm :D" [Dana: 33] or "I had a great Christmas, spent with the wider family in [Central Europe]." [Zétény: 91].

While not providing personal or cultural information, a further usage of multimedia is to supply information that the text cannot convey effectively. This usage conveys information that it would be difficult to comprehend through a textual description alone, including such examples as providing pictures to illustrate points, as below:

(127) I may well have met you again recently, I'm re-connecting with a lot of people who I previously worked for or studied with! Sadly I have a terrible memory for faces so I'm not good at remembering people. So that you can definitely spot me, I've attached a photo!

see you soon,

best regards,

Liz

[Liz to Avin: 32]

(128) When a change is called 'formatted' this means I have changed something about the styling or structure of the document. For example, I noticed that instead of center aligning text (I have attached a pic of Microsoft Word with an arrow to the button I mean) you have been pressing the space bar multiple times - I have corrected this so centre formatting is correctly aligned.
[Liz to Imran: 26]

In the emails above, the picture sent to Avin was inline, and the picture sent to Imran was an attachment, shown below:

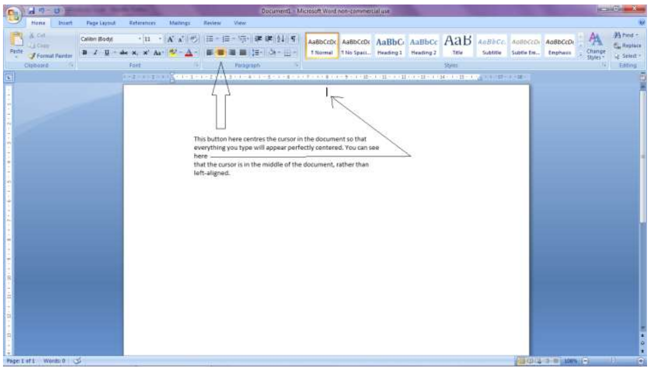


Image is a screenshot from Microsoft Word, the text reads: *"This button here ↑ centres the cursor in the document so that everything you type will appear perfectly centred. You can see here ↥ that the cursor is in the middle of the document rather than left-aligned"*

Figure 20: Image sent to Imran

Reading these emails, the smiling picture in [Liz to: Avin 32] could be seen as adding a friendly tone to the sign-off (much the same as an ":)" emoticon), as Liz expresses a worry that she and Avin may fail to recognise each other when they meet again (as they have arranged earlier in the email). The picture conveys something that text could not do effectively: an accurate description of what Liz looks like.

The email to Imran includes an image that uses text with illustrative arrows to make sure that Imran notices the appropriate part of the image when reading the text. This image is instructional and has considerable tie-reinforcing attributes; Liz has gone beyond what is expected of her – this consideration is 'salient' or 'marked' (Locher & Watts, 2005) – and she has explained in a way that is hopefully easier for her recipient to understand (especially given that Imran is an ESL speaker), thus taking his needs into consideration. These emails to Avin and Imran, exhibit recipient design and attempt to take into account potential problems faced by the recipient.

The following examples show another usage of multimedia, namely hyperlinks. Hyperlinks are firstly used for citing information sources. Similarly to standard academic referencing, these hyperlinks augment the text by allowing the reader to verify the writer's source material as trustworthy or reliable for themselves. Linking texts in this way allows for an easier discourse on the topic and separates the writer's opinion from information gained from an outside source. It again is a technique which shows consideration of the reader's perspective. Two examples of this are shown below:

(129) I have just been going through the chapter you mentioned for the Rana quotes.
++ Since your email however, I have done a quick Google search, and I'm not even sure now that this quote is a complete quote from one book, as the part after the ellipsis, is replicated verbatim here and here in the latter it is referenced as a quote from Solomon R. 'Chinese political negotiating behaviour: a briefing analysis' [Liz to Supaksorn: 91]

(130) Currently, according to the [home country] Embassy in London's website, if you stay [home country] within 1 month, you don't need to apply for the visa. It's visa-exemption.

[link to embassy website] (The country number 40 on the list is the United Kingdom). [Supaksorn: 107]

In these instances, the multimodal features alter the reader's interaction with the text, they allow the text to be verified and allow the reader to find supplementary information. This may also make the information exchange more equal (in the sense of power) as no interactant holds more information than the other about the source material, they are both able to interpret it independently and then discuss. This makes interaction with the information more collaborative, which is important for stronger ties (Vandergriff, 2013; Shen et al., 2014).

To summarise, the inclusion of urls and attaching of multimedia items appears largely to have a positive affiliative function as these items can be seen to supplement, enhance and ease the understanding of the email text. They can also be of themselves something shared for enjoyment purposes, such as Supaksorn's music and video and Victoria's and Alice's photographs. These types of multimedia can begin to bridge the 'relational gap' that exists when communication is purely through text, and rarely or never face-to-face. What I mean by 'relational gap' is the idea that knowing someone through multiple communication channels which allow the interaction to be experienced by more than one sense, i.e. touch, vision, hearing etc. starts to build a richer picture of that person. By sharing these artefacts that let the communicative partner experience some part of the sender's personal life or culture, a wider picture of that person can be seen, and the potential for more sharing of this kind is initiated.

Non-salient politeness, as discussed in these subsections is a relational device which parallels Goffman's description of "change signals":

> Rituals of birth, marriage, and death form one set of examples [of "change signals"]. Another comprises occasions when minor liberties are first taken - use of the other's personal possessions without a by-your-leave, penetration into the other's personal space, initial use of familiar forms of address, and so forth. (Goffman, 1971, p. 203)

All the above disclosures and sharings allow the receiver to "penetrat[e] into the other's personal space" which in turn allows a deeper understanding of events which may refer back or be based upon past events in the partners' relationship, as Kádár and Haugh state "an understanding in the here-and-now is dependent on understandings established through the there-and-then." (2013, p. 76). While this section has focussed on *what* is written about, the next section looks not only at the *what*, but also crucially at the *how*. By *how* in this context, I refer to those added elements that accompany and alter the interpretation of the written words such as exclamation marks, emoticons etc. These are collectively termed “CMC cues” and are discussed below. These features are important to analyse in detail, as in CMC writers rely on these textual cues rather than being able to use prosody and body language. In face-to-face communication, facial expressions, gestures, vocal tone etc. are important domains that the interlocutor can mimic, which is “intimately tied to relationships, liking, and empathy, functioning both as a signal of rapport and as a tool to generate rapport” (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 221). However, in written media, writers must use other means to clarify the intended locutionary force (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

Having looked at non-salient politeness, it is time to turn now to salient politeness. By this I mean those parts of text that are typically considered polite, or as described in face-to-face communication, “face supportive” (Haugh, 2013). What is specifically covered are those aspects of salient politeness that do more than simply maintain face in a way that is expected and accepted a.k.a “politic” or “unmarked” (Locher & Watts, 2005), as covered in Chapter 8, but rather those examples that serve to reinforce ties by doing more than is expected by common courtesy, such as paying compliments.

There is a huge amount of standard politeness in the email data, such as polite address terms, standard wellness enquiries, even bracketing the main body email text with a greeting and sign-off, as Zummo states, “greetings and closings in email exchanges, as well as address terms, are part of politeness formulae to maintain relations in a friendly working environment” (Zummo, 2018b, p. 59). However, much of this is not salient, but rather expected, or “politic” as mentioned above. Therefore, this type of politeness is dealt with in the maintenance chapter which deals with those aspects of language that, while not reinforcing, do serve to make transactions smooth and avoid relationship decay. These sections look briefly at two examples of polite behaviour that go beyond what is expected: compliments and kisses.

6.3 Compliments

As explored in sections 5.2.3 and 5.3.2 of this thesis, compliments are an important aspect of initiating tie creation as they immediately show approval of the recipient, leading to a potentially more favourable response, especially in a business relationship. Compliments are also used by both Liz and the clients throughout their business interactions to reinforce the relationship. Unique and tailored compliments are examined here in the reinforcing chapter as they provide additional specific information that then becomes part of the relational historicity.

Complimenting your writing partner allows you to pick an action that person has done; an ability; or a character trait, and praise them for it, thus explicitly showing what traits of that person you approve of. However, there are risks to complimenting, “Paying a compliment can also be quite face-threatening for the speakers themselves since the interlocutor receiving it might not take it as a positive remark to be appreciated but as an unwelcome or embarrassing comment” (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012, p. 980). In this way, paying a successful compliment may indicate that one knows one’s recipient well, and that the compliment has been designed specifically to please them, though this cannot, of course, be the case for compliments in first-contact emails. There are also cultural factors that may influence the interpretation of compliments. As Wolfson (Wolfson, 1981) states, Arabic compliments may form part of conventionalised rituals while Japanese compliments may look insulting from an American perspective (the latter is also expressed by Daikuhara, 1986). Cheng confirms, “cultures vary in what constitutes acceptable or preferred compliment topics” (Cheng, 2003, p. 95). With this in mind, it is possible that some compliments in this dataset have been missed or misinterpreted as I am not an expert on every national culture represented. However, clients are communicating with a British partner, in English, and have been exposed to British cultural norms for a number of years through study; thus, it may be that their complimenting strategies have been Anglicised.

Compliments in the dataset are varied, appearing in several forms and with different potential impacts on the reader. A compliment can be responded to in three ways: acknowledging the compliment, usually with thanks, (and/or) paying a compliment in return, or giving no response. This final option is unlike spoken data, where compliments are frequently described as gaining a response from the listener, usually acceptance (but often with a downgrade or qualification), denial, both, or some ritual response (Pomerantz, 1978; Holmes, 2012, p. 210; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012). In this email data, around half of the compliments given receive no response at all, in some cases there is no follow-up email from the recipient, and in others, while there is a following mail, the compliment is not mentioned. Compliments are never rejected. Compliments are also not always of the reader and the reader's qualities/actions/abilities etc., but less often, compliments are given of a mutually known other or passed on from an acquaintance of the writer (either known or unknown to the reader). I explore some of these examples below.

6.3.1 Compliments of the reader

These are unsurprisingly the most common type of compliment in the dataset, and are frequently combined with giving thanks e.g. "Thank you for finishing my work early. You really did a good job" [Imran: 12] (a pattern also noted by Manes & Wolfson, 1981, pp. 127–128). These compliments indicate desirable qualities/abilities of the reader and show the writer's approval of these qualities e.g. "Here is your paper, it was a really interesting read" [Liz to Zétény: 106] or simply use a positive adjective to describe the reader "You are great" [Victoria: 17]. Writers also make use of indirect compliments, showing how something the reader did made the writer feel "I have to say I am REALLY enjoying reading your thesis" [Liz to Supaksorn: 36] or "Like what have come from my close friends, your message makes me feel warm" [Supaksorn: 141]. All of these indicate approval of the reader, and in many cases, approval of their work, which is important for a business relationship. When a person makes a compliment, they state a favourable opinion, and by doing so "the speaker expresses a commonality of taste or interest with the addressee, thus reinforcing, or in the case of strangers, creating at least a minimal amount of solidarity" (Manes & Wolfson, 1981, p. 124).

When analysed together, compliments reveal the differences between client and proofreader, and the qualities which each believes is most worthy of complimenting in the other. The table below is a short summary of those talents and attributes perceived as most praiseworthy. Numbers in brackets indicate the number of compliments that can be roughly summarised as falling into each category.

Liz's best attributes	Which clients wrote it?	Clients' best attributes	Which clients does it apply to?
Provides work clients are happy with (24)	Alice, Imran, Meera, Miyako, Ruth, Sofia, Supaksorn, Victoria, Zétény	Good/clear writing style (17)	Alice, Hai, Imran, Irma, Ivie, Meera, Ruth, Supaksorn, Zétény
Works fast (11)	Alice, Imran, Ivie, Meera, Ruth, Zétény	Fast and/or generous payment (4)	Ivie, Ruth, Victoria, Imran
Nice/kind/friendly/ helpful (11)	Avin, Dana, Imran, Meera, Sofia, Supaksorn, Victoria, Zétény	Nice/kind/helpful (9)	Alice, Avin, Supaksorn, Zétény
Academic/intelligent/ informative/ expert (7)	Alice, Imran, Ruth, Zétény	Interesting writer (6)	Imran, Miyako, Ruth, Supaksorn, Zétény

Table 23: Compliments received by Liz and Clients

The "praiseworthy" aspects of Liz and the clients illuminate their different roles in the business relationship. While being nice/kind is seen as praiseworthy for both groups, all other broad compliment groups relate to their roles. Liz values interesting and clear writing from her clients, presumably because her job is then both quicker and less boring. Understandably as a business owner, fast and generous payment is also valued. Clients on the other hand value a service they are happy with, that is provided quickly, by someone who is perceived as an expert. While these may seem like very pragmatic compliments which value the person's performance in their role more than the person themselves (with the exception of the nice/kind/helpful category), when they are responded to, it is clear that these are compliments that the recipients are happy to receive. Both parties like to be told that they are good at what they are doing, as these compliments and responses show:

(131) I really enjoyed reading this; I found your questionnaire results very interesting. [Liz to Imran: 35]

Thank you very much that you are enjoying my work. [Imran: 36]

(132) I happy of your work because reflect my ideas perfectly. I hope that your help give me the points to get my first class. [Sofia: 21]

It was my pleasure to help. [Liz to Sofia: 22]

(133) I have to say I am REALLY enjoying reading your thesis, as a linguist and one who has long been fascinated by Eastern culture, it is steadily increasing my

yearning to travel and experience these wonderful cultures for myself. I especially loved your explanation of the perception of time [Liz to Supaksorn: 36]

I am glad that you like my thesis. The perception about time is presented by Cohen.
Hope to welcome you in [home country] after my graduation. [Supaksorn: 37]

The above examples are effectively tie reinforcing; by showing approval of the writing partner and taking the time to write these compliments, with specific details of what they enjoyed/were happy with, the recipient feels they are receiving something specifically tailored to them. This could be interpreted as an aspect of homophily, which is important for strong functional ties (Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011), in that by listing specifically the aspects that they approve of, the writer shows the reader that they may care about the same things.

The type of response is also important for tie reinforcing, while the above responses simply indicate gladness at the compliment received (though Supaksorn does augment this by mentioning additional reading which Liz could follow up on, and expressing a wish to show Liz more of her culture, which Liz has expressed an interest in), the compliments below trigger further compliments from the recipient:

(134) I trust Prof Zétény's candidate selection. I believe you will graduate soon as well. No one has English writing and proofreading skill like you. [Alice: 90]

(135) Thank you for the kind compliments about my language ability - it certainly helps having English as my first language! Though I have to confess, your knowledge of really obscure words far outstrips mine, I had never heard of suzerainty, primogeniture or punctilio before reading your thesis! So thank you for helping to improve my vocabulary [Liz to Alice: 92]

(136) I don't think I've ever read such a lovely, heartfelt dedication, it's fantastic. [Liz to Supaksorn: 14]

(137) Thanks you very much. I like yr edits as well. [Supaksorn: 15]

(138) Please let me say thanks for all your work, it was a pleasure to work with you. [Zétény: 71]

(139) Here is my invoice for the proofreading of the book - it was a pleasure to read, and I am very grateful for the work and your faith in me as a proofreader. [Liz to Zétény: 72]

The compliments above show how one compliment can trigger another. The reinforcing power of specific compliments is greater as they have taken time and effort to produce; they are not formulaic chunks of language which can be written almost without thinking.

While most compliments do follow a standard set of patterns syntactically, as discovered by Manes and Wolfson (1981, p. 120), the most common being "NP is/looks (really) ADJ" as demonstrated by example (136), what makes these compliments successful is the elaboration. Compliments can be 'framed' by comments related to the object/person that is being complimented (Manes & Wolfson, 1981, pp. 128–129), which examples (134), (135), (136) & (138) show. It is this aspect of designing something for that specific reader and engaging with one's knowledge of the historic relationship with that conversational partner which is effectively tie reinforcing. Compliment-triggered compliments show accommodation (Dragojevic et al., 2016) towards the writer, as Dragojevic et al. (2016, p. 41) state, depending on what participants are focussed on e.g. their partner's role, emotional needs, comprehension, etc. they accommodate in different ways.

Having explored compliments of the email recipient, I now look to another type of compliment in the data: compliments of others who are in some way related to the reader.

6.3.2 Compliments of others

There are not many examples of these in the dataset, but they are nevertheless interesting, as they again reinforce ties through homophily; by indicating one's approval, not of the other, but of someone the other also likes, you show a mutual liking. Below are some examples, with their responses from the reader:

(140) Your Mum's an artist!!! The picture you sent is a real Christmas card !!! [Alice: 54]

You don't know how right you are about my Mum, she's got a degree in Textiles and works as a garden designer, she certainly has a lot of artistic flair :) (I took the photo though, so I feel I can claim some credit 😋 !!) [Liz to Alice: 55]

(141) I'm honestly really enjoying reading the [novelist surname] interview again, he's a really interesting man. I must get around to reading some of his books (what would you recommend starting with?). [Liz to Avin: 37]

Ohh I am happy to hear that you enjoyed working on the interview.
All of his novels are fantastic but I recommend his last novel [TITLE] which is really thought provoking. [Avin: 38]

(142) I have just sent back Miyako's dissertation - I finished more quickly than I thought I would. She is a stunningly good writer and the subject was so interesting, it really was a pleasure to read. [Liz to Zétény: 129]

> Million thanks! This will help Miyako a lot, and I feel happy that you like her work. [Zétény: 130]

By showing approval of someone close to the recipient (Liz's mum, the author Avin is analysing for her thesis, Zétény's wife), who the recipient themselves has previously described positively or otherwise shown their emotional involvement with, the writer shows that they now have this approval in common. This works similarly to sending well-wishes to the recipient's family, or inquiring after their health, both of which occur in the data: doing this, or writing specific compliments, shows concern for, knowledge of and also approval of not only the recipient but also their wider likes and relationships. By showing approval of a mutual like, one also indicates homophily (Burt, 2001; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009) and may build towards a desire to explore mutual interests together (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005).

Interestingly, examples (131) and (142) may show a cultural difference in what is perceived as self-praise. In example (131), Liz praises her own mother openly and warmly, whilst mitigating her self-praise at having taken the photo through the use of CMC cues indicating the statement as non-serious. While it is typical in the UK and America to praise one's family, in some cultures, such as Japanese (see, Daikuhara, 1986, p. 115), this would be considered immodest as the family is considered part of the self, so this is tantamount to self-praise. It is interesting to note that Zétény, on hearing praise of his East Asian wife, does not accept or reject this compliment, but rather just states that he is glad Liz enjoyed her writing. It could possibly be that he felt this was inappropriate, and Alice, a Southeast Asian native, may have found Liz's praise of her own mother immodest. It is not possible to know for certain if either of these statements is correct, but it is worth bearing in mind, as such cultural mismatch may have an effect on the tie-reinforcing potential of the compliment and compliment response.

The final type of compliment present in the data generally occur in first-contact emails and are a way of establishing affective ties right from the beginning by illuminating mutual contacts, and passing on recommendations. These first-contact compliments such as "My colleague John suggested you as the right person for proof reading. :)" [Dana: 1] are examined in Chapter 5 section 5.2.3 and section 5.3.2. However, some do occur later, as the examples in the next section show.

6.3.3 Compliments from others

Compliments from others not only show that the conversational dyad are actually more widely connected to others who approve of their accomplishments, but also show that positive talk about the recipient has taken place outside of the dyadic relationship. This positive talk outside the relationship shows that the conversational partner is not only interested in the relationship when it suits business needs, but is also happy to engage in talk about their conversational partner in their free time, and is willing to pass on compliments from others about them. This all shows a larger time commitment to the relationship, and a broadening of the ties which connect the dyad, both of which are important for stronger ties (Granovetter, 1973; Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005). There are few examples of these types of compliments in the data, but some (with their responses, if any) are shown below:

(143) I hope the work on the thesis is going well - I was meaning to ask you, I was talking to my step-Dad (who is a police Inspector in the [location] Police force - if you google "Inspector [Father's name]" you should get a picture of him) about your assignment and he was really interested in your research and said he'd love to read it when it's finished if you have no objections. [Liz to Meera: 58]

Sure why not! I am glad that he is interested. I will definitely share once its finalized. I hope I can get the details about his contact from website. [Meera: 58][44]

(144) P.S I was talking to my grandfather (who writes and marks TEFL papers) about your thesis, as he is very interested in language and he said he'd really love to read it, I of course would not send it to him without your permission and I was wondering how you would feel about him reading it. [Liz to Supaksorn: 56]

Certainly, Liz. You've got my permission. ++
Anyway, tell yr grandpapa, feel free to correct and comment my thesis. His ideas are welcomed. [Supaksorn: 58]

(145) Well done for the great job you did for Irma - I recommended you to her and she's told me that she's happy with job done. [Ruth: 44]

No response

(146) My supervisor has looked Chapter 1 and he is very happy from your work and me also. [Imran: 25]

No response

[44] The compliment and reply have the same email number as they were part of a three-message conversation that took place on LinkedIn, which were then automatically forwarded by LinkedIn to my email address. Hence, all three messages appear as one email.

These compliments show either Liz citing others' interest in the client's work, or clients citing others' satisfaction with Liz's work. As researchers, the clients of course are keen to have their research approved of, disseminated and to have it described as interesting. Therefore, Liz, by talking to others and gaining enthusiastic reactions to the clients' research, helps the clients with their wider aim, and validates their involvement in the projects they are completing. It is pertinent that she mentions the credentials of those who are interested i.e. an involvement in the police force (which Meera's research is focussed on) and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) exam writing (Supaksorn works on cross-cultural communication). The jobs of her father and grandfather validate their interest as being professional, and potentially helpful; they are not just hobbyists, but useful interested parties.

For Liz on the other hand, her clients' passed-on compliments validate her professional ability as a proofreader, Imran's passed-on compliment is especially important, as not only does her proofreading need to satisfy the client, but also others who read their research. These passed-on compliments are therefore obviously tie-reinforcing; not only do they show approval of the recipient, but they potentially widen the network of which the dyad is a part. This transfer of information is what makes being part of a network valuable; Liz and the clients act as bridges between communities, being the only link by which information can flow between them (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1364). Such links can lead to referrals, as shown in Figure 15, p. 75.

As shown above, all three types of compliments serve to reinforce ties by indicating approval of the other in some way (their abilities, their likes etc.) indicating an emotional involvement with the partner, a genuine consideration of their emotional wellbeing, and in many cases, indicating shared values.

Another interesting, albeit rarely used, method of showing affection is by sending kisses at the end of an email. Each kiss is represented in British writing as an upper- or lower-case "x". This type of informal and highly affectionate gesture is not generally associated with a business context.

6.4 Kisses

In this dataset, kisses are extremely rare and are only used by Liz, therefore this short analysis is not generalizable. However, from personal experience, I feel this feature would occur much more in personal email, and perhaps it would be present in other professional contexts[45] (maybe between close colleagues), so I briefly examine its usage here.

It should be noted that all kisses in the data are shown as “x”; this is not a symbol universally used to designate a kiss, and it may be that some clients did not know how to interpret this symbol, therefore, the assumed positive impact may have been entirely lost. Regarding the origin of ‘x’ as a kiss symbol, I was unable to find scholarly work, although the Oxford English Dictionary does confirm that a definition of “X” (as a noun) is “Used to represent a kiss, esp. in the subscription to a letter” (OED Online, 2018). However, several articles, including one from the *Washington Post* indicated a Christian origin (Epstein, 2014), so they may be more interpretable to clients from Judeo-Christian backgrounds. Thus, it is only really possible to examine Liz’s possible motivations for using kisses, rather than clients reactions to them.

For kisses, the conversational context is very important; none of the instances of using kisses following sign-off appear after the conversational partner has sent a standard non-emotionally-loaded business email. In all cases, the email prior to the reply containing a kiss is a positive compliment of Liz and her abilities (“No one has English writing and proofreading skill like you.” [Alice: 90]), a conveyance of good news (“I am very happy to let you know that I have passed my viva and I am a doctor now:)” [Hai: 54]) or a telling of personal trouble (“My mother is sick, Liz, she has a drop of hormone and my father has kidney disease. / I has to nurse both of them and find the cabable doctor.” [Supaksorn: 133]). Each of the examples given here clearly conveys information warranting an emotional response. Kisses also occur after a comparatively larger number of emails have been sent, occurring later than the mean and median values for any CMC cue (see Table 26, p. 177, kisses mean = 101, median = 106). This implies that a tie has to be significantly strong and functional for kisses to be used by Liz, and in the context of this dataset at least, they are not added out of habit irrespective on conversational context. Kisses here occur at times

[45] It may also feature in other sole trader/client relationships, perhaps more frequently where business and clients share the same cultural background – my mum, who is also a sole trader, has reported several of her (predominantly white, British, middle-class) clients sign off with a single kiss: ‘x’

when topics of significant emotional impact are under discussion or when there has been a generous compliment made by the conversational partner.

In the dataset there are four examples of "Liz + 1 kiss" and three "Liz + 2 kisses". Double kisses seem to only occur following positive news, though the sample size is too small to generalise. In all cases, the kisses possibly increase the sincerity of the writer's words in the main body of the email. Even written, kisses connote an intimate gesture of affection and hence they are used here when showing gratitude, sympathy or when congratulating.

In the example email below, the kisses may also affect the reader's interpretation of the perlocutionary force of the request:

(147) Thank you so much Meera, I really appreciate this :)

> I hope the work on the thesis is going well - I was meaning to ask you, I was talking to my step-Dad (who is a police Inspector in the [location] Police force - if you google "Inspector [Father's name]" you should get a picture of him) about your assignment and he was really interested in your research and said he'd love to read it when it's finished if you have no objections.
>
> I hope you're well
>
> Liz xx [Meera: 58][46]

In this email, Liz expresses her appreciation for Meera's positive recommendation left on her LinkedIn page, and also requests Meera's permission to share Meera's thesis with her father. In this example, the kisses may serve to show this is a friendly request with no obligation on the reader and no need for the reader to feel pressured to accept.

The email below occurs after what Goffman refers to as a "Change signal" (Goffman, 1971, p. 203); the participants have been out for a meal together at an Indian restaurant the night before to celebrate the completion of proofreading. This is the first time they have socialised; all other face-to-face meetings, of which there have been few, were to accomplish some aim such as a data transfer. Later the same day, Liz sent the following email:

(148) `106) 02/05/2013 Couchsurfing`

[46] This email contains an exchange which took place on LinkedIn automatically included and forwarded to Liz, thus while the email is from Meera, it contains some text written by Liz.

Hi Ploy,

I really enjoyed dinner with you this evening, it was lovely to get to know you properly - I have informed [partner's name] that we have to honeymoon in [Southeast Asia]!

Here is the website I was telling you about: https://www.couchsurfing.org

well worth joining up to.

Liz xx

The email is affectionate and entirely non-business-focussed, maintaining the intimacy that the meal together had generated. Supaksorn responds the following day sending Liz a long email which addresses some work matters but also attaches some music from her country for Liz to listen to "The attachment is [my country's] music for your breakfast. I translated the song titles. "The Coming Dawn" is the simple melody composed by the present King of [Southeast Asian country] when he was a young guy." [Supaksorn: 107] and extends a further offer for Liz to visit Southeast Asia:

(149) I will wait for your coming to [Southeast Asia]. First of all, we both have to collect money for this plan :) A return ticket is about 650 pound. I will get back to my working life soon, and you should tell me in advance when you are ready to visit me, so that I will prepare a special, meaningful, cultural + food touring schedule and transport facilities. [Supaksorn: 107]

This generous offer of hospitality may be part of Southeast Asian business practice, but it is nevertheless tie reinforcing as whatever the motivation, it offers the participants an opportunity to become more closely acquainted (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003; Incelli, 2013).

As stated at the beginning of this section, kisses tend to be a response to extremely emotive news, as the following exchange also supports. This exchange occurs after Liz has sent an email following a three week communication break asking Supaksorn if she has a work schedule planned for the next stage of proofreading her thesis:

(150) *129) 08/08/2013 Re: Post-viva proofreading*

My mother is sick, Liz, she has a drop of hormone and my father has kidney disease.

I has to nurse both of them and find the cabable doctor.

I think you can accept and do other customers' work until the end of September, please alert me one more time.

Yep, I will ask Mike by email one more time.

Ploy

(151) *130) 08/08/2013 Re: Post-viva proofreading*

Hi Ploy,

I'm so sorry, I hope they both get better soon.

Don't worry about anything, I wasn't urging you to hurry, simply working out my schedule.

Best wishes to you and your family,

Liz x

Supaksorn's email contains a lot of self-disclosure, showing the strength and functional nature of her existing relationship with Liz. Additionally, despite her personal troubles, she shows concern for Liz's business interests during this time. Liz's email in return is emphatically supportive, urging her not to worry about the time. The kiss at the end of the sign-off in this case perhaps shows the strength of her support and affection. While the second sentence of the main text does have a business focus, the rest of the email is relational, and the kiss reinforces this more informal and closer type of writing. Kisses in the dataset, while rare, are clearly only used when the preceding email has contained some disclosure of great emotional import, whether negative or positive, and where the relationship is fairly well established (minimum 50+ emails). This may designate them as a relatively high-risk strategy in that they run the risk of misinterpretation if used earlier in the relationship.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on those textual features which allow the writer to reinforce their relationship with their partner by showing a time commitment, a shared like, sympathy and empathy, shared experience, humour, approval, and concern for the other's feelings and experiences. All the above contribute towards a richer relationship, which is focussed on more than one specific goal, and which has a diverse history for participants to draw on and refer back to in later communications. In Goffman's words, this makes the relationship "multi-bonded":

> Those whom he deals with in one type of situation have a role relationship to him. When he deals with the same individual in more than one type of situation, he has more than one role relationship to him, resulting in an "over-all" relationship that is "multi-bonded." (Goffman, 1971, p. 188)

These multiple bonds have been described as categorising a strong tie (Milroy & Milroy, 1992), and from a business perspective:

> rapport is thought to increase (1) feelings of perceived control in a relationship, leading to greater levels of customer satisfaction with a firm, and (2) the level of commitment toward a relationship, leading to higher levels of loyalty to the firm. (Gremler & Gwinner, 2008, p. 318)

This loyalty can be seen in the high level of compliments about satisfaction, as described in Table 23 (p. 160), and in various clients' expressions that they are happy to wait for Liz's availability, or that they prefer to use her rather than anyone else, see for example:

(152) I hope this large freelance commission will still allow you to do some work for me? (: [Zétény: 88]

(153) I'm happy for you that you got a bigger job but sad that I wouldn't be able to use your service for the time being. Is there a chance you could recommend someone else please, let me know because I was going to sent it in tomorrow. Please, I really need someone as good as you. [Ruth: 19]

(154) I'm happy for you to do my transcribing and other jobs for me. [Ruth: 102]

(155) I have also recommended you to my fellows who need proof reading and typing. [Meera: 26]

(156) I would like to tell you that I have commanded my friends to sent their assignments to you Adel and Ahmed [Hassan: 42]

Liz also shows loyalty towards her clients:

(157) I can wait as long as you need for the next chapter. [Liz to Hassan: 31]

(158) I'm very happy to work to your schedule, for me, there is no rush. [Liz to Supaksorn: 42]

(159) I'm glad you found my comments helpful and I would, of course, be very happy to work with you again. [Liz to Zétény: 17]

These examples, and the subject of this entire chapter and the next, reinforce my theory of network ties, presented in Figure 1, p. 37, which shows that many ties are not static, but transformative, moving gradually from one tie type, to another. As Shen and Chen state in their analysis of online multiplayer games "It is possible… to convert the typically transitory and weak ties one creates in online communities into strong and lasting connections." (Shen & Chen, 2015, p. 213). This chapter provides specific examples of how this transformative process can be accomplished through written interaction, and many of these examples are also applicable to spoken and face-to-face contexts.

This chapter has focussed largely on non-salient politeness features, those types of relational work that contribute towards network tie reinforcing by for example, mirroring the conversational partner (Blackmore, 2007; Donald, 2013); displaying homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine, Govindan, & Naaman, 2011; Shen, Monge, & Williams, 2014); reciprocating/collaborating (Granovetter, 1973; Shen et al., 2014); familiarity/closeness/emotional disclosure (Goffman, 1971; Milroy & Milroy, 1992; Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011) and lasting and frequent contact (Ehrlich & Carboni, 2005; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009; Fuerst, 2012; McMeekin Sullivan, 2012; De Meo et al., 2014). All but the final category here can be shown and accomplished through language, and the last through recurrent emails over a longer time period.

This relational work can be identified as having a positive or friendly tone, and is usually text that falls outside that which is strictly required for the business transaction taking place. It is affiliative and relationship reinforcing, because while still being appropriate it injects some 'personality' or uniqueness into the message. What falls into this category are generally comments which relate specifically to the persons in the conversation, the situation, or the work discussed: this is not merely rote phatic talk; they are detailed and often uninterpretable without a wider context. As shown in the following chapter, CMC cue usage also falls somewhat outside the norm of standard written English, with the inclusion of features such as emoticons and emoji, multiple punctuation marks and non-standard use of ellipses. Therefore, these usages cannot be categorised under the heading of "conventional politeness" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Pilegaard, 1997; Puustinen, Bernicot, & Bert-Erboul, 2011). This relational work is often subtle, but it is nonetheless important as it forms the foundation on which relationships categorised by honest disclosure, empathy and sharing can be built.

As shown throughout this chapter, the line between business and friendship becomes blurred when a dyad are given time to work on a project together and when that work is satisfactory for both parties. However, more than being satisfactory, the chapter has also illuminated how overcoming troubles together and being open about personal difficulties *can* be hugely beneficial; it is via the catalyst of troubles-tellings and apologies that participants are able to self-disclose, express sympathy and understanding, and build a rich shared relational history. Even such reinforced relationships can gradually decay, as shown in Chapter 9, but they can also outlast the business relationship and become something more, transformed through "penetration into the other's personal space" (Goffman, 1971, p. 203).

Chapter 7 CMC cues

"Five exclamation marks, the sure sign of an insane mind."
– Terry Pratchett (1991, p. 215)

7.1 Introduction

Sometimes referred to as "CMC cues" (Vandergriff, 2013; Liebman & Gergle, 2016) and by other authors variously referred to as "discourse markers" (Whalen et al., 2009), "'oral' features" (Cho, 2010), "netspeak" (Crystal, 2006; Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2013) or "'compensational' features" (Herring et al., 2013), these terms refer to a wide range of textual additions and modifications used in CMC and other written communication. Due to their frequent use in relational work they are examined here, as they add considerable depth to the discussion started in the previous chapter, and are a feature unique to CMC which has not been given enough systematic attention, something that this thesis hopes to begin to rectify.

The features included under the terms listed above cover a wide range, and there seem to be no two sources who completely agree. Therefore, in order to obtain a manageable number of features to investigate, and to gauge consensus across the literature, the features that at least two of the above-mentioned sources include are shown below, along with which authors mention them:

	Cho (2010)	Crystal (2006)	Herring et al. (2013)	Liebman & Gergle (2016)	Vandergriff (2013)	Whalen et al. (2009)
repetition of letters [coooool]	X	X	X	X		
repetition of punctuation [!!]	X	X	X		X	
use of all capitals [HELLO]	X	X		X		X
Emoticons [:D, :-P]		X	X	X	X	
emphasis using asterisks [*good*]		X		X		X
exclamation marks [!]	X			X		X
lexical surrogates [hmm, haha]		X			X	X
Ellipsis mark […]					X	X
Interabangs [?!]				X	X	
parenthesis [( )]	X					X
performative actions [<smiles>]			X	X		

Table 24: List of features comprising CMC cues

It should be noted at this stage, that a number of features were found in my dataset that seemed to parallel the usage of these CMC cues specified in the literature (all features found are shown in Table 26, p. 177). For example, some writers chose to embolden, italicise, underline or highlight text, which performed many of the same functions of all caps, and postscripts were found to perform many of the same functions as parenthesis. It is worth noting that participants Lovemore, Miyako, Victoria, Abdessalam, Lisa, Alya, Ivie, Sofia and Irma did not use these bolds, italics, underlines, highlights, or postscripts, and usage is generally very low across the dataset. However, these features are still worth considering, as they represent deliberate changes made to the texts, which cue something specific in terms of interpretation, exactly as with those features listed in Table 24. Therefore, examining these changes to see if they are meaningful may bring new insight into methods of recipient design (Sacks et al., 1974; Arundale, 2010).

It should be noted, as has been previously stated in the Methodology chapter, section 3.5, some data which would have been useful to include in this section, such as font choice, font size and font colour was lost in the course of data cleanup. These features would benefit from future investigation.

The function of CMC cues is generally described as a consideration of their usage as a group of features, rather than individually. Cho argues that "the use of oral features in CMC" helps to "produce a style that is informal and "conversational" in nature" (Cho, 2010, p. 6). Both Herring et al. and Crystal claim that these features act as a replacement for features present in face-to-face communication, such as pitch, tone, non-verbal and paralinguistic features (Crystal, 2006, p. 37; Herring et al., 2013, p. 7). Crystal adds that smileys in particular are used for disambiguation and rapport (2006, p. 41), while Herring et al. note that they express "the inherently ludic character of language use on the Internet" (Herring et al., 2013, p. 7). Both Liebman and Gergle (2016), and Vandergriff (2013) also indicate that CMC cues are used to develop relationships (positively or negatively) (Vandergriff, 2013, p. 2; Liebman & Gergle, 2016, p. 570), while Whalen et al. (2009, p. 267) state that "discourse markers" segment, emphasise, clarify or add an affective component to writing.

Before moving on to the data analysis, I clarify my theoretical position regarding the interpretation of most of the functions above as 'tie-reinforcing', whether they directly mention affective stance or rapport building (or similar), or not. My interpretation here is based on the integration of multiple different theories of behaviour and language use; by not constraining my interpretation to one theory, it is possible to see how usages may in different ways contribute towards the formation of stronger functional bonds between email writers. By looking at CMC cues in context, it is possible to see that many of them are:

- *Produced to alter the interpretation of lexical content and emphasise the writer's engagement with the recipient.* For example, by adding humour, by hedging or softening, or even by adding ambiguity in cases where the use of CMC seems to contradict the lexical content in terms of meaning (see section 7.3.1). These usages aid correct interpretation, but they also manage the reader's potential emotional response and reinforce ties through this consideration (Laub Coser, 1960; Gremler & Gwinner, 2008). Many of these usages also contribute towards a more friendly and informal writing style which creates a favourable environment for self-disclosures.

- *Produced in a context that imitates the email partner's usage*. This full or partial mimicry/accommodation towards the conversational partner, has been shown in and of itself to foster rapport (with some provisos, e.g., rapport is not fostered in cases where the partner is an obvious outgroup member, or has a social stigma) (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009; van Baaren et al., 2009; Liebman & Gergle, 2016; L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017). Therefore, convergence towards similar CMC cue usage is one way in which CMC cues can be assessed as forming part of the linguistic landscape that contributes towards the fostering of relationality. Other elements of mimetic behaviour have already been discussed in section 4.5.

When looking at CMC cues in general it is important to initially make some things clear. Firstly, given the business context of these emails, it must be considered that Liz, as the business owner, and the British cultural insider, may be held up as an example of 'how to do business talk, via email, in Britain' by her clients, thus affecting the way they phrase their emails.[47] I considered that a simple way to answer the question, in relation to CMC cues, was to simply see whether Liz or the client in each conversation used the specified CMC

[47] I must here offer my sincere thanks to questioners at two separate presentations I gave in both Huddersfield (2017) and Belfast (2017) for bringing this point to my attention.

cues above first. If Liz used the cue first, it might be hypothesised that the client was 'following her lead'. Note, that of the CMC cues listed above in Table 24, repetition of letters, emphasis using asterisks and performative actions were not represented in my dataset.

To determine who used the CMC cue first in each case, the number of the client's email in which the item first occurred was compared with the number of the email in the conversation with that client in which Liz first used the term. Smaller numbers are emails earlier in the conversation, so if Liz's number is smaller than the client's, she used the term first. For illustrative purposes, a small section of the full table is shown below. To view in full (Table 34), please go to the Appendix, p. 317.

Parentheses		
	Client	Liz
Abdessalam	13	4
Alice	6	5
Alya		5
Avin		2
Dana	3	34
Hai	5	29
Hassan	14	4
Imran	21	26
Irma	4	3
Ivie		2
Lisa	3	2
Lovemore	4	3
Meera	1	6
Miyako	1	6
Ruth	34	2
Sofia		10
Supaksorn	1	23
Victoria	1	2
Zétény	7	2
Average	8	9
Median	4	4

Table 25: Comparison of use of parenthesis

Table 25 compares the point at which parentheses started being used by each client and Liz within each conversation (measured by the email number in sequence). In four of these conversations, Liz was the only participant to use parentheses. From the remainder, in eight conversations, Liz started using parentheses first, while in seven cases, the clients used parentheses first. This roughly equal distribution of first usage, and the fact that first usage generally occurred early for this CMC cue, i.e. before the tenth email in the majority of cases is reflected in the average and median scores, the median for both Liz and the clients falling at four.

However, this pattern of both Liz and the clients beginning CMC cue usage at around the same time does not continue across the board, and different CMC cues start being used at different times. The table below summarises the findings:

CMC cue	Parenthesis	Exclamation marks	All caps	Emoticons	Repeated punctuation	Ellipsis mark	Bold	Lexical surrogates	Postscripts	Italic	Underline	Highlight
Client average[48]	7.9	22.9	25	28	26	30.4	30.8	45.8	55.7	78.5	75.5	1
Client median	4	19	19	19	26	26	21	46	36	78.5	75.5	1
Liz average	8.9	17.8	26	33	55	71.5	76.7	/	62.8	55	/	/
Liz median	4	12	23.5	24	55	69	66	/	46.5	55	/	/
No. cases where Client is only user	0	1	5	1	4	5	2	4	1	1	2	1
"….." Liz is only user	4	7	1	7	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0
Cases where both participants use the cue, but Client goes first	7	5	3	4	2	2	2	/	1	0	2	/
"….." Liz goes first	8	4	1	2	0	0	1	/	1	1	/	/
No. conversations in which CMC cue not used at all	0	1	9	5	13	10	14	15	14	16	17	18
No. emails (any writer) containing at least 1 instance of this cue	224	197	45	108	26	33	17	5	15	6	2	6

Table 26: CMC usage across all conversations

.
[48] As before, both average and median refer to the average and median number of the email in sequence at which the first usage occurred.

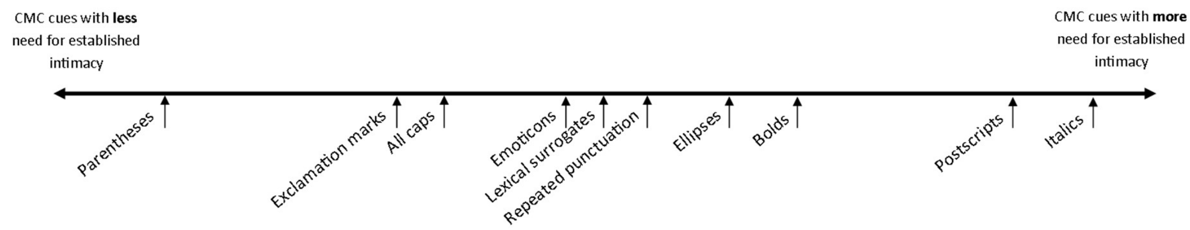
Table 26 shows that across the majority of CMC cues, Liz is using CMC cues after the client has already used the cue (compare the two rows "Cases where both participants use the cue, but Client goes first" and "Cases where both participants use the cue, but Liz goes first"). However, when comparing the total number of emails containing any CMC cue usage, i.e. use of one or more cues, for Liz the total is 43% and for the Clients the total is 41.5%.[49] Combined with the results from the table above, this implies that Liz uptakes later, but then uses CMC cues more frequently in these later emails. This evidence strongly suggests that Clients are *not* simply mimicking Liz's usage of CMC cues, but are establishing their own norms of sending business email, which may be somewhat more informal than norms established by a British cultural native. Whether this is because of the clients' mixed cultural backgrounds, or due to the client/business-owner relationship, would have to be investigated by using further comparable datasets.

Table 26 also enables a further piece of analysis, which to the best of the author's knowledge, has not been attempted or mentioned in prior literature. I suggest below a potential "intimacy scale" for CMC cues based on how long participants have been in contact (measured by number of emails sent – which is a better approximation for time spent together than actual time elapsed) before they start using the specified cues. The raw data for this can be seen in Table 34, p. 317. For each cue, the email number where it was first used for Liz and the client in each of the 19 conversations was recorded as in Table 25 above, and the averages were used to decide the spacing on the cline. The lowest average email number was 8.5 (parenthesis) and the highest 66.8 (italics).

Of course, as aforementioned, some commonly mentioned CMC cues do not appear in my dataset (e.g. letter repetition, asterisks for emphasis), and some that do appear have very low rates of usage (e.g. lexical surrogates, italics etc.), which makes the following scale suggestive at best. However, for the sake of future studies which may seek to make a similar comparison between CMC cues, this will hopefully be valuable. Note that underlines and highlights have not been included on the cline due to being used in very few conversations and by very few writers.

[49] 221 emails authored by Liz, and 230 emails authored by the clients.

Figure 21: CMC cue intimacy cline



The cline shows that parentheses are likely to be used early in an email conversation, while for postscripts and italics, there may need to have been a significantly longer period of contact for their usage to be appropriate.

Another measure I wished to establish was the 'commonness' of a CMC cue. Establishing the 'commonness' of a CMC cue was rather difficult, as there are two feasible measures: the CMC cue which occurs *at least once in the greatest number of emails*, or the cue which occurs *across more conversations* – both can be obtained using Table 26 above (raw data available in Appendix section 11.5). Both are valid, but both have issues: the CMC cue occurring in a greater number of emails may be pushed higher by a single participant's very liberal usage. However, taking only the number of conversations ignores frequency of use and may create a false frequency rate, for example if one cue occurs rarely, but generally at least once per conversation.

The frequency rating was therefore calculated using both measures. By taking the raw number of emails containing at least one usage of the specified cue and dividing it by the total number of emails in the dataset, one percentage was obtained (i.e. 108 emails contain at least one emoticon/emoji across 1069 emails[50] = 10.1%). A second percentage was obtained by averaging the number of conversations in which the CMC cue occurred by taking Liz's count (e.g. used the cue with 13 clients) and the Clients' count (e.g. 7 clients used the cue) and obtaining the average value (e.g. used on average across 10 conversations). This number was then shown as a percentage of 19 (the total number of conversations, e.g. 52.6%).

[50] Emails from referrers were not included.

When the percentages for number of emails and number of conversations were arranged smallest to largest for all CMC cues, they produced the same order with the exception of those cues occurring very infrequently. For the majority, those terms occurring across more conversations also appeared more in the dataset as a whole. However, for italics, highlights, lexical surrogates and underlines the orders were:

Frequency of occurrence across the dataset:

1. Italics and Highlights

3. Lexical Surrogates

4. Underline

Frequency of occurrence across conversations:

1. Italics and Lexical Surrogates

3. Underline

4. Highlight

Therefore, in order to obtain a usable order, I averaged these two scales, putting italics first, followed by lexical surrogates, highlights and underlines.

The scale, from most frequently used (number 1) to least frequently used (number 12) is as follows:

1. Parenthesis
2. Exclamation marks
3. Emoticons
4. All caps
5. Ellipsis mark
6. Repeated punctuation
7. Postscripts
8. Bold
9. Italics
10. Lexical surrogates
11. Highlights
12. Underlines

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this roughly follows the same order as the cline described in Figure 21, for the first few cues, probably because CMC cues used earlier in the conversation have more opportunity to be used overall and are thus more frequent. A greater amount of time spent interacting has previously been linked to greater production of CMC cues, and this increased production to positive relational outcomes (Liebman & Gergle, 2016, p. 572).

As CMC cues have generally been considered as a combined group of features, rather than individually, the following analysis sections take a mixed approach. By ignoring the differences in the usage of certain CMC cues, prior authors have presented work which could be taken to imply that all cues are capable of performing the same range of functions. However, when looking at this thesis' data, and by comparing studies which choose to focus on only one cue (e.g. see Skovholt et al., 2014 for an analysis of emoticons; and Teh et al., 2015 for an analysis of exclamation marks) it is clear that while there is much overlap, not all CMC cues are used for all functions. Therefore, what will first be presented is a short literature review and individual analysis of each cue where possible (literature on some cues could not be found). This is followed by an analysis of the most common functions of CMC cues as a whole, which can be linked back to tie reinforcement, sections 7.2.1 - 7.2.9. Some cues perform functions linked to weak tie maintenance, and these therefore are discussed in Chapter 8, section 8.4. Where cues perform functions not linked to either tie reinforcement or maintenance, these will be briefly mentioned in the individual analyses for the sake of thoroughness.

7.2 CMC cue individual literature reviews and analyses

Below are presented the individual reviews and analyses of CMC cues, combining insights from the literature and from my dataset. In order to present the following analyses, I studied my data to see what functions the text was performing in which the CMC cues were situated e.g., thanking, greeting or signing off, offering, negotiating etc. and looked at what function the CMC cues were performing within that text e.g., topic separation, adding humour, clarifying, contradicting the lexical content, etc. This has enabled me to present information not only on *how* CMC cues are used, but also *where* in a text they are typically used. Of course, this cannot be generalised beyond my dataset, but may provide a useful starting point or point of comparison for other researchers.

7.2.1 Parentheses

Parentheses are both the most frequent cue in my dataset, and that with the earliest starting usage in the email conversations. While parentheses are seen as CMC cues by some researchers (e.g. Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2004; Whalen et al., 2009; Cho, 2010), there is generally little discussion of what they do, other than separating some text from other text (with no discussion of *which* text, or *why*). While Del-Teso-Craviotto (2004, p. 77) gives the following explanation of their usage in chat rooms: “hugs, which are often present in greetings… are represented in these chat rooms by means of parentheses around a participant’s screen name”, Whalen et al. (2009) note that hyphens, parentheses, and ellipsis marks can be designated as “text-separators,” thus indicating to the reader that those parts enclosed “are to be interpreted non-literally” (Whalen et al., 2009, p. 275).

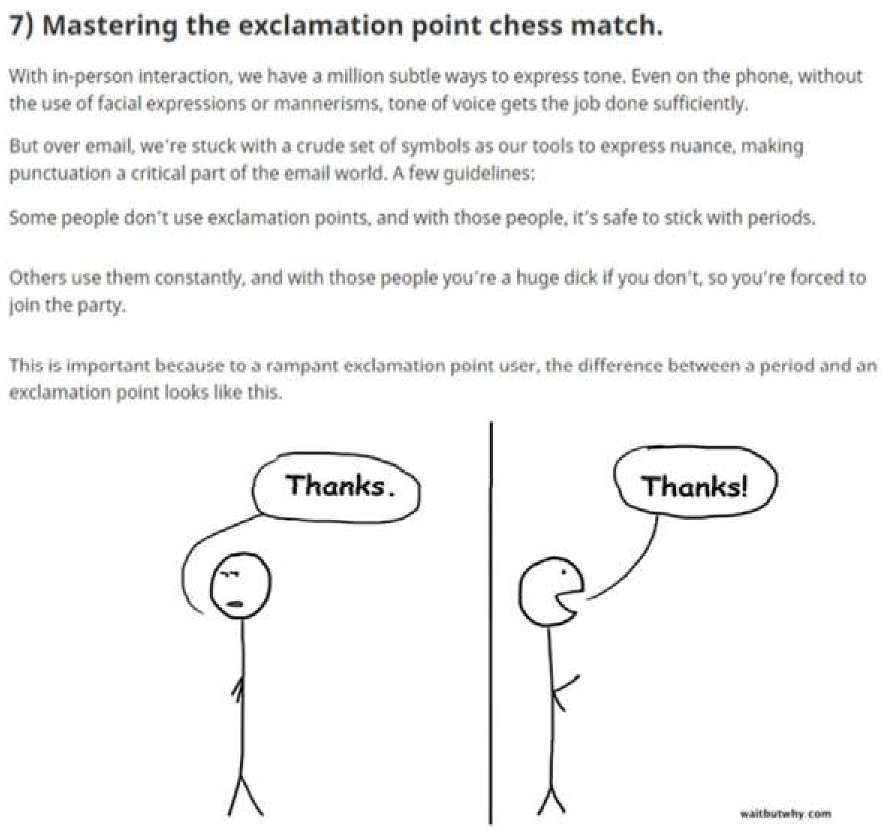
Cho (2010), writing specifically about parentheses, observed that “A more detailed examination of this feature is required, focusing on what item(s) are contained in parentheses (e.g., adjective, independent clause, etc.) and what purposes parenthetical comments serve” (Cho, 2010, p. 13). Thus, it is strongly indicated that something of a basic typology needs to be developed for what is included in parentheses, and what functions they serve in CMC.

Parentheses in my dataset have very broad usage, generally appearing with neutral statements, but also frequently with requests, offers, troubles, sign-off, wish/want statements and statements connoting both positive and negative emotions. In terms of what function they are performing within these areas, parentheses are often used for clarification, where writers restate more clearly or concisely within the parenthesis the message, or part of the message, they are conveying in the rest of the sentence. Additionally, joking comments can be contained within parentheses, as can additional information, or information on a different topic. In my dataset, unsurprisingly given the business primarily works in academic proofreading, there are also several academic uses of parentheses for referencing.

7.2.2 Exclamation marks

Exclamation marks (single, not repeated, for repeated usages, see ‘repeated punctuation’ section 7.2.5) are another very frequently used cue, present in a very broad range of parts of writing. Whalen et al. (2009, p. 267) state that exclamation points “add emphasis”, while Darics (2013, p. 145) shows that exclamation marks can reflect excitement shown by the writing partner in CMC. Skovholt and Svennig (2013, p. 596) add that exclamation marks (in their example, combined with an intensifying adjective) can be used to reinforce a display of agreement. While Filik et al. (2016), in their study on the interpretation of sarcasm in statements combined with various CMC cues, found that exclamation marks were the only cue tested which did not appear to have any effect on sarcasm interpretation. In fact, they state “Interestingly, the presence of an exclamation mark made all comments appear more positive… which suggested that exclamation marks may function as markers of friendly interaction.” (Filik et al., 2016, p. 2144).

There does not appear to have been much written on the usage of exclamation marks within CMC beyond stating that they add emphasis and (usually positive) emotion. Of the CMC cues examined, they generate the highest positive correlation score (0.72), showing that to a high degree, as the client uses more exclamation marks, so does Liz, and vice versa. This could reflect the assessment made in this humorous, and possibly accurate, comic illustration from Urban (2013):



7) Mastering the exclamation point chess match.

With in-person interaction, we have a million subtle ways to express tone. Even on the phone, without the use of facial expressions or mannerisms, tone of voice gets the job done sufficiently.

But over email, we're stuck with a crude set of symbols as our tools to express nuance, making punctuation a critical part of the email world. A few guidelines:

Some people don't use exclamation points, and with those people, it's safe to stick with periods.

Others use them constantly, and with those people you're a huge dick if you don't, so you're forced to join the party.

This is important because to a rampant exclamation point user, the difference between a period and an exclamation point looks like this.

Figure 22: Urban's (2013) exclamation point chess match illustration

Though Urban is clearly making his point for comic purposes, his description and illustration both effectively capture the principles of communication accommodation (Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973; Giles, 2016) and recipient design (Sacks et al., 1974). Converging towards one's communicative partner's norms, i.e. by using the same greeting or sign-off terms (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017), or accommodating towards their CMC cue usage norms, is likely to be perceived positively. According to Dragojevic et al. (2016, p. 48, writing about spoken communication), accommodation towards increases the listener's perception of speaker's attractiveness, intelligibility, interpersonal involvement, competence etc. and also builds rapport and relational solidarity. Speaking someone's "own language" may also lessen the chances of being misunderstood, as illustrated in Figure 22 above. All of these features of exclamation marks emphasise their tie reinforcing, and maintaining, abilities.

Exclamation marks in my data occur, as previously stated in the prior literature, predominantly in areas where something emotive is being expressed (thanking, positive statements, well-wishing, wish/want statements, negative statements and troubles etc.). In terms of their function, exclamation marks overwhelmingly function to add emphasis, but can also be used to indicate non-serious statements, to indicate relational involvement, as in Figure 22, and to minimise the force of a statement.

7.2.3 Emoticons and emoji

Emoticons/emoji (henceforth “e/e”) are probably the most examined, or at least commented upon, CMC cue. Even in the early era of CMC they achieved attention with Shapiro and Anderson (1985, p. 15) describing the “smiley face” as a joke or irony marker. Thirteen years later, Baron described “so-called ‘emoticons’ or ‘smileys’” as “less-than-intuitive symbols” and questioned if they would ever “achieve widespread usage” (Baron, 1998, p. 148). In the 2000s and 2010s there has been much research, with Stanley describing these symbols as “simulacra of presence” (2015, p. 244), while Vandergriff (2013, p. 1) states “recent findings on emoticons cast serious doubt on the notion that emoticons translate nonverbal cues of face-to-face communication into text-based CMC”. Filik et al. (2016, p. 2130) found that “emoticons had a larger influence on both comprehension and emotional impact than punctuation marks”, with Gordon and Luke (2012, p. 120) also finding that emoticons, along with a variety of CMC cues, were important for interpretation and rapport.

Whalen et al. (2009, p. 267) describe emoticon functions as clarifying controversial remarks or adding an affective component, but agree with Vandergriff (2013) in that both state they are used infrequently. I would suggest that given my dataset, plus evidence provided by Skovholt et al. (2014), this statement about rarity can be conclusively rejected. The current state of widespread use was almost certainly made even more likely by the invention of, and widespread ability to use emoji, Japanese “picture characters”, introduced in 2003 (Dürscheid & Siever, 2017, pp. 1–2), e.g. 😂 & ❤️ etc. (emoticon versions of those emoji shown could be :’D and <3). These pictures make interpretation easier for those who struggled to see more than random punctuation when presented with emoticons.

In should be noted that emoticon interpretation may be somewhat up for debate. Skovholt et al.’s article, which analysed 1606 business emails, found no occurrence of the “:-(“ emoticon in their data, and while this is not a flaw the writers had any control over, they did describe this symbol as representing “frowning” (Skovholt et al., 2014). In my experience, I have only seen this referred to as “sad”, and a quick poll of my Facebook contacts confirmed that this was the case for the majority of them too. In total, 21 people replied to my question of ‘does this :-(represent frowning, sad or something else?’ with 19 indicating that it was sad (though some with clarification that it was mild sadness e.g. “no more biscuits ☹”), 1 preferring frowning and 1 stating that it could be used for both. Two people who indicated that it was sad, stated that this: 😡 was the appropriate frowning symbol. However, Emojipedia, which describes all current emoji using their “official character and/or CLDR names and code points listed as part of the Unicode Standard” describes this emoji as “Slightly Frowning Face”, “A face that is a little bit sad, with a slight frown and neutral eyes” (Emojipedia Pty Ltd, n.d.) showing a possible root cause of this ambiguity.

Though this may seem like a small quibble, the description of emoticons as ‘smiling’, ‘sad’, ‘frowning’ etc. may influence the way that these emoticons are interpreted in use. In this fictional example: “Didn’t get the job :-(” there would be a large difference in the interpretation of this emotional state as ‘sad’ versus ‘frowning’; is the sender upset, confused or angry? Without some kind of standard agreement, or at least common consensus, on what these emoticons indicate, it is difficult to tell. This may be an area where future studies could benefit from post-event interviews with senders to clarify their perlocutionary intent, and it should be borne in mind as a potential problem with my analysis, especially for the “:(” emoticon.

The aforementioned study by Skovholt et al. (2014) is by far the most detailed study of e/e I have found. The study created a full working model of emoticon usage in business emails (from three separate companies), finding they fit into three principal categories:

> [emoticons] serve 3 communicative functions. First, when following signatures, emoticons function as markers of a positive attitude. Second, when following utterances that are intended to be interpreted as humorous, they are joke/irony markers. Third, they are hedges: when following expressive speech acts … they function as strengtheners and when following directives … they function as softeners. (Skovholt et al., 2014, p. 780)

Because Skovholt et al. focussed on writer attitude, their approach was particularly useful to this study. I therefore felt it was worth assessing how my data compared with their findings.

For Skovholt et al.'s first category, there is only one example in my data of an emoticon following a signature, so this is by no means a well-represented category, this is in contrast to Skovholt et al. where signatures were the most frequent location for emoticons. For humorous uses, I found several examples, many of which are presented in the section on CMC cues adding humour, 7.3.2. As far as the third and final category of Skovholt et al.'s paper goes, my data largely conforms to their findings. Generally, Skovholt et al.'s e/e classifications are helpful in establishing what functions e/e are performing, though my distributions varied highly from their findings. Additionally, another usage was discovered: writers showing an emotional stance towards an otherwise neutral statement, see examples in section 7.5.1.

As shown in Table 26, e/e are often used in the dataset, being the most frequently used CMC cue that does not form part of standard written punctuation (e.g. as parenthesis and exclamation marks do). Due to their status as *not* part of standard punctuation, e/e are somewhat more marked as part of informal written language (i.e. punctuation has a standard, formal usage, where there are no such rules for e/e other than those informally established within communities). It is therefore interesting to investigate under what circumstances e/e usage is seen as appropriate, and what kinds of expressions they are paired with. Therefore, an additional mini-analysis is presented here of what conversational contexts elicit the first usage of e/e by both Liz and the Clients. Again, this thesis is interested not only in the 'state of play' in ongoing relationships, but how this communication style was arrived at. As only one client used an emoticon in their first-contact email, the section below seeks to investigate how e/e were introduced, and at what stage, by the other dyads.

Context for initial usage of emoji/emoticons

While it is clear that there is no formula to predict exactly when either email partner will begin using e/e, (not that I expected one to emerge!), there are general trends. One of these trends is that e/e are first used after the email partner has expressed something in their prior email that may be potentially relationship damaging. This is the case for some subsequent uses of e/e as well. By 'damaging', here I mean things like expressing bad news, making a mistake, giving information which may make business arrangements more difficult, etc.

For example, the following e/e are delivered in such contexts:

This admission of a mistake, which has cost both Irma and Liz a loss of time and resources:

(160) Hi Elizabeth I can kick myself.

I mistakenly sent you an old abstract instead of Chapter 2. Please see attachment for chapter 2. I will send another chapter later today

[Irma: 19]

is followed by the following reassurance from Liz. The smiling emoticon here reinforces the expression and helps to show that Liz is not angry or too inconvenienced by the mistake:

(161) Don't worry, not too much time lost :) will get on with chapter 2 today.

All the best,

Liz

[Liz to Irma: 20]

Similarly, the following sequence between Meera and Liz begins with Liz apologising for not being able to do any proofreading for some time, which comes just after an email from Meera asking Liz to proofread a chapter if she is free. Liz starts by doing some phatic talk, then apologising and offering an excuse for why she cannot work:

(162) *22) 15/08/2011 Re: Hello*

Hi Meera,

I hope you are enjoying the summer. I am really sorry but I won't be able to do any proofreading for you until the beginning of September due to needing to finish my dissertation.

I am really sorry

Liz

Meera responds with the following friendly message, containing exclamation marks which enhance the friendly tone, doing much the same work as the smiley face in example (161), and non-standard spelling which also adds to the informal tone of the message:

(163) *23) 15/08/2011 Re: Hello*

yEa that's okay! Let me know when u r free! Best wishes

Meera Khan

It is Meera's following email, sent almost a month after the one above, which contains her first use of an emoticon. As mentioned before regarding string emails, it can be hard to know what context they are responding to; the sender's preceding email or their email partner's. Therefore, for the following email I offer two possible explanations, with the correct interpretation probably being some amalgam of the two:

(164) *24) 12/09/2011 Re: Hello*

Thanks Liz

I will get back to you shortly. as i AM Still writing! :)

Meera Khan

In the case of [Meera: 24], if example (163) provides the primary context, then the emoticon may express a positive outlook to a (potentially) negative situation. Whereas, if responding to example (162), the smiling face may be an implied further acceptance of Liz's situation and a marker of solidarity with her as they are both engaged in writing up their research.

A further example in this category are examples (165) and (166) between Liz and Ivie. Here, after a one month break of contact, Ivie sends work for Liz to edit to be completed by the following day with an apology. An earlier version of this work has been edited previously. In the wider context, Liz is perhaps predisposed to accept Ivie's request as the one-month-earlier emails were Liz requesting and Ivie generously accepting involvement in the PhD project.

(165) Please see attached research proposal and I will appreciate if you can edit it for me by 4/7/14.

Sorry you have to do this again.

[Ivie: 17]

Liz responds by sending the work back the same day (03/07/14), with a compliment about the work's quality:

(166) *18) 03/07/2014 Re: Ivie [attachment - completed work and invoice]*

Hi Ivie,

I hope everything is well with you too.

Here is your proposal - it's looking really good :)

Liz

This convivial response including phatic talk, the implicature that the short deadline was not a problem, and a compliment, effectively reinforce the ties between the two.

E/e may also be used at the point where the bad news is delivered, in this case the e/e is sensitive to the sender's personal context, rather than to the context established by the prior email. The following emails fall into this category:

(167) *20) 15/10/2013 Re: proofreading*
Hi Liz
If you haven't started can you please stop proofreading of Chapter 2? my supervisor made major changes so it is pointless for me :(
Sorry
[Dana]

(168) I can't do any proofreading on wednesdays as I'm in uni 9-7 -_- so one Thursday/Friday is fine
[Liz to Hai: 12]

In this setting, the emoticons serve to show the writer's alignment towards the troubles, and perhaps by adding these more informal or "cuter" written expressions they also hope to engender sympathy. Again I argue here that the move towards informal language and expression of personal circumstances and emotional involvement brings email partners closer and reinforces their ties, or at least creates the potential for ties to be reinforced (Bargh et al., 2002, p. 35). Both emails above create the potential for the responder to express sympathy or empathy towards the writer's situation, to ask for more details (why is Liz in university for 10 hours on Wednesdays? On what grounds did Dana's supervisor make major changes?) and also create an event to refer back to in future talk.

The first use of e/e may also be a response to, or expression of, something positive. In this case, these positives include good news, preferred responses to questions, confirmed arrangements, returning of completed work and similar. In the following sequence, Avin has requested to meet Liz on Friday and Liz has offered a possible time which would work conveniently around her driving lesson. Avin then responds by writing:

(169) Yes of course it is possible , we can meet at 1:30 pm tomorrow Friday ok? [Avin: 23]

To which Liz replies:

(170) *24) 29/08/2013 Re: Friday, 1:30pm*

No problem, see you there :)

Liz

Two things are notable about this response. First, the emoticon implies that Liz is not only pleased about the outcome of the discussion, but is also happy to be seeing Avin again, an affiliative statement that reinforces their relationship. Additionally, the email is very brief and I have found that very short emails have a much higher incidence of e/e than emails in the remainder of the dataset.[51] I hypothesise that this higher incidence of e/e serves the functions of making the tone of a short email clearer and indicating friendliness rather than brusqueness (use of exclamation marks also serves this function). Additionally, they serve as an aspect of recipient design (Sacks et al., 1974) allowing the receiver to interpret the email correctly by adding a further layer of interpretation or a clarification of the message.

To examine another similar case, the following sequence occurs after Liz has informed Lisa that she has no time to take on greater than 30,000 words of proofreading work, in the following email, Lisa confirms her work does not exceed this length:

(171) *7) 09/04/2013 Re: Proofreading*
Hi Liz,

The length of the document will be no more than 30,000.

Kind regards

Lisa

(172) *8) 09/04/2013 Re: Proofreading*
Perfect :)

Liz

Like the above pair between Liz and Avin, example (172) is brief, both expressing her pleasure at Lisa's response, and by its very length and the fact it omits a greeting (McKeown

[51] I have extensively examined these very short emails during the course of my PhD and found that they have several unusual properties. Though the longer discussion does not fall within the scope of this research, I presented a talk on this subject at SymPol11, Valencia, (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2018), the abstract of which can be viewed here https://linguisticsphd.wordpress.com/2018/06/08/sympol11-2018-conference-abstract/

& Zhang, 2015, p. 95), making a move towards a less formal writing style. The first usages between Liz and clients Supaksorn, Miyako and Sofia also fall into this category.

Thus, the emails listed contribute towards some of the major components of a strong functional tie, they spend *time* on the email partner, they offer *support*, they begin to build *trust* (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003; Fuerst, 2012).

Considering e/e across the dataset, they generally occur with positively connoted parts of writing such as positive statements, thanks, offers and commitments and compliments, but may also occur with negative statements and troubles. They overwhelmingly function to emphasise and support the lexical content, but can also be used to contradict it, thus bringing a new interpretation, to add humour and to downgrade a statement's seriousness.

7.2.4 Lexical surrogates

Lexical surrogates or "nonlinguistic statements" are defined by Whalen et al. (2009, p. 267) as "segments of text that do not constitute actual words, such as "mmmmmm"". While writers in general have listed these items under the description of CMC cues, they have not offered much in the way of description of what they are for, what members are within the category, or how they are used. The few descriptions found include that they are often used as a form of emotional expression (Ledbetter & Larson, 2008, p. 1092), while Pirzadeh and Pfaff (2014, p. 247) noted that lexical surrogates were emotional cues that attempted "to mimic real speech", and were more often used with positive rather than negative expressions. This is an interesting feature which may be under-represented in business discourse, and might be more easily found and analysed in more relationship-focussed, as opposed to task-focussed CMC such as chat rooms, MMOs and friend/family chat on messaging services.

There are only five examples in my data, though other analysts may identify more, as there is no 'list of lexical surrogates' to consult, thus the analyst must make up their own mind. The five in my dataset are "uhaha" [Alice: 70], "oh" [Ruth: 21] and [Zétény: 54], "ohh" [Avin: 38] – which could also be considered the only example of letter repetition, another CMC cue, and "oops" [Ruth: 97]. These are spread equally across five different textual elements, so no generalisation can be made about where they occur. In terms of function, they emphasise, add humour or soften the force of the writing.

7.2.5 Repeated punctuation

Captured within this category are repeated uses of punctuation e.g. “!!!” and combined multiples (including interabangs) e.g. “!?!”. The literature is more revealing on multiple punctuation than it is on many CMC cues. Gupta et al. found in their examination of “emotional” customer emails that “Users tend to use repeated question marks or exclamations to express their frustration and anxiety” (2013, p. 496). Their result is somewhat unsurprising, as they were looking at customer complaint/dissatisfaction emails. However, one could interpret their results as multiple punctuation marks being indicative of, and enhancing, high emotional content. Vandergriff (2013) examined CMC cue usage in task-based conflictual quasi-synchronous conversation between English as a foreign language students and found that multiple exclamation marks were usually seen as an intensifier or emotive marker, but sometimes just as a symbol of friendliness (Vandergriff, 2013, p. 7).

An interesting study by Teh et al. (2015, p. 7), looking at the effect of the number of exclamation marks used on the positive or negative sentiment strength of a message, concluded that generally, the more exclamation marks, the more positively interpreted the sentence was for a positive statement (except one which could be interpreted as insincere or sarcastic). For negative statements, the more exclamation marks, the more negative.

There is not a large number of results to analyse in this category, but my data suggest that repeated punctuation occurs most often with thanking, followed by a roughly even split across well-wishing, positive statements, compliments, troubles and exclamations. They are never used with offers of sympathy and reassurance, negative or neutral statements, offers and commitments or wish/want statements. I would hypothesise that the latter categories with zero usage may be interpreted as insincere, joking or mocking if repeated punctuation were used. Functionally, they are overwhelmingly present for emphasis, but can also contribute to making a statement joking, aiding its interpretation or even seeming to contradict the lexical content, especially when combined with smiling e/e. Multiple exclamation marks are often paired with intensifying adjectives and emotive expressions. The exclamation marks may serve to enhance the affective and emotional content of the message, to mitigate a troubles telling, or to indicate urgency or excitement.

7.2.6 Ellipsis marks

In reviewing the literature on ellipsis marks, I found that thorough reviews of the use of ellipsis marks in quasi-synchronous CMC have been undertaken only by Vandergriff (2013) and Ong (2011). While Simpson (2005) reviewed ellipsis mark usage in fully synchronous CMC. Their findings indicate that ellipsis can be used in these contexts to indicate:

- The omission of unnecessary text (Simpson, 2005, p. 176) which may cue irony (Hancock, 2004, cited in: Vandergriff, 2013, p. 1)
- Pauses (as in spoken discourse) (Simpson, 2005, p. 176; Vandergriff, 2013, p. 1)
- "Trailing away" at the end of a sentence (Simpson, 2005, p. 176; Vandergriff, 2013, p. 5)
- Linking two turns by a single writer (Simpson, 2005, p. 177; Ong, 2011, p. 212)
- Separating an agreement preface from a disagreement token (Vandergriff, 2013, p. 5)

Whalen et al. (2009) additionally describe ellipses together with parentheses as text separators which may cue that the text should be interpreted non-literally, while Filik et al. state that ellipses "make unambiguous literal comments appear more sarcastic." (2016, p. 2143). Whalen et al. (2009) is the only study to use email data, and their results are the least detailed regarding this particular CMC cue.

A usage not mentioned by other authors, but which occurs several times in this dataset, is the use of an ellipsis mark to emphasise the time-consuming nature of a task, usually, but not always, one to be completed in the future:

(173) (Voila!) The draft for Chapter 3 is attached to this email. (I took a longer time than 12 hours...). [Alice: 28]

(174) I am still busy with the errands... but should be able to send it to you tonight. [Alice: 35]

(175) Thank you very much, Liz! I look forward to your response again. I am now going to look at my Conclusion once more before sending it to you... [Alice: 73]

(176) Well, I would like to submit my thesis in December... [Dana: 3]

(177) Friday would be ok then we can stick to 20p, I can't really make it much sooner as I have a big Phd commission at the moment and the guy is really messing me about so it's taking a lot of time... [Liz to Meera: 29]

(178) Sorry for delay...i prefer to get feedback before Sunday. [Victoria: 29]

(179) Also, thank you for the comments, which are really helpful/ I will be careful of the distinctions you mentions. I must admit that loose vs. lose is an evergreen problem source for me… [Zétény: 97]

Alice often uses ellipsis mark in this way, and there are many examples from her emails, though as the above shows, other writers are also aware of this usage. The ellipsis mark here functions as something like a pause or an emphatic passing of time, rather like the ‘trailing away’ described by Simpson (2005) and Vandergriff (2013). In these instances, a negative aspect can also be seen in several messages regarding either the nature of the task, or the likeliness of its timely completion, phrases such as “would like to submit”, “should be able”, “messing me about” imply that the timelines given may be subject to change. Thus the ellipsis mark may cue uncertainty. Victoria’s “sorry for delay…” uses ellipsis possibly to show the omission of detail about whatever caused the delay, but again could be interpreted as being indicative of the passing of time. These uses may contribute towards tie reinforcing by making the reader feel empathetic towards the writer, and by being, in some cases, somewhat humorous. These are also an informal punctuation usage which might be less associated with a strictly business environment.

In my data, ellipsis marks are quite widely used throughout text, although are generally present with compliments, neutral statements, negative statements, troubles, apologies and offers. They also have very varied functions, being used to clarify and aid interpretation, to contradict, to emphasise, to cue humour, to minimise force and, in another usage not seen for other cues, to indicate that more information will be given.

7.2.7 All caps

All caps/capitals or uppercase refers to writers capitalising parts of text which would not normally be capitalised. The specific functions this might perform are not frequently mentioned in the literature, though some suggestions are as follows:

> "all capitals for 'shouting': I SAID NO" (Crystal, 2006, p. 37)
>
> "Capitalization of letters tends to mark something for attention" (Teh et al., 2015, p. 4)

Cho agrees that capitalisation can be used for emphasis (Cho, 2010, p. 11), while Gordon and Luke (2012, p. 120) bracket all caps in with other CMC cues, vaguely stating that cues such as emoticons and capital letters could show the email writer's involvement and rapport.

It should be noted that as authorial intent in this data can be inferred or guessed, but not known for sure, some instances of all caps could be due to writer error, i.e. pressing the Caps Lock button by accident, or holding 'shift' too long. An instance which looks like such a case is this subject line "aMMENDED ONE" [Meera: 31], the lowercase 'a' is a possible sign that Caps Lock was on accidentally (then shift was pressed, intending to capitalise the initial 'a' and instead changing it to lower case).[52] There are also instances of only two letters being capitalised, which may indicate shift was held slightly too long, e.g. "THat's fine" [Zétény: 138]. However, for the sake of analysis, I counted all instances of two or more adjacent capitals (excluding acronyms), and analysed them assuming they were intentional.

All caps were found to most frequently occur with neutral statements, greetings and sign-offs, imperatives, positive statements and compliments, although they occurred across most parts of email text, with the exceptions of troubles tellings. In terms of their function, all caps were primarily used to add emphasis, or to make a distinction between different parts of the text, for example, when participants replied to questions using the body text of the sender's email, they would typically differentiate their answers using all caps, bolds or both in order to aid the reader.

[52] Zummo found similar potentially accidental capitalisation in her data, and noted "As for the upper instead of lower case (and the other way round), when not used to convey emotional tones, it is suggested that users may not check their texts before sending them, which goes contrary to the idea that asynchronous CMC allows time to edit the text." (Zummo, 2018a, p. 53).

7.2.8 Bolds, italics, highlights and underlines

Almost nothing can be found on the usage of any of these cues in CMC, thus they have been considered together here. Zummo (2018b), and Ledbetter and Larson (2008) are the only sources I could find on CMC usage of these cues, fortunately both using email data. However, even in these studies, mentions are in passing. Zummo states: "Informal written style also emerges in the case of angry tones, with the use of capitalization and bold, red to focus on the importance of what is being said" (2018b, p. 66). I have found no mentions of either underlining or highlighting in the literature, excepting Crystal's statement that "Colour is also present, being routinely used to highlight hypertext links" (Crystal, 2006, p. 129) though this implies the colouration of the text, rather than text highlighting, as does Zummo's "red" (2018b).

It seems to make little sense that the prior literature designates all caps as a CMC cue, whilst making little mention of such textual modifications as bold, italic, underlined etc.. However, this may have happened because these textual modifications are less accessible in various types of CMC, requiring more than simply pressing 'Caps Lock' or 'Shift'. For example, one may have to access menus, use other symbols (in some systems, paired asterisks enable bold text), or use html coding e.g. . This 'barrier to entry' has probably led to much wider usage of all caps compared to other textual modifications, but this would benefit from further investigation.

Bolding, underlining and capitalisation are given the heading 'textual modifiers' in Ledbetter and Larson (2008). However, these are bracketed together with other cues when used in their statistical analysis, and the specific cues' usages and effects are not examined individually. Interestingly, in their study of 123 emotionally-supportive emails received by students, 3 uses of underline (0.02 per email) and 17 uses of bold (0.14 per email) were found, in my dataset, the occurrence is an order of magnitude lower, with bolds at 0.02 per email and underline at 0.002.

While analyses of these features in CMC are infrequent, studies looking at print text, especially McAteer's PhD study (1989), have been more helpful. Lyons (2016) suggests that italic fonts give "a sense of speed and urgency", while Ononye notes that "bold face is generally a print mark type that is associated with emphasis" (2014, p. 369). McAeeter, studying the effects of typeface change in written text, indicated this lack of literature even at the time of her writing (1989, p. 17). However, her PhD goes a long way to address this. She notes "intonational stress, functioning to indicate information salience or to signal contrast can be equated with the common use of capitals, italics, bold, or underlining" (1989, p. 29), also noting that bold can be used to emphasise key points (p. 18).

One of McAeeter's tests, which asked participants to rate emphasis when adjectives were presented in italics versus capitalised and standard typeface showed italics generally functioned as more moderately emphatic than capitals, which were perceived as highly emphatic (p. 48). However, different adjectives were affected differently. Another of her tests suggested that participants interpreted italic font as indicating a contrast or a "connotation", she described "connotation" as including such participant comments as ""more emotional", "meaningful" etc." (p. 63). Her participant responses suggested that "italics are for subtlety, contrast and implication, and capitals for stressing importance, drawing attention, modulatory emphasis of the word itself." (p. 65). Additionally, McAteer found that "Evidence accumulated to suggest that capital letters functioned best for providing modulatory emphasis, italic print for contrastive" (McAteer, 1989, p. vi).

There are few usages of any of these cues in my data, with bolds being the most frequent with 17 occurrences. All four cues occurred most frequently with neutral statements, with bold, underline and highlights also occurring with requests, italics and bolds with well-wishes and positive and negative statements, and bolds with wish/want statements and troubles. Regarding function, bolds, highlights and underlines were most often used to separate and show the importance of certain parts of text, italics also fulfilled this function, but were more frequently used for emphasis, a function which was also performed by bolds and highlights. These four features were never used to indicate humour or to minimise force. Italics also had an academic function i.e. for titles of books, journals etc.

7.2.9 Postscripts

Postscripts are not officially designated a CMC cue, in fact, very few writers mention them at all. Having reviewed the available literature, it seems that no scholarly work has focussed on postscript usage in media other than sales emails (see e.g. Zhu, 2005), though there are numerous non-academic style guides and advice blogs available online (e.g. Nikitina, 2012). There are also forum posts on whether using postscripts in an email is acceptable. None of these (again, with the exception of those publications relating to sales emails specifically) have analysed, assessed or suggested what content should be or is included in a postscript. Most mention the postscript only as a final passing note, indicating that it contains anything forgotten in the letter or email. However, I have found in my data that far from containing forgotten information, postscripts in the dataset contain intimate and humorous details, details on a different topic to the main body of the email and intertextual references to prior emails. Thus, they build the cohesion of the email conversation as a whole, and additionally often contain tie-effecting information. Therefore, I believe the ‘P.S.’ should be regarded as a CMC cue in that it fulfils many of the functions of these cues, for example: showing that the text should have a potentially non-literal interpretation (Whalen et al., 2009); regulating and disambiguating the message (Vandergriff, 2013, p. 2); adding affection and informality (Cho, 2010; Vandergriff, 2013).

In looking for literature on how postscripts are or should be used in email, posts on online fora were the greatest source of information, with little academic work existing. Indeed, although an article on email relational work by Kádár and Bax (2013) contains an email message showing a shift from relational talk to business talk in the postscript, the fact that a postscript is present, and marks this change in tone, is not commented upon (see Kádár & Bax, 2013, pp. 80–81). Forum posters noted, from their own personal experiences, that postscripts were not always used to express a forgotten thought. Though some stated that postscripts have no place in email, J. R., a member of the forum https://english.stackexchange.com, stated the following in a discussion about whether “P.S.” should be used in an email or not:

> I use a P.S. rather often in my emails, when the content of the P.S. is unrelated to the rest of the body of the message. For example, if I was writing two or three paragraphs about a database problem to a colleague, but I knew his wife had been recently released from the hospital, I might end the message with something like:
>
> P.S. I hope your wife is doing better.

> That's an easy way to make an abrupt transition to something unrelated to the rest of the message. (forum member J. R., 2013)

Though this is J. R.'s personal opinion on his individual usage, his assessment is supported by my data, which in many cases shows the exact pattern which J. R. has described. Another comment by user Barrie England on the same forum presents the following assessment:

> it's perhaps worth pointing out that in both email and conventional mail a postscript can be a consciously chosen device for drawing attention to what it contains. What might look like an afterthought to the reader might be a deliberate ploy by the writer. (forum member Barrie England, 2013)

Again, I think the poster is correct. Certainly, in email there is no reason for the postscript to simply be an afterthought or something forgotten in the main text, as one can simply go back and edit this. As Barrie England (2013) states, the postscript can rather be seen as a 'deliberate ploy' by the writer. Thus, like everything else discussed here, the postscript may signify a piece of text that is somehow significant, differentiate that text from the main body, and/or indicate a possible extra layer of interpretation.

Postscripts are interesting as they section off part of the text, designating it as an addendum or supplement. What is most interesting is what type of information is chosen for the postscript, and how it relates to the main body of the email. It is worth noting that postscripts may not be a frequently used or widespread practice in business emails specifically, or perhaps in emails as a text type at all (though the literature that can be found on sales emails indicates that these may be an exception, cf. Zhu, 2005; Cheung, 2008).

Given the lack of literature on the subject, and the small number of cases present across my data (18 cases) and because only four writers in this dataset use postscripts (Alice, Dana, Liz and Supaksorn) the conclusions are not generalizable. One explanation for the small number of writers using postscripts is that postscripts may not be widely used across cultures, as Zhu (2005) potentially indicates in her examination of Chinese and English sales letters, where she notes that while they are a typical feature of English letters, they are missing from most Chinese ones (Zhu, 2005, p. 82).

Generally, the function of postscripts is similar to that of other CMC cues, especially parenthetical comments and ellipses. Like parenthesis, they often section off some part of the text, designating it as different in some way (in terms of what is written and/or how it is written). One additional unique usages of postscripts, which is explored in section 7.5.3, is introducing new content which is related to an email several emails prior.

Across the dataset, postscripts most often occur with neutral statements, wish/want statements, positive statements and troubles, occurring less frequently with offers and commitments, sympathy or reassurance and compliments. They generally function to separate text away from the main body, to make jokes and to add additional information. They can also serve to decrease the perceived importance of a statement by not including it in the main text.

7.2.10 Case study

In the following sections, 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5 the main usages of CMC cues will be presented in terms of what effect they have on the text into which they are inserted. Due to space constraints, examples will be presented as excerpts from emails in the majority of cases, not as part of the entire email text. Contextual information will be given where needed in the explanations of the examples. This being the case, it seemed prudent to present a short case study of two emails which are rich in CMC cue data, including the only instance of a post-postscript. By showing both emails in full, and then proceeding with the analysis, the reader is able to have a full understanding of how these cues can function in situ. The following pair of emails between Alice and Liz is interesting, as it is the only case of two emails with postscripts being sent where one is a reply to the other. Additionally, the texts both contain other CMC cues including bold text, ellipsis marks, parentheses, exclamation marks and a smiling emoticon:

(180) *36) 25/11/14 Thesis draft: Chapter 4 (Alice Lam) [attachment – chapter 4]*

Dear Ms Marsden,

Attached is my draft for chapter 4.

There is another thing that I am trying to standardize -- the citation marks.
I am changing them in every chapter now. You may spot the inconsistency in this chapter.

I hope this chapter will not bore you to tears. I thought the last one would, but your reaction was different...This chapter is very "**dry**", so your patience is required (although I lost mine several times).

Many thanks once again.

Best wishes,
Alice
P.S. It seems that I have not been adhering to my submission schedules recently...

(181) *37) 25/11/14 re: Thesis draft: Chapter 4 (Alice Lam)*
Dear Alice,

I'm sure this chapter won't bore me to tears! It's repetition that I find boring, rather than dry facts. Don't worry, I'll take regular breaks from it!

Can I ask again, when do you need the proofreading for the entire thesis finished by? I've been losing track of my deadlines recently and I don't want to disappoint anyone.

Best wishes,

Liz

P.S. No worries about schedules, I prefer them a bit more loose!
P.P.S Please feel free to call me 'Liz' if you wish :)

Alice's email (180) starts formally, using 'Miss Marsden'[53] and stating what is attached and what Alice is currently working on. Then there is a marked change, indicated not only by the change in subject, discussing her and Liz's assessments of her work, but also by the presence of the CMC cues bold text and ellipsis marks. There is also a use of idiom 'bore you to tears' – all these inform the reader that this comment is at least partially non-serious. The parenthetical comment following "your patience is required (although I lost mine several times)" also cues both a potential non-serious mood and troubles telling. Phrasing in this way might show "troubles resistance" (Jefferson, 1984), as parenthetical comments are associated with non-serious and non-literal comments (Whalen et al., 2009).

Following this is a standard sign-off, then the postscript. What is interesting about the postscript here is that it again adopts a non-serious mode, indicated by the ellipsis and the

[53] It should be noted that Liz has never used this name for herself, signing off as 'Liz Marsden' in her first email to Alice, and using 'Liz' thereafter. Alice uses this address term for all her emails, up to number 36.

use of ‘it seems’ which makes the sentence proposition somewhat uncertain, as if Alice is surprised by her own tardiness, or unwilling to firmly admit it. Had this been a serious telling, it may have included an intensifier such as “*a lot* of trouble” or “I’m *really* having trouble”. If meant as an apology, one would expect the word “sorry” or “apologise” to be present. It may also be the case, as with the majority of troubles and apologies in the dataset, that a serious trouble/apology would be in the main text. Here, on the other hand, we have the text sectioned off, beginning with the phrase “it seems that I” and ending with an ellipsis. It is probable that this postscript is meant to be read as a witty rejoinder to Liz’s earlier gentle inquiries such as “I was wondering when you might be sending the next chapter? There's no hurry, I just wanted to plan my time.” [Liz to Alice: 31].

Liz’s email displays a structure that mirrors Alice’s with each point from Alice’s email that she chooses to address, addressed in the order it was presented in Alice’s email. Thus Liz first emphatically rejects Alice’s assertion about the ‘dryness’ of her chapter using exclamation marks for emphasis, then introduces a new topic, asking Alice to remind her of the final deadline date. Alice’s postscript comment on her own lateness is addressed in Liz’s own postscript where Liz asserts that the scheduling is not giving her a problem. It is hard to assess here whether this information has been presented in a postscript because it is seen as subsidiary to the main email topic, or simply to mirror where this information was placed in the prior email, perhaps as a kind of accommodation (Dragojevic et al., 2016) towards the writing partner. Liz’s post-postscript is more interesting; not only is a double postscript unusual, this postscript introduces an open invitation to Alice to address Liz as “Liz”. The delicacy with which this is phrased, is emphasised by the use of “please” and the double iteration that this is Alice’s choice “feel free to… if you wish”, and the separation from the main body text perhaps to downgrade this offer’s importance. The message, beneath its hedging, is a directive speech act, and a smiling emoticon is included to imply its friendly intent.

Both the above emails are using tie reinforcing behaviours in their postscripts and main body text: engaging in humour, showing that they approve of the recipient and have paid attention to the recipient’s prior emails, and importantly, as in Liz’s P.P.S., opening the relationship up to a potential deeper level of intimacy (see “change signals” in Goffman, 1971, p. 203). This practice of giving the other ‘intimacy permissions’, or sharing parts of one's personal life that go beyond the needs of the business conversation is sometimes accomplished in postscripts, in attachments (explored in section 6.2.2) and also in the main body of the email (section 6.2.1). It leads to a stronger functional tie between participants and a move further away from business talk as the relationship progresses.

In the sections that follow, the different functions of CMC cues will be examined. These are non-mutually-exclusive, but they do cover what has been generally observed in my dataset as CMC cue usage to reinforce functional ties. The functions are split into three main categories, some with sub-categories. Please also note the unique categories (such as ellipses to show the passing of time) listed in the above analysis (section 7.2 and subsections). The categories used in the below analysis are as follows. (n.b. The categories are somewhat fuzzy, and where overlaps or other interpretations are possible, this is shown in the analysis.):

- Alter interpretation: These cues change the literal interpretation, or the potential emotional impact, of the sentence proposition in one of three ways.
    - Contradict/indicate uncertainty: These CMC cues are not matched with the lexical content, e.g. those cues such as exclamation marks and smiling e/e which are generally associated with positive statements may be added to a negative statement thus adding a new layer of meaning.
    - Humour: These CMC cues indicate a non-serious or joking interpretation for what would otherwise appear as serious.
    - Minimise: These make the content appear less damaging or less serious, mitigating any potential threat to the reader, e.g., making offers etc. optional, rather than appearing compulsory, and clarifying authorial intent.
- Emphasise: These cues support the lexical content, making it more emphatic or exaggerated, but in so doing, do not add an extra layer of meaning, just enhance what is already there.
- Aid interpretation: These cues help the reader to understand the intended meaning by making the text clearer, this can be through graphically distinguishing important

parts of the text, or by using parenthesis or postscripts to add supplementary information. Many cues in this category maintain ties, rather than reinforcing them, thus the analysis presented here focuses on reinforcing examples, while those which have maintaining functions are discussed in Chapter 8, section 8.4.

- Clarify: These cues indicate a specific interpretation of the lexical content.
- Indicate importance: These cues indicate to the reader what part of the text to focus on.
- Give additional information: These cues separate extra information from the main text.

As stated many times previously in this thesis, it is of course impossible to know exactly what a writer *intended* when using a specific cue, or exactly how the recipient *interpreted* this usage. Therefore, the below discussion should be taken as the analyst's interpretation of the data, and it would be prudent in the future if developing this classification of CMC cues to use writer/recipient feedback to support the analysis.

7.3 Alter interpretation

The subcategories under this heading all effect the interpretation of the lexical content by adding something to it, for example to contradict it, indicate that it is non-serious or laughable, or to minimise its force. The CMC cues here are crucial to the correct interpretation of what has been written, unlike those in the following category, section 7.4, which do not alter the interpretation, only emphasise it.

7.3.1 Contradict or indicate uncertainty

All the examples in this category which have the effect of reinforcing ties between participants are potentially worrisome/negative statements, which generally relate to personal troubles. The CMC cues act to indicate uncertainty in the proposition, or to contradict it (e.g. a widely smiling e/e paired with a negative statement). The reinforcement comes from the disclosure of personal troubles, which lead to more knowledge of the writer, and the use of CMC, which adds an extra layer of interpretation, giving potential insight into the writer's emotional state regarding the trouble they are facing. Additionally, such disclosures have the potential to elicit sympathy or reciprocal disclosures, leading to building trust and rapport.

Ellipses can be used to show uncertainty in one's abilities:

(182) I did my best to polish the style, but I guess there will nevertheless be some stylistic discrepancies… [Zétény: 103]

(183) Thank you for noticing the inconsistencies in Hanyu Pinyin and making the other suggestions. I will try to be consistent... [Alice: 30]

Both the above indicate a writer's inability to be completely in control of mistakes in their work. The ellipses here may also, like those described in section 7.2.6, cue the time which has elapsed (or will elapse) in trying to address these writers' issues. Both the expression of time taken and a degree of helplessness may make the reader feel sympathy, and may prompt the reader to offer encouragement or disclose similar experiences. In fact, in the email following example (183), Liz replies "No problem at all :)" which while not addressing Alice's issue directly, could be seen as a supportive move, perhaps indicating that she is happy to keep pointing out these issues to Alice if she is unable to address them herself.

In all the following examples in this category, the CMC cues express a stance which contrasts with the lexical content, again paired with negative statements/troubles. These usages also show the fuzzy boundary between this category of contradicting, versus cuing humour (explored in the next section). I would suggest that this usage might mirror the use of laughter in troubles-telling in face-to-face talk (Jefferson, 1984; Adelswärd, 1989). As stated by Jefferson, this can show "troubles resistance" i.e. it shows that one is managing to cope with the situation, as in the following examples. They are perhaps also somewhat light-hearted or humorous, and may be intended to downgrade the complaints/problems:

(184) I am currently doing write up and it is really slow :D I will definitely send you as soon as I am done with it. [Meera: 26]

(185) I'm giving another shot at this! 😁 [Alice: 72].

(186) I am really crossing my fingers for good commentaries and minor revisions -- or else, I really cannot imagine what will happen to me :D!!! [Alice: 83]

(187) Just tell me if it gives u sense (which i am sure it wont :D) [Meera: 27]

(188) Will send you money by tomorrow as net is not properly working at the moment. :) [Meera: 36]

(189) P.S. 45 more seconds to mid-night....I think my last chapter will be delayed :) [Alice: 54][54]

(190) I'll aim to have them back to you by 19th November if that would be ok, the work is really piling up for me at the moment! [Liz to Imran: 31] (sent 01/11/2012)

(191) I will do my absolute best to get all your chapters back to you on time, I'm actually thinking of taking some time off from my cafe job in order to get all this proofreading done! [Liz to Zétény: 34] (sent 09/11/2012)

(192) I am sending you my Conclusion before I churn out ten different versions of it! [Alice: 75]

(193) Sorry if you have received duplicate emails from me, Outlook is not behaving itself this morning! [Liz to Supaksorn: 97]

The examples above from Liz, (190) and (191), perhaps do more than simply express her resilience in the face of trouble, but in the case of possibly missing deadlines or needing more time, these troubles tellings may buy her some leniency or sympathy. Here she reinforces ties by detailing her problems and personal circumstances (but also emphasising her willingness to do the clients' work), which her clients can potentially sympathise or empathise with. Using exclamation marks opens these utterances up to a variety of interpretations – is Liz seriously overwhelmed? Is she being deliberately hyperbolic and therefore humorous? Does she intend to evoke confidence in her ability from the recipient, or sympathy? This ambiguity perhaps works in Liz's favour in this regard, as she can gauge the recipient's reaction, and then backtrack and reframe her statement if she does not get a response that is favourable or beneficial. In these cases, Zétény responds simply with an emphatic "many thanks!!!" [Zétény: 35] while Imran responds "I understand that you are busy, but if you can finish early, I shall be very thankful to you." [Imran: 32]. These are both supportive replies, though Imran's hints at the possibility for tie destabilisation should his work be very delayed, or conversely significant reinforcement should Liz return the work early.

[54] This postscript followed body text where Alice thanked Liz enthusiastically for sending her a Christmas decoration photo see example (125), p. 150. In [Alice: 52], Alice had said she would send a chapter "tomorrow", but she did not manage to send a chapter that day.

Interestingly, for those examples using e/e above, the writer usually chooses the wide-smiling face, represented as “:D” or 😁. There is a possibility that this represents a less genuine smile than “:)”, though there are usages where “:D” is aligned with the message content (such as example (226), p. 215). This usage increases affection and intimacy by showing the writer’s alignment and giving the reader insight into what the writer is feeling. For example, Alice and Meera are shown to have a positive outlook towards problems with their work (examples (184)—(189)); by using these e/e they show Liz their emotional involvement and give Liz insight into their personal situations; this is a kind of personal emotional disclosure (see comparable examples in section 6.2.1). By providing “secret information about self” one builds “familiarity” (Goffman, 1971, p. 192). As shown in the examples used, only two writers use e/e in this way, so it is likely part of written idiolect. The use of multiple exclamation points in (186), combined with the wide-smiling emoticon may add to the troubles resistance (Jefferson, 1984) that Alice might be displaying here with this very negative-sounding statement. By expressing her worries about reviewers in this way, she may be showing her resilience in the face of potential adversity; she also opens up the possibility for Liz to offer her sympathy.

7.3.2 Humour

This function exemplifies the large amount of overlap in the 'alter interpretation' subcategories. As shown above, indicating a non-literal or somewhat humorous interpretation can be used to show troubles resistance. Additionally, humour can be used to soften or downgrade a request, complaint etc. as also shown in the following category. Furthermore, CMC cues can be used to exaggerate a sentence already clearly indicated as humorous by its lexical content, as shown in section 7.4. Therefore, it was difficult to select those examples that most purely exemplified CMC usage for humour, and the examples included here show some overlap with the aforementioned categories.

In terms of its usage as a tie reinforcing behaviour, humour is widely described as a positive action which creates group consensus (Laub Coser, 1960, p. 81), "aids in relationship building, and relaxes people in moments of anxiety and tension" (Gremler & Gwinner, 2008, p. 317). It is also "a means of socialization – of reconciliation, of affirmation of common values, of teaching and learning, of asking for and giving support, of bridging differences" (Laub Coser, 1960, p. 83). Fraser (2011, p. 106), in her study of immigrants' interactions with police officers in Victoria, Australia, found that joking about commonalities showed approval of and solidary with the other. Additionally Gremler and Gwinner (2008, p. 317) described humour as 'connecting behaviour'.

Baron (1998, p. 148) described humour and sarcasm as one of the common features of email, and given this background, it is unsurprising that several joking uses of exclamation marks, parenthesis, emoticons, postscripts, lexical surrogates and ellipses are found in this dataset. Humour used by few participants, Liz is a frequent user, as is Alice, while Dana, Hai, Meera, Ruth and Zétény have only one or two usages each. It may also be that I, as a cultural outsider, failed to identify some clients' joking usages, or this low usage by most clients may be due to clients perceiving this usage as inappropriate in a business context. Another explanation might be that some clients did not feel they had sufficient English skill to engage in wordplay and non-literal writing. However, these suggested explanations are of course guesswork.

The following examples show where CMC cues have been used to alter the meaning, not where they have been used to enhance something which was clearly already humorous (for this usage, see section 7.4):

(194) Let me know what works for you. I also have a driving lesson at some point one morning, but I have forgotten which day! I'm still at my parents' house so I don't have my diary with me. [Liz to Imran: 62]

(195) I enjoyed this email; both funny and reassuring, it's nice to know I'm not the only one who reads stuff back and goes "what exactly was I thinking?!?" [Liz to Alice: 71]

(196) It is strange that neither my phone nor my computer shows that my two messages have been sent ! (Why?!) [Alice: 93]

(197) Well, I am glad that I can send you something "refreshing" then after the economics and business-stuff!! (: [Zétény: 93]

(198) [work excerpt]

When I read it, I could not understand it myself (uhaha!). I am thinking of replacing it with:

[work excerpt] [Alice: 70]

(These two further examples require some contextual knowledge for interpretation; please see the footnotes.)

(199) Only for a minute, perhaps! :D [Alice: 46, entire email text][55]

(200) You don't know how right you are about my Mum, she's got a degree in Textiles and works as a garden designer, she certainly has a lot of artistic flair :) (I took the photo though, so I feel I can claim some credit 😋!!) [Liz to Alice: 55][56]

The combined CMC cues above, including exclamation marks, e/e, repeated punctuation, parentheses and also Zétény's use of potentially sarcastic quote marks in example (197), create a light-hearted, informal and affective tone, which breaks the boundaries between business talk and relationship management talk. Noticeably, the majority of these humorous uses accompany text that is already relationship rather than business focussed. Examples (195), (196), (197) & (200) show non-standard punctuation in humorous asides, three of which are additionally sectioned off from the surrounding text by the use of parentheses or

[55] This email was sent as a reply to an email where Liz stated "Thanks for sending me the next chapter, as it begins with the word 'abracadabra' and a reference to Harry Potter I think I'm going to enjoy this one!" [Liz to Alice: 45]

[56] Following Alice's praise of her Christmas decoration (see p.152), Liz jokingly claims "some credit" for taking the photo.

quote marks. It is notable that these emails occur when the participants have been communicating for some time (50+ total emails sent); by this stage, ties have been effectively reinforced and humorous deviations from business talk therefore do not carry the same danger of being misinterpreted as they may have done earlier in the pairs' relationship. In example (198), the written representation of laughter (a lexical surrogate CMC cue) explicitly marks Alice's sentence as laughable (Glenn, 2003, p. 49), this is enhanced by the use of an exclamation mark and the lexical surrogate is additionally bracketed away from the "serious" text by the use of parenthesis. The parentheses especially mark this lexical surrogate, and the parenthetical comments in the other examples, as something the writer has added that is a little "cheeky" or flippant. As a tie reinforcer, this is effective, as it lets the reader in on what looks, because of the parenthesis, like a 'private' joke.

Examples (195), (196) & (199) show how the line between joking and troubles telling is blurred, as each of these recounts a problem in a non-serious way. Examples (194) and (199) are self-deprecating, reporting a personal fault in a light-hearted way, while in example (196), Alice bemoans technology not producing the expected results. The CMC cues here may invite the partner's empathy, but also invite them to laugh at a problem that is presented as something not too crucial or potentially damaging.

7.3.3 Minimise

CMC cues in this category act to downplay the importance of what has been written, to ensure it is read with the right tone (e.g. to add a friendly or 'uplifted' tone to something that might otherwise be perceived as very serious), or in the case of parenthetical comments particularly, to tell the reader how to interpret the rest of the sentence.

A part of writing that is frequently minimised is the apology. Here, rather than making the apology more emphatic, more serious or more deeply sorry, the addition of a CMC cues, often the exclamatory 'sorry!', could be seen as more friendly, and maybe a little self-deprecating that the mistake was made in the first place. These apologies are all for very minor inconveniences which barely require an apology at all. In these cases, this reinforces ties, as apologising when it is not really necessary has the potential to show the recipient that care is being taken about their feelings, and any possible imposition the mistake has caused.

(201) I will have a chance to have a final look before I hand it in. Sorry for the rush! Thanks indeed! [Hai: 16]

(202) Sorry, forgot to attach the document to my last email!
Liz [Liz to Meera: 14, entire email text]

(203) Sorry for not acknowledging receiving of this document! I have got it and will try to have it back to you by Friday or Saturday if that's ok. [Liz to Meera: 41]

(204) I've written loads of comments (sorry!) [Liz to Alice: 64]

(205) Oh, sorry, I forgot to mention: please find Ch 1 and Ch7 attached to my previous e-mail.

I think now you received everything. [Zétény: 54]

(206) Sorry Ruth! Do you have it attached to this email?
Liz [Liz to Ruth: 98, entire email text]

The CMC cues below, such as e/e, ellipses and lexical surrogates can also be used to mitigate and reassure; to make sure that a statement is not interpreted as too serious, angry or important, and help the recipient to determine the tone in which the message is meant to be interpreted:

(207) I will send you my draft for Chapter 3 within another 12 hours. This is a "killer chapter" with historical details...   [Alice: 26]

(208) I'd need a few hours to do this and I'm supposed to be seeing friends on Sunday evening, so let me know in advance so I can work out a time to fit this in :) [Liz to Hai: 29]

(209) Please send the essay as soon as possible if you would still like me to proofread for you :) [Liz to Victoria: 28]

(210) It's not hugely important, so don't worry about getting back to me quickly :) [Liz to Ruth: 116]

(211) …there is no attachment! :P [Liz to Hai: 24, entire email text]

(212) Oops, forgot to attach document.

Regards, Ruth

[Ruth: 97, entire email text]

Example (212) mirrors example (211), but where Liz uses an exclamation mark and tongue-out emoticon, Ruth uses a lexical surrogate to show the non-seriousness of the complaint.

"Oops" is a mild term generally heard in conversation with children who have made a minor error – so its usage here downgrades and trivialises Liz's mistake, also adding a bit of humour due to the incongruous use of 'Oops' in a business context. Liz's ellipsis (211) presents a punchline perhaps implying that Hai's email (missing the stated attachment) is in this case the 'joke initiator'. Both of these minimise and alter the interpretation of what could be perceived as a serious criticism and an irritated complaint.

In Alice's usage of ellipses (207), the ellipsis mark seems to imply that Liz will discover the "punchline" i.e. the difficult nature of the chapter, when she begins her proofreading. In examples (208)—(211) emoticons form an important part of recipient design. "the talk … is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants" (Sacks et al., 1974, p. 727), in the sense that their interpretation is aided by the inclusion of e/e. Liz's "don't worry" in example (210) is supported by a smiling emoticon which reinforces the message.

As Jenkins and Hinds state, "It is particularly important in letters of request, for example, to motivate the reader to respond, especially when there is no obligation on the part of the recipient to do so." (Jenkins & Hinds, 1987, p. 331). One way to do this is to minimise the request. In (208) & (209) Liz's smiling faces make these requests seem more friendly, and perhaps seek to mitigate any client worry about the situation. Exclamation marks can also be used with the same effect:

(213) Also, if you can tell me who John is and how he found out about me, that would be really helpful! [Liz to Dana: 37]

(214) If you could finish revising the chapter at anytime in the second week of January 2015, it will be great! [Alice: 57]

(215) I'd value your feedback on the poster, please let me know if you think it's ok or if there's anything obvious I've forgotten to mention! [Liz to Supaksorn: 110]

Each of these requests contains not only the request, but also the writers' assessments of the positive outcome if this request is fulfilled. These requests generally work as tie reinforcing through their polite phrasing coupled with a positive assessment of the requestee as valuable, generous and helpful (in the event that they fulfil the request). By fulfilling the requested action, the requestee is able to claim these positive assessments, and knows that they have reinforced their relationship with the asker.

Another aspect of recipient design is using parenthetical comments to attempt to portray the writer as courteous and friendly, rather than rude, as in examples (216)—(218) below. These parenthetical comments may also take into account the cultural mismatch between Liz and the clients; extra courtesies may be used in order to avoid a misunderstanding of intent. As House states, cross-cultural encounters may carry a higher risk of "face-threatening impoliteness, resulting in face-loss, misunderstanding or even a complete breakdown of the talk or the contact" (House, 2010, p. 284), so attention to (im)politeness is of paramount importance.

These parenthetical comments pay attention to the readers' possible wants, and protect the way the writer may be perceived:

(216) Dear Liz (if I may),

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Miyako Kojima, and I am an MA student. [Miyako: 1]

(217) I hope you enjoyed your travels - where were you visiting? (you don't have to tell me, I'm just curious!) [Liz to Victoria: 54]

(218) I hope you won't find me rude to send you this on New Year's Day. You will probably (and should) start to work on it later. [Alice: 57]

Example (217) mitigates a possible imposition where Liz may feel she is asking more than will be welcomed about Victoria's personal life. While Miyako excuses what might be construed as inappropriate informality, and Alice makes it clear that she does not expect Liz to work on New Year's Day. These parenthetical comments cue the reader that the writer may consider this extra politeness work optional, but also that they understand why the reader may have some objection to what they have written. I.e., the writer considers that the reader may find offence at being addressed by their first name only, being sent work on a holiday, or being asked a personal question.

CMC cues can also be used to help redress perceived prior damage, as in the below example. Here, the postscript cued a change of topic (from discussing remuneration) to a reference to a prior email:

(219) P.S. I hope I didn't scare you with my piece of "aging" experience. You will sail through the PhD course because you're a young bright spark! [Alice: 87]

This example is a witty reference to a prior email, acting as a reassurance for Liz, in which Alice described the PhD journey thusly:

(220) The PhD program is a catalyst for aging (in terms of appearance -- loss of hair and sleep, in addition to the increase of wrinkles and occasionally nightmares). I am quite determined to reverse the aging process after I have attained the parchment. [Alice: 83]

It is possible that because of the lack of CMC cues in the above quote which would alter interpretation of the meaning (e.g. no joking tongue-out smiley, no italics or multiple exclamation marks), that Alice may have worried that Liz took this warning seriously. Liz in fact made no reference at all to this warning in her reply to it. Therefore, the postscript in example (219) may act as a mitigation of any distress Alice thinks she may have caused, and also as a compliment of Liz in the process. It also minimises the potentially 'scary' personal disclosure by reassuring Liz that it may not wholly apply to her. This showing of care and consideration for the conversational partner is an effective tie-reinforcing strategy.

7.4 Emphasise

Examples within this category use CMC to emphasise and intensify. The content of the writing would not be misunderstood without the addition of CMC, and they do not add an extra layer of meaning, rather they take what is already there and enhance it. There are a huge number of examples of this usage in the data, and for several CMC cues, such as e/e, exclamation marks, repeated punctuation and all caps, this appears to be their default usage. The majority of examples in this category express some positive sentiment such as well-wishing, thanking, praising etc. Several such positive examples are shown below.

(221) By the way, happy birthday to you! [Victoria: 49]

(222) Thank you again! TGIF! Cheers! [Alice: 75]

(223) Thanks! :)
Liz [Liz to Ruth: 121, entire email text]

(224) That's brilliant and no problem at all :) thank you so much. [Liz to Alice: 97]

(225) You are a star :)
Thank you [Dana: 16, entire email text]

(226) CONGRATULATIONS DR CHEN :D
xx [Liz to Hai: 55]

(227) Here's wishing you a very happy and successful new year 2015!!! [Alice: 52]

(228) Dear Liz,
Thank you very much!!! Your Mum's an artist!!! The picture you sent is a real Christmas card !!!
I wish you and family a very wonderful new year!!!
Best wishes from [Southeast Asia],
Alice
P.S. 45 more seconds to mid-night....I think my last chapter will be delayed :)
[Alice: 54, entire email text]

(229) Much thanks!!!! [Meera: 36] [57]

(230) I should also note that I have now revised the paper and found your comments VERY useful. [Zétény: 16]

(231) Please do get in touch with Liz, she is really good!! [Meera to Ruth and Liz: 59]

(232) Many thanks!!! [Zétény: 35]

(233) Ohh I am happy to hear that you enjoyed working on the interview.

All of his novels are fantastic but I recommend his last novel [TITLE] which is really thought provoking. [Avin: 38]

The usages above decrease the formality of the written language by introducing spoken-like features into the text in a largely non-standard way. Non-standard punctuation in this dataset seems to coincide overwhelmingly (but not exclusively, see examples (244)–(247), p. 220) with positive statements such as giving thanks and paying compliments. In these cases, the use of, for example, multiple exclamation marks, may attempt to replicate an uplifted or excited tone of voice.[58] In the usages above, these multiple punctuation marks occur alongside intensifiers such as “very”, “really” and “much”/“many” thus these sentences are already indicative of emphatic content, and the multiple exclamation marks serve to emphasise this. The e/e used parallel the emotions expressed by the words e.g. “that’s brilliant” plus smiling emoticon (224), “CONGRATULATIONS” plus widely-smiling emoticon and emoji and two firework emoji (226). In (226) the firework emoji add to the celebratory content. These reinforce ties by showing the emotional involvement of the writer with the reader, and often their pleasure at the current state of their business relationship. They also work towards having a more personal relationship, seen in particular in the examples from

[57] In this dataset, the preferred way for writers to use multiple exclamation marks is as a triple rather than a double, with more than twice as many “!!!” as “!!”. This may serve to emphasise that this multiple usage is a deliberate choice rather than an accidental double tap of the key, or perhaps, as with list writing and joke making, the ‘rule of three’ is in play. It is difficult to know with such a small number to analyse, but this would benefit from further investigation.

[58] See Crystal (2006) who suggests that multiple punctuation may be a way to replicate vocal prosody in the written medium.

Alice above (227) & (228). By adding emotional content, intimacy is increased and thus the tie is reinforced (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1362).

The ‘Ohh’ from Avin in example (233) could be seen as a sigh of pleasure. In the email before, Liz had expressed finding the interview participant very interesting and wanting to read one of his books (he is a professional author). Avin is a great fan of his work, having devoted her entire thesis to its study, so here Liz and Avin are reinforcing their tie through a potential shared hobby/interest (Shen & Chen, 2015).

Even where only single exclamation marks are used, as in examples (221), (222) & (223), by making these sentences exclamatory, a more upbeat tone is added which enhances the positive connotations of what has been written (Filik et al., 2016). The exclamation marks also ensure that these cannot be misinterpreted as less than positive (e.g. as sarcastic or insincere) as does their surrounding context (if any).

It should be noted, that thanking with the inclusion of exclamation marks is potentially a part of written idiolect, and in my dataset is used on only a couple of occasions by Meera, Ruth, Miyako, Dana and Liz but much more frequently by Alice, Hai and Zétény. Of the 52 examples present in the dataset, Alice accounts for 21 (three emails having multiple examples), Hai for 6 and Zétény for 16. This may reflect Urban’s (2013) cartoon (Figure 22), and as he stated, imply that these participants would consider a “thanks” without an exclamation mark less than enthusiastic/friendly. Liz however, rarely uses “thanks” with an exclamation mark but prefers phrases such as “thank you very much” or “thank you so much” for emphasis, or addressing the client by name e.g. “thank you Ruth” to make the expression more personal.

More than half of all the ‘Thank* + !’ found do not directly mention in the same sentence what they are thanking for e.g. “thanks for the X”, this is left to context, often the wider context of the email before, see example (223) above. See in contrast, examples (201)—(206), pp. 212-212, containing ‘sorry’. This may be because thanks is less associated with a particular specific act than apologising, and is more linked to showing nonspecific gratitude. “thank*” may be used in business in a nonspecific way as a rapport building strategy to show general thankfulness for continued collaboration. Waldvogel’s finding on greetings and closings in workplace emails supports this hypothesis, as she found that “Sometimes

Thanks was used genuinely to express thanks for something done or in anticipation of the meeting of a request, but there were also a number of instances where it was used more as a ritual closing formula" (Waldvogel, 2007, p. 465).

In the example below, the exclamation mark emphasises the humour of Liz's statement (though importantly, it does not aid the interpretation as being humorous, the statement is humorous with or without the CMC, hence its inclusion in this section):

> (234) Here is Agnes's transcript, the end of her interview made me laugh - I don't think she wanted you to stop! [Liz to Ruth: 94]

Liz's message makes a humorous comment about Agnes, a woman Ruth interviewed which Liz transcribed. Example (234) invites the reader to agree with the writer, which Ruth does, contributing much more detail about the interview experience:

> (235) I know, and I had ran out of questions for her. .. Guess what she never wanted to take initially - as didn't know I wasn't interested in personal details, and it turned out that she never wanted it to stop. [Ruth: 95]

This response reinforces ties between the two as Ruth makes a self-disclosure about her interviewing experience. This prompts Liz in the following emails to make comments about other interviewees in Ruth's dataset; this becomes an enjoyable part of the business relationship for both parties. "Here's Gemma, / I enjoyed her interview, she's funny! There's a lot of what linguists call 'smile voice' in her transcript" [Liz to Ruth: 99], "Thank you! I'm learning from you too as I've never heard of that before." [Ruth: 100]. As these excerpts show, what can begin from one humorous comment can expand into an ongoing discussion.

Exclamation marks are generally reinforcers, markers of humour, or markers that show a positive stance. This finding as exemplified in my data supports the usages previously described by other researchers (see e.g. Whalen et al., 2009; Skovholt & Svennevig, 2013; Filik et al., 2016), and also adds considerable depth to the description of what type of language generally accompanies exclamation mark usage. In this dataset at least, exclamation marks usually accompany language that is emotional or affective in content, functioning as a marker of sincerity and genuine positive intent. The examples below, like some of those above, typify this. In these examples, exclamation marks emphasise sincerity in the offers of sympathy and acceptance of apologies:

(236) I am so sorry to hear that! It's freezing these day! [Hai: 35]

(237) Hope you get better soon! [Hai: 35]

(238) I'm sorry, you're not the only PhD student I know who is working very hard over Christmas :(I wish you could have some time off to celebrate too. [Liz to Alice: 49]

(239) thats perfectly fine Liz¬!:) [Meera: 42, entire email text]

(240) Dear Liz,
Don't worry! All the best !
A [Alice: 63, entire email text]

(241) It's not a problem at all. Please don't worry! It might take two working days to come through, so leave it until Wednesday before you check. [Liz to Hassan: 12]

(242) No problem at all :) [Liz to Alice: 97]

(243) I am SO sorry about what you're going through with your viva. [Liz to Supaksorn: 140]

This usage reinforces ties by increasing the impact of the statement and showing an affective stance towards it. Examples (236) & (237) are both from the same email, and previously Liz had complained of suffering from a cold. Hai's emphatic expression of sympathy shows Liz his genuine concern for her wellbeing. For (241) Hassan previously apologised for having difficulty with a money transfer, and for example (240), Liz previously apologised for not having time to do a second reading of Alice's thesis. Example (243) is in response to a troubles-telling from Supaksorn about her final viva recommended amendments. This example sympathises with the negative emotions conveyed in the recipient's prior email by writing the intensifying adverb in all caps text, potentially a facsimile for louder or more emphatic speech (see Howe, 2013, p. 52). These reassurances to their email partners emphasise that the writers are not inconvenienced or upset. The examples mentioned all show acceptance and reassurance of the partner's trouble/apology, thereby reinforcing ties by not only preventing the relationship from destabilising, but actively working to keep it functional.

Multiple punctuation marks can also be used to create a tone of exaggerated urgency which emphasises the lexical content:

(244) Yes, we met - and I am sorry if I did not remember you when I met you but you lost weight[59] and I don't know what else is changed in you!! [Avin: 33]

---

[59] I hadn't

(245) Liz I have to show the last version to Mathew and not [novelist surname], so can we do that tomorrow? or still you need time? If so let us meet on Wednesday and I will send you what I will attach to the interview as well. what do you say?? [Avin: 38]

(246) *23) 28/09/2014 Urgent Please!!!!!! [attachment - work for proofreading]*
Hi Liz,
Hope you are well.
I am sorry to bother you again.
I will appreciate if you can edit the attached today .
Many thanks
Ivie [entire email text]

(247) I wanted to ask to help me , do you remember the transcription you did for me?
I need something to be done with the same transcription??Are you available on the
campus? Can we meet? [Avin: 29]

In Ivie's email (246) the multiple exclamation marks appear in the subject line along with the adjective "Urgent" which is clearly meant to grab the recipient's attention. Avin's three emails could be interpreted as showing desperation/urgency (though her intent cannot be known). The multiple questions in (245) & (247) are part of Avin's written idiolect, and posing questions one after the other appears as a feature in about 1/3 of her emails. However, this use of multiple question marks is in only these two emails, and may indicate an additional urgency in her need for an answer. Avin's multiple exclamation in (244) is interesting. The context of this message is that having met face-to-face in July 2013, Liz and Avin met accidentally again in November 2014 and neither recognised the other until Avin had a realisation and asked by email if she and Liz had met. Both then sent apologies and excuses, with Liz citing her poor visual memory and Avin the above excuse, which combines an apology, a compliment and an excuse in one statement. The double "!!" may be intended to emphasise her sincerity and/or her shock at making such a mistake in the first place. Either way, it is an effective repair that expresses a genuine regard for Liz's feelings, thus reinforcing their tie and potentially repairing any damage caused by the mistake.

The following examples also show negative statements such as an apology or troubles telling emphasised by the use of CMC, often in the form of a sad emoticon. Unlike those above, which, with the exception of example (244), accompany requests, the below examples do not have the same sense of urgency:

(248) It seems to me that I cannot get the format of my reference right :([Hai: 33]

(249) Sorry, forgot the attachment :([Hai: 20, entire email text]

(250) This technique is new for me ,so excuse me I DON't want burden you with my problems . [Hassan: 11]

(251) Hi Liz
If you haven't started can you please stop proofreading of chapter 2? my supervisor made major changes so it is pointless for me :(
Sorry [Dana: 20, entire email text]

The examples are all troubles tellings, and while examples (248), (249) & (251) emphasise the writers' emotional states, perhaps intending to evoke sympathy, example (250) shows concern for the recipient. Whilst recounting his trouble in transferring money, Hassan indicates that he does not want this difficulty to impact Liz or encroach upon her time in helping him. All these troubles tellings reinforce ties through personal disclosure, and additionally, may be a catalyst for participants to spend time together and work cooperatively thus reinforcing ties through having joint goals and spending time on the relationship (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003; Scanlan & Zisselsberger, 2015).

7.5 Aid interpretation

The CMC cues in this category all help the reader to access the correct reading of the text, either by increasing clarity where there may be ambiguity, giving extra information to answer potential questions before they are asked, or by signalling part of the text as distinct or important so that the reader knows where to focus. All these techniques are a part of recipient design; they anticipate the reader's potential needs or interpretation difficulties and attempt to alleviate them. This usage may add self-disclosures, especially in the case of clarifying or additional informative usages, which are tie reinforcing. However, they may also simply serve to maintain a functional tie by actively working to avoid misinterpretation and maintain smooth communication. Because the subcategories here, more than those which alter or emphasise, can serve to reinforce strong ties *or* to maintain functional ties, those which fit within this chapter are mentioned here, while those which maintain are analysed in section 8.4.

7.5.1 Clarify

One tie-reinforcing method of clarifying a sentence using CMC is to add an indication of emotional stance towards something that could otherwise be seen as neutral. Unlike the previous categories, this usage neither contradicts the lexical content, nor emphasises content which is already emotionally loaded.

(252) I might have to hand it in latest the beginning of next week :([Hai: 23]

(253) I will send you everything once ready :) [Hai: 32]

(254) I will send you all of them soon :) [Hai: 39]

(255) I can help you here and there – did I tell you that I have a diploma in teaching [East Asian language] as a foreign language? (: [Zoltan: 142]

Examples (252), (253) & (254), all from Hai, show his orientation to different statements. Both the context of example (252), and the sad emoticon, contribute to clarify that this hand in date is bad news. The three further examples show the writer's commitment to a stated course of future action and the writer's positive stance towards it. By adding e/e here, a positive outlook towards future interactions is created, and the writer shows that they are happy to do this future action, which is usually of some benefit to the email recipient. Uses of clarification to maintain functional ties can be seen in section 8.4.1.1.

7.5.2 Indicate importance or difference

The examples in this category use CMC cues to designate one part of the text as separate from the rest. This could be to indicate a change in topic or a change from business talk to relational talk. This is frequently accomplished by parenthetical comments and postscripts. This can be seen clearly in the case study examples (section 7.2.10). There is some overlap here with the humour category (see section 7.3.2) as these parenthetical comments and postscripts may also make a non-serious comment on what would otherwise be interpreted as a serious topic. See the examples below:

(256) (Voila!) The draft for Chapter 3 is attached to this email. (I took a longer time than 12 hours...). [Alice: 28]

(257) P.S. The photo shows my door decoration. It's Japanese. [Alice: 52]

(258) PS: Italy was amazing and guess what, so so so warm :D [Dana: 33]

(259) P.S I was talking to my grandfather (who writes and marks TEFL papers) about your thesis, as he is very interested in language and he said he'd really love to read it, I of course would not send it to him without your permission and I was wondering how you would feel about him reading it. [Liz to Supaksorn: 56]

(260) p.s. as I'm sure you know, I received [important email] this morning :) [Liz to Zétény: 129]

The examples above deviate away from the topic of the rest of the email. For the postscripts specifically, they serve as an addendum to the message and are the last thing the reader sees. Cheung's article on sales emails and letters states:

> The corporate informant from National Geographic described postscript as the second most-looked-at section of the letter. She stated in her written response:
>
>> It is our last chance to compel a reader to buy. Our premium mention is usually in the PS or if no premium we will restate the offer in its most attractive form. (Cheung, 2008, p. 181)

Though Cheung found that postscripts only appeared in a very small number of the examined 80 sales emails and 80 printed sales letters, reinforcing the offer made was a frequent move in this location. In stark contrast to this, the postscripts in this thesis' dataset do not use postscripts for reinforcing an already stated message, but for giving new information, usually with an affiliative function, which in these examples is completely unrelated to the email's main subject. This sectioning-off of the text may be so that the reader's final impression of the email text is one of friendliness and/or because the message contained in the postscript may not have been deemed relevant, appropriate or important enough to include in the main body of the email. The physical separation from the main body text also cues a different mood – the email sign-off could cue an end to business talk while the postscript introduces an entirely new topic. These self-disclosures may indicate a desire to communicate beyond business.

Example (257) follows an email in which Alice switches rapidly between talking about her work, and talking about the upcoming Christmas/New Year celebrations. At this point, these two topics are tightly interlinked and do not form an obvious business/friendship split, as Alice has sent her supervisor work to read over the Christmas break, which is pertinent for her and Liz's timing. However, while the holiday is mentioned, the subject of Alice's home decorations is not brought up in the body of the email, even though she has included a photograph attachment. The description/explanation for this attachment (reproduced in Figure 17, p. 151) is left until the postscript. This can be interpreted as initiating a new level of intimacy, as sharing these personal details of her home is not relevant or necessary to the ongoing discussions of work timings over Christmas (including whether Alice herself will be taking a break).

Example (258) follows an email where Liz returned some of Dana's work, asked for clarification regarding a final deadline and whether Dana wanted her reference list proofread, and included the following sign-off:

(261) Hope you had a good time in Italy,
Best regards,
Liz [Liz to Dana: 32]

Dana includes her response to this inquiry in her postscript as opposed to the main body of her text. Dana's main body text includes "Thank you a lot, think this was the last one :)", so the postscript does not represent, in this instance, a deviation in tone from the email body, (which includes an emoticon). However, the postscript is more emphatic, using repetition and a widely-smiling emoticon (as opposed to the standard smiley face) "so so so warm :D" . While Dana's tone throughout is friendly, the postscript does represent a deviation in topic as the rest of the email is business focussed. In this usage, the postscript separates affiliative/personal talk from business talk.

Example (259) also represents a big deviation from the email's primary topic: returning Supaksorn's most recent piece. The comment about her grandfather's interest in Supaksorn's thesis topic is visually separated from the main body by use of a postscript. The impact of this particular conversation about Liz's grandfather has been discussed in detail on p. 140, so it is not repeated here.

7.5.3 Give additional information

This usage offers extra helpful information, which provides more detail on the topic at hand. Unlike the 'clarify' category, these examples are more crucial to the message, adding details that are additional to the message content and could not be inferred.

(262) Don't get me wrong, I remember you and I remember working with you, I literally just have a problem with visual memory (I can't remember what places look like either, but I can remember the experiences I had there) [Liz to Avin: 34]

(263) I was back home ([North Africa]) collecting some data for my research. [Abdessalam: 13]

(264) I believe about work and happiness (F rule : fun, friends, finance, fame, and future).
After I graduate, I plan to work in fictions/travel articles (hopefully, bestsellers in [home country]),
but I will also teach at the univ for my job security. [Supaksorn: 57]

As can be seen above, these parenthetical comments can appear in surrounding text that is already relationship (rather than business) focussed. In these cases, the parentheses provide supplementary personal commentary. Both examples (262) and (264) give the recipient of the message access to deeper "circles of the self" (Goffman, 1971, p. 192) by disclosing personal failings and personal goals and beliefs, these disclosures reinforce ties through providing opportunity for mutual disclosures (as indeed happens in the case of example (264)) and showing the writer's trust of the reader. Example (263) is a minor disclosure, but it nevertheless begins to paint a more detailed picture of the email writer and gives the recipient something to refer back to in future emails.

The following uses of parenthetical comments do a double-duty, both adding personal information, and adding supplementary information to the main text. They may: set up an opposition in the form "X, (but if Y, not X)"; offer an alternative scenario; or, like Liz's two emails to Avin below, they may give a reason for a suggestion. In examples (266) and (267), Liz gives examples of specific engagements that mean meeting at the specified time is more convenient.

(265) It will be easy for you to contact me in person if necessary before my submission date, 18 January (if Mike's does not change this deadline) [Supaksorn: 12]

(266) I can meet you on Friday if you're free after 2pm (I'm at work 11am-2pm). Do you need me to bring a memory stick? [Liz to Avin: 4]

(267) I will be there sometime between 9 and 11 (but I have a doctors appointment at 11:30, so I will need to leave a bit before then). [Liz to Avin: 32]

(268) P.S if you're having any trouble at all coping with the way I have annotated and changed your text, this video on how to accept and reject changes might be useful: [website link] [Liz to Imran: 35]

(269) p.s. from now on, can you email me at this address? Not sure how much longer I'll have the use of my student email account. [Liz to Meera: 29]

(270) *PS: CC are the university monitoring unit for supervision record and my proofreader* [Supaksorn: 138]

In all these examples, the recipient gets some information about the writer's personal situation and may infer more from that, e.g., for (265) that Mike, Supaksorn's supervisor, is perhaps prone to changing deadlines, or for example (267) that Liz has a physical or mental health problem for which she needs to see the doctor. These personal details give the email partners more potential to build on their relationship in the future by referring back to these statements and showing they pay attention to their partner's words (Gremler & Gwinner, 2008, p. 310; Fraser, 2011, p. 120). Personal information may also present an opportunity to express a similar experience, to show sympathy or one's solidarity with, or hopes for, the conversational partner. Without knowing more intimate details about someone's life, and having no visual or auditory clues about someone's successes or struggles, it is impossible to build a relationship that goes beyond routine politeness (Price & Arnould, 1999).

Examples (268), (269) & (270) add something supplementary for the reader that is of use to them: a helpful video, a way to keep in touch, and information about the other email recipients. These postscripts allow the writer to differentiate this information and make it clear that it is separate from the body text of the email, avoiding potential upcoming questions before they are asked. This attention to the reader's potential concerns is tie reinforcing in that it enables fluid conversation.

Additional information can also be added in the form of offers or advice to the recipient. These show an understanding of the client's needs, and show that Liz, as a sole trader, is considerate when dealing with those she works for:

(271) I am happy to read the document all in one go, or chapter by chapter (though I find chapter by chapter usually works best for both me and the student, and lets me break down my fee into per-chapter invoices, which helps with my cash-flow and means you won't have to pay in one big lump sum). [Liz to Lisa: 2]

(272) My final price is £25, and the work would take four days (I have other work to do in addition to yours - but if you really need it faster, I could probably do it in three days minimum). [Liz to Abdessalam: 4]

By further explaining how and why she conducts business in the way she does, Liz in example (271) increases the transparency of her business practices perhaps in an attempt to build client trust. In example (272), Liz both protects herself by giving the client an understanding of the reasons for her given timeline, but also offers to work harder for the client. This may be an attempt to increase client loyalty and gratitude which could have positive repercussions such as repeat work, or faster payment. In these two examples, it is clear that there is a business motive; however, this does not nullify their ability to reinforce ties between client and business.

7.6 Conclusion

A big part of relationship reinforcing in email is accomplished through the use of CMC cues and textual modification, as explored in-depth in this chapter. This thesis provides one of the first detailed explorations of a number of different CMC cues, examining them in relation to each other and showing where usage of specific cues is similar and different. Additionally, this thesis argued for the inclusion of postscripts under the heading of 'CMC cue', and exposed the relatively sparse literature on their analysis.

CMC cues can indicate a range of interpretations of the text, or can be used to emphasise or supplement the lexical content. In terms of their usage as tie reinforcers, especially when used to alter the interpretation or emphasise it, CMC cues fulfil a range of functions. They can indicate transitions from business talk to relational talk, add humour, reduce the possibility of misinterpretation and clarify the content. All of these functions contribute towards tie reinforcement by indicating trust, liking or concern for the writing partner and their needs and wishes, making self-disclosures, engaging in non-serious talk, and designing text to be easier to interpret.

Chapter 8 Maintaining Weak Functional Ties

"we notice things that don't work. We don't notice things that do… We notice e-book readers, we don't notice books"
– Douglas Adams (2002, p. 110)

8.1 Introduction

The literature has much to say on the maintenance of relationships, although 'maintain' is often used as a lay term, reflecting the understanding of prolonging or preserving something. However, I use 'maintain' in this chapter in a specific way: to refer to those behaviours that neither reinforce nor destabilise a tie, but rather, uphold the status quo (see glossary, section 2.4, p. 26). I refer to those parts of routine 'politeness' which are only noticed if they are absent (when language may be interpreted as brusque or rude), including such practices as courtesy and deference where appropriate (Hooker, 2008) and generally behaving appropriately in the given context (Locher & Watts, 2008), called by Watts (1989, 1991, 2008) "politic" behaviour, defined as "socio-culturally determined behavior directed towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group, whether open or closed, during the ongoing process of interaction" (Watts, 1989, p. 135). This 'state of equilibrium' is important; Watts here mirrors my assertion that the type of tie one has with another can be relatively static, with only small fluctuations (of course, *complete* stasis is not possible, but minimal changes will not fundamentally alter the relational parameters). Watts also notes that trouble or change within relationships can lead to communicational breakdown. Before moving on to look at the tie maintaining behaviours present in the thesis dataset, I will briefly review the available literature on relational maintenance practices to put the discussion in context. The passage that best reflects this thesis' conceptualisation of maintenance is the following:

> Friendships vary along a continuum from agentic to communal. Agentic relationships are based on joint activities and projects, characterized by fairly explicit individual rights and "tit for tat" reciprocity, limited in emotional investment, and **maintained** for as long as their benefits to self exceed their costs (Rawlins 1992, p. 168). Communal relationships are based on wide-ranging conversation and joint activities, characterized by diffuse mutual responsibilities and obligations, or generalized reciprocity. They are deepened by emotional attachment and empathy and **maintained** through

> shared commitment and personal loyalty (Rawlins 1992, p. 168). (Price & Arnould, 1999, p. 40, emboldening added)

Rawlins' 'agentic' and 'communal' relationships (as cited in Price & Arnould, 1999) can be categorised, in this thesis' parlance, as 'weak functional' and 'strong functional' ties respectively. Rawlins' maintenance mirrors this thesis' general conclusion that weaker ties persist only as long as they are needed, and strong ties take more effort to create and maintain, but have more relational benefits. So, 'out-of-the-ordinary' behaviour, which either 1) reinforces a relationship that is not already strong and/or functional, or 2) destabilises or reverts to minimal courtesies in a previously strong functional relationship, has the power to transform the relationship. The behaviours expected from a close friend versus those of a casual acquaintance are not interchangeable – if either one started behaving like the other, one would have reason to believe the person wanted to transform the relationship, or was in some kind of distress (e.g. in the case of a close friend who began acting standoffish). This is however, context dependant; especially in a business relationship, one might expect a number of purely task-focussed emails intermingled with tie-reinforcing ones without this damaging the relational tie (see e.g. examples (287)—(289), p. 244 later in this chapter).

Ehrlich and Carboni (2005) also express this difference in strong versus weak tie maintenance, stating that: "a strong tie … requires a good deal of energy to maintain. Weak ties may not provide as much social support but, since they are easier to maintain, you can have many more of them". This energy required for strong tie maintenance can be seen in the previous two chapters, where the described features such as self-disclosure, CMC cue usage, media sharing and complimenting can not only be used to reinforce a relationship, but must also continue to be used once they become expected (e.g. they transition from marked behaviour to politic behaviour) in order to maintain the strong functional tie. As Watts (1991, p. 6) states, "politic behaviour is at all times a relative concept".

Manago et al. (2012) in their study of the Facebook networks of 88 college students used various descriptors for the relationships present within those networks, such as "acquaintances", "activity connections", "close connections", "maintained connections", "strangers" and "online connections" (Manago et al., 2012, pp. 373–374). These descriptors reflect many of the tie connection types discussed in this study, with "activity connections" paralleling business only relationships, and “close” paralleling ‘strong’. What is interesting is their conception of “maintained connections” – the examples they give are “high school friends and past romantic partners” (p. 374). This suggests that these connections are ones where a strong functional tie existed at some point in the past, but then destabilised or decayed to some degree. However, total decay is not present, as there is still some, perhaps fairly frequent, contact with these individuals. Here, ‘maintained’ might be taken to mean something like ‘habitual’ or may reflect the general conception that ties which were formally strong take longer to decay (Burt, 2001; McPherson et al., 2001; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011; Shen et al., 2014). This may be especially true in the age of social media, where online ‘contact opportunities’ (Burt, 2001) can be more frequently created, even if these are minimal, such as ‘liking’ a connection’s photo. This conception of ‘maintained’ is **not** the same as the one used in this study, as maintained, according to Manago et al. is taken as a relationship type in itself, not, as this thesis describes, as a process that holds a given relationship steady in some state e.g. weak/strong/dysfunctional etc., without change. However, Manago et al.’s (2012) idea is a useful concept and reflects the transformational nature of ties whereby the parameters of a relationship and the strength of that relationship can be fundamentally altered by factors such as geography (Martin & Yeung, 2006, p. 359) and life stage (Burt, 2001), which can increase or decrease homophily and ability to empathise. This type of relationship might be best described in my typology (see Figure 1, p. 37) as being maintained at some state between ‘strong functional’ and ‘decayed’.

Maintenance is hard to define due to its contextually-dictated nature, and the nature of the relationship in which it operates; some behaviours that have been designated as ‘reinforcing’ in the previous two chapters, may in fact be ‘maintaining’ in a given relationship.[60] Once a relationship has been reinforced, and self-disclosure, CMC cues, compliments etc. are habitually present in interactions, this becomes a feature that will be noticed by its absence if no longer used. Therefore, *use*, while contributing to the strength and functionality of the relationship, also serves to maintain that strength and functionality. Therefore, so that this chapter can focus on something different, rather than looking at those behaviours that reinforce and maintain strong functional relationships, here I discuss

[60] As seen in example (119) and the following discussion, p. 146

those behaviours that maintain weak functional ties with minimal change and no destabilisation or decay.

This chapter is split into three sections followed by an overall conclusion. The first section considers standard politeness for weak functional tie maintenance by looking at emails which adhere strictly to business talk, with none of the alterations or additions which were examined in the previous two chapters. These emails do not reinforce the relationship between clients in terms of encouraging greater intimacy, but they do ensure that the business relationship remains convivial and smooth without destabilisation or decay. The second section examines rote 'politeness' phrases. These differ from those examples examined in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, as they are not unique or tailored – they are polite, but they do not go beyond what is expected. Compare for example the following well-wishes "have a good day" versus "good luck in your meeting". The second is clearly more specific, takes into account the current context, shows relational historicity between receiver and the well-wisher i.e. that they know the recipient has a meeting and that it is important this meeting goes well. The first example works well for maintaining a weak functional tie, while the second maintains a stronger functional tie or begins to reinforce a weak one. The third section analyses how recipient design, in terms of making text easier to understand and minimising the chances of misinterpretation, can be aided by the inclusion of CMC cues.

8.2 Adhering to business talk

There is ample research suggesting that email is not, and need not be, task-oriented only, even in the realms of work and business. As Huang and Shyu (2009, p. 599) state, "most firms currently consider email simply as a task-oriented communication medium, neglecting its power in building customer relationships". Additionally, "workplace emails do much affective as well as transactional work. [Abdullah] describes email as "a rich repository of relational communication" that allows writers the flexibility to personalize their messages" (Abdullah, 2003, p. ii, cited in: Waldvogel, 2007, p. 457). These quotes support the work done in the previous two chapters, which showed how tailored and specific relational work could be integrated with, and stem from, task-based writing. This section however looks at emails that are task-focussed and in which relational or 'polite' talk is conventional and goes no further than what is expected in the context.

By behaving in a "politic" manner (Locher & Watts, 2005), participants can maintain weak functional ties whilst neither reinforcing through affective behaviour, destabilising through impolite behaviour, nor decaying through a total break in contact (see Watts, 1989). For several clients, especially those with shorter-lived interactions (generally those who wrote fewer than 15 emails) this kind of interaction is the norm. There are few mentions of these clients' emails in the previous two chapters for exactly this reason. These are clients who used few, or no, CMC cues (see Appendix section 11.5), made few self-disclosures and paid few compliments. Their discourse was entirely task-orientated for the majority of their emails.

Some examples of these types of emails are below. They are numerous in the data, and even clients who engage in frequent affective talk also send these kinds of emails from time-to-time. They are distinct from emails portrayed in the decay and destabilisation chapter in that they are conventionally polite i.e. they are politic and non-reinforcing, and there is no indication of any kind of trouble. This is especially important, as trouble can be seen as a frequent catalyst for change, either reinforcing the bond between participants through self-disclosure and expressions of sympathy, or destabilising the relationship, as shown in the following chapter.

Examples of emails maintaining weak functional ties:

(273) *3) 14/07/2013 Re: New Form Entry: Contact Form [attachment - report]*

Daer Liz

Thank you for your reply. The attached is my first year report. Could you please have a quick look at it from page 2 to page 17 only and confirm the cost and time to finish it. So you will be proof-reading only from page 2 to 17.

I look forward to hearing from you soon

Kind Regards

Shamekh [Abdessalam]

(274) *28) 08/08/14 From Hassan MAZIQ [attachment - essay C1]*

Hi Elizabeth
this is the first chapter
Hassan

(275) *17) 28/04/14 RE: proofreading [with attachments - completed work and invoice]*
Hi Hassan,

Here is you report. If you have any questions at all about my comments or edits please don't hesitate to email me and I will get straight back to you.

All the best,

Liz

(276) *5) 14/06/2013 Re: Proof reading*
Hi again,
Please do let me know whether you'll be able to do my work within the proposed time-frame & the pricing.
Thanks
Kind regards
Irma

(277) *11) 15/06/2013 Re: Proof reading*
Hi Irma,

Will have these chapters back to you in the next few days. Would you prefer several smaller invoices, or a large one at the end?

Best regards,

Liz Marsden

The emails above all illustrate pure business-directed talk. Conventional politeness markers are highly in evidence with many examples of "please" and "thank*", mitigated requests: "Could you please have a quick look at it" (273), "Please do let me know" (276), and offers: "please don't hesitate to email me" (275). Emails are additionally all structured and written formally e.g. excepting the first line of example (277), sentences are grammatically complete, and emails contain both greeting and sign-off. As mentioned in the introduction, greeting and sign-off may be seen as structural forms of politeness in the email medium (Bunz and Campbell 2002, described in: McKeown & Zhang, 2015, p. 93).

The presence of these politeness features shows the writer's effort to keep the relationship flowing smoothly; it is shown that the relationship is appreciated and that there are hopes it will continue “I look forward to hearing from you soon” (273). Also, the wants and needs of the writing partner are taken into consideration “Would you prefer several smaller invoices, or a large one at the end?” (277). Email (274) above is something of an exception, containing very little text at all. These types of emails are also fairly frequent, often containing only a description of the attachment, accompanied by greeting and sign-off; a short answer to a question asked in a previous email; or an acknowledgement of receiving the previous email among other things. They are generally sent on the same day or next day after the preceding email (see Table 6, p. 81), meaning that their context is clear to the recipient. Some further examples are:

(278) *17) 27/01/15 Chapter 6 [attachment – completed chapter]*
Hi Hai,

Chapter 6 as promised

Liz

(279) *30) 26/03/14 Copy of HRM A2 (myemail@hotmail.co.uk)?* [attachment - internet document]

Dear Liz

This is the second one.

Thanks

Victoria

(280) *30) 09/07/2013 Re: chapters [attachment - work for proofreading]*

Hi Elizabeth,
please see attachment for Chapter 6.

Kind regards

Irma

(281) *7) 24/09/2013 Re: proof reading*
Hi Dana,

As soon as you're ready I can begin proofreading.

Best,

Liz

(282) *22) 07/10/2012 Chapter 1 [attachment - completed chapter]*
Hi,

Here is your first chapter, more to follow during the week.

Thanks

Liz [to Imran]

(283) *23) 06/11/14 Re: Chapter 2*
Dear Ms Marsden,
Thank you.
Alice

There is nothing about writing a very short email that dictates it must be devoid of affective content. Indeed, several examples of these short mails being used affectively may be seen in the previous chapter.[61] They do so primarily with liberal use of CMC cues, and often informal writing and phrasing, affective emails may also omit either the greeting or the sign-off (much more frequently the greeting). These emails shown above on the other hand still conform to traditional email structure, although they lose the grammatical completeness shown in examples (273)–(277). They often accompany the returning or sending of work, and it is rare to see emails in the dataset with no message text at all, so short texts like these may accompany attachments, instead of the attachment being sent with no accompanying email text, which could possibly be interpreted as impolite.

Again, politeness strategies are in evidence here, with “thanks” being used as a sign-off in (279) & (282), and “thank you” being the main message text in (283). Also, future interactions are again referenced and consideration is given to the needs of the client “As soon as you're ready I can begin proofreading.” (281), “Here is your first chapter, more to follow during the week.” (282), both of these statements from Liz are future-orientated and maintain ties by showing that participants have the intent to maintain contact and fulfil their obligations.

Another way for participants to maintain their weak functional ties is by returning and sending work, whilst adhering to their expected role and previously agreed schedules. This avoids destabilisation and can be accomplished without reinforcement. Below, the steps through which the business relationship is structurally maintained, from start to finish, are

[61] See example (199), p. 210 and examples (206), (211) and (212), p. 212

shown. This is followed by Table 27, which shows how these steps can be followed, using examples from three clients. The business relationship steps are as follows:

- Requesting work
- Agreeing to do that work and negotiating the terms of that work e.g. price, timescale etc.
- Doing work as laid out in the agreed terms
- Paying for that work

As seen with, for example, Abdessalam, Ivie and Hassan in the table below, it is possible for this structure to be completed once, or many times, without much, or any, use of tie reinforcing features. These examples cannot be presented in full for space reasons, so some intermediate emails in Abdessalam's dataset are omitted. However, the entire business interaction between Liz and Abdessalam is reproduced in the Appendix, section 11.9. The four steps above are abbreviated in the table below to "Requesting", "Agreeing & Negotiating", "Doing" and "Paying". The writers are colour-coded for ease, Liz in blue, clients in black. Breaks between lines have been condensed to save space.

	Requesting	Agreeing & Negotiating	Doing	Paying
(284)	Dear Liz I am writing to you with all respect wondering If you could do proof-reading to my first year report. my work is around 5700 words. Could you please let me how long does it take for to finish it and how much does it cost I look forward to hearing from you soon Kind Regards Shamekh [Abdessalam: 1]	Dear Shamekh, Thank you for getting in touch. Proofreading of a report of the length you describe would take around five days and the price would be approximately £25. [lines omitted][62] I look forward to hearing from you soon. Best regards, Liz [Liz to Abdessalam: 2] (Three emails follow, Abdessalam sends his report, Liz confirms the price of £25 and four days, but offers a faster service if needed, Abdessalam requests that work be done in three days if possible)	Hi, I have managed to complete your proofreading, your document and my invoice are attached. Please note that due to the formatting I was unable to use comment boxes in your bibliography,so I have written my comment where, for example, I saw missing information, in line with the text - please make sure you don't leave my comments in when you submit! [lines omitted] If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me. All the best, Liz [Liz to Abdessalam: 7] (Two emails follow where Abdessalam asks what certain notations mean, and Liz replies)	Dear Liz Thank you very much for your help and proofreading. I have deposited the money into your account on the 17th July, so please let me know If you did not receive it. I am looking forward to sending my future work and my final thesis. kind Regards Shamekh [Abdessalam: 10] Dear Shamekh, Thank you very much for such prompt payment, which I have received. I look forward to working with you again, All the best, Liz [Liz to Abdessalam: 11]
(285)	Hello Liz, How are you ? Hope you are well. Attached is a copy of my personal statement and I will appreciate if you can proof read it. Many thanks Ivie [Ivie: 10]		Dear Ivie, No problem, all done. Just one comment, you refer to Caesarean Sections as both CS and C/S - you need to pick an acronym and stick to it, unless these two acronyms refer to different things, in which case they are too similar. All the best, Liz [Liz to Ivie: 11]	Thank you so much. [Ivie: 12] Dear Ivie, Thank you so much for your very fast and generous payment. Best regards, Liz [Liz to Ivie: 13]

62 Liz notes that the quote is an estimate and that terms and conditions are attached. See Appendix section 11.9.

(286)	Dear Elizabeth This is new report (3000 words) about Britvic PLC (2012) needs proofreading . its deadline is 6 May 2014. Your faithfully. Hassan Maziq [Hassan: 14]	Hi Hassan, No problem. The price estimate for this is £12. Please send the document as soon as possible. Best, Liz [Liz to Hassan: 15]	16) 27/04/14 Re: proofreading [with attachment - essay] [NO MESSAGE] [Hassan: 16] Hi Hassan, Here is you report. If you have any questions at all about my comments or edits please don't hesitate to email me and I will get straight back to you. All the best, Liz [Liz to Hassan: 17]	Ok , I have sent 14 pounds . [Hassan: 18]

Table 27: Structure of business workflow

The table shows three examples of work projects from start to completion (284) – eleven emails between Liz and Abdessalam, representing the first piece of work done for this client (his thesis proofreading was completed after the end of data collection, see Table 28, p. 287); (285) – four emails between Liz and Ivie, the second of five individual pieces of work done for this client; and (286) – five emails between Liz and Hassan, the second of three pieces of work done for this client.

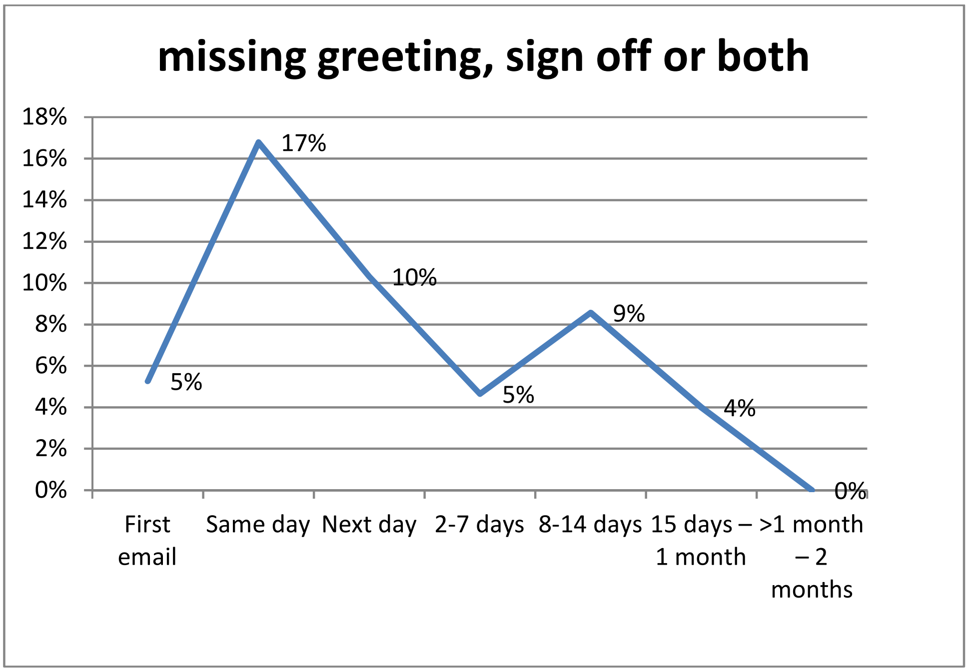
It is only shorter pieces of work that can be accomplished so quickly and easily. In general, work where a single paper/essay/report etc. can be transferred and edited relatively quickly has this format seen above. When working on PhD theses in contrast, there is far more opportunity for reinforcing to occur, as work often spans several weeks, months or even years and participants have a longer time in which to build a relationship. Additionally, the stakes are higher in terms of the importance of the work and the amount paid and it is possible that this investment in the relationship encourages tie reinforcement. In Ivie's data, though example (285) above (her second piece of work with Liz) is business-like, after Ivie's acceptance to be included in this thesis, there is a marked change, with CMC cues such as emoticons and exclamation marks appearing in both participants' emails in work taking place after this event. It seems that in this case, Ivie's agreement led to a reinforcing of the tie between the participants, which can be immediately seen in their following business contact (see examples (165) and (166), p. 189).

Hassan's (286) and Ivie's (285) examples have been deliberately chosen because they are among the most concise and problem-free examples in the dataset. They are not typical conversations, which like Abdessalam's example, and many others described in the thesis, generally have more back-and-forth discussion about all manner of topics. For example, Hassan's first work project conversation has several emails after work is completed detailing his difficulty in making a bank transfer to Liz [Hassan: 8-13]. These minor problems and longer discussions do not necessarily lead to either tie reinforcing or destabilisation, although they do have this potential. However they are more difficult to present in this format where it is advantageous to see all emails in full, where possible. The emails shown share many interactional features with emails across the whole dataset which display weak-functional-tie-maintaining language. They also typify many of the shorter sequences which occur in otherwise longer projects in terms of their business focus and lack of deviation into relational talk.

In (285) Ivie opens with a simple wellness inquiry, a way of re-establishing contact after a break of two months. While this certainly shows concern for her reader, the construction "how are you? Hope you are well" is not tailored (see also the next section of this chapter), rather it is a rote phrase which can be produced without much cognitive engagement and without historic reference to prior emails or interactions. Therefore, while it maintains a convivial relationship, it does not reinforce it. Ivie then moves swiftly on to requesting work, but again does some relationship management in her indirect request "I will appreciate if you can proof read it.". This mitigates the request by making it a declarative rather than imperative, and stresses that the effect of Liz's action – should she take it – on Ivie, will be positive. This helps to maintain the business relationship and provides Ivie with a line to adhere to (see Goffman, 1967) – that of 'grateful customer'.

There is no negotiation in this interaction; one can assume that having worked for Ivie just two months before, there is no need to renegotiate price. As the document is short, Liz returns the edited copy the following day. Ivie makes a minimal response to the returned work, which nevertheless includes the intensifier "so", emphasising her thankfulness and thus adhering to her established line. Liz, perhaps mimetically (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017), uses the exact same phrase to thank Ivie for her payment "thank you so much", again using intensifiers to signal her approval "very fast and generous". This enthusiastic final message may mark a move towards tie reinforcing; with this added compliment of Ivie's good qualities, Liz signals that she approves of Ivie (see compliments section 6.3.1, Chapter 6). This is a tailored phrase, and not a rote or generic compliment, but one that can only apply to this situation. Additionally, the amount Ivie paid is also tie reinforcing (it was nearly double what was invoiced), as she goes "above and beyond" what is expected, moving away from politic behaviour and into behaviour that is more markedly polite/relationship enhancing.

Example (286), occurring just seven days after the successful conclusion of Hassan's prior proofreading project, shows far fewer politeness features than the other examples. Hassan gets directly to the point, introducing his work and giving the deadline. In this sense, he acts as an ideal customer, only saying what is needed and useful for the business owner, and not 'wasting time' with additional phatic comments (although, of course, a large section of this thesis is spent explaining why this relational approach is *not* a time waste). Though in his initial email Hassan spends time adding a greeting and sign-off, he quickly abandons these; (286) takes place over just two days and the data show that it is much more common to omit these when emails have shorter time gaps between being sent, than if they have larger time gaps, as shown below:



Graph 5: Emails missing greeting, sign-off or both as a percentage of total emails in that time category

Note that three further time categories have been omitted due to skew caused by the low number of emails in each category. Only two emails, missing greeting, sign-off or both fall outside the graph shown above. The full and raw statistics can be seen in the Appendix, section 11.10.

Nevertheless, the total percentage of same and next day emails having neither a greeting nor a sign-off is only 3.1% and 1.3% respectively. Therefore, this behaviour is still unusual. It may be culturally-based, or perhaps be a result of Hassan's possible lack of confidence in using English, leading to him wanting to keep messages brief. Despite his brevity, Hassan still manages to fulfil his role as client, sending work and payment promptly, therefore leading to a successful interaction, although certainly one where no tie reinforcing takes place.

Example (284) is rather more complex, as it contains in full a total of eleven emails, and perhaps due to this longer sequence, as hypothesised earlier, there are some tie reinforcing elements present. For the purpose of this analysis, I use the full conversation, containing all emails, as presented in the Appendix, section 11.9. Abdessalam begins with the formal phrase "I am writing to you with all respect" showing deference to Liz, and ending with "I look forward to hearing from you soon" indicating his eagerness for the business partnership. Liz mirrors this exact phrase in her reply, again as with Ivie, showing potential mimetic behaviour, indicative of approval of the other. Liz in her reply thanks Abdessalam for his email, indicating that this unsolicited contact is wanted and welcomed. This email is focussed on the business at hand, and on making her working process comprehensible (i.e. by emphasising that prices are estimates and by attaching terms and conditions). However, her declaration that "these figures are estimates and may increase or decrease slightly depending on the quality of the work" has the potential to be tie reinforcing or to be damaging, dependant on the outcome, as a higher price, by this description, indicates lower quality work, while a lower price equals higher quality work. This phrasing is potentially dangerous for this beginning relationship, although in [Liz to Abdessalam: 4] Liz confirms her original price. This phrase could have become a potential changing point for the relationship.

In email [3] work is submitted to Liz, and more politeness work is in evidence. The thanking mirrors, though not exactly, Liz's thanking in the previous email, and it contains a mitigated request "Could you please have a quick look at it… and confirm the cost and time to finish it". Liz in her reply, confirms the time and the price, then makes an offer, and a small self-disclosure "(I have other work to do in addition to yours - but if you really need it faster, I could probably do it in three days minimum)" her assertion of busyness, but willingness to add extra work, constructs her as a businessperson who is willing to put the client's needs before her own. This is a potentially reinforcing move within this email conversation, as Liz's offer may go beyond what Abdessalam expects. Abdessalam in his following email indicates "I would be grateful If you could do it in three days" showing the positive effect Liz's actions would have on him, he also restates his intent to pay for the completed work "after you finish please send me your bank details for payment.". This shows his commitment to his role in the business-client partnership.

Email [7] is interesting, with many features. First Liz states “I have managed to complete your proofreading” – this use of “managed” is interesting as it implies some additional effort or hardship, this can be contextually explained by her prior email where she states her intent to “hopefully” return Abdessalam’s work on Wednesday, but if not, Thursday morning. Email [7] was in fact sent earlier, on Tuesday, so this “managed” implies this extra effort taken to do the work quickly. The email also notes a problem with using the ‘comment’ function of Word’s Track Changes in bibliographies which use referencing software (Word 2010, in these cases, treats the whole bibliography as a single section, so comments highlight and apply to the entire text), stating that she had to write comments inline instead. Liz adds a note here “please make sure you don't leave my comments in when you submit!” the exclamation marks this as helpful, but also somewhat humorous advice. This extra help formatted in such a way using an exclamation mark is a tie-reinforcing move, bringing participants closer through humour (see section 7.1.2.2 and Laub Coser, 1960; Gremler & Gwinner, 2008, p. 317). Further tie reinforcing also takes place when Liz shares a weblink to a tutorial showing how to accept and reject tracked changes. As shown in the reinforcing chapter, section 6.2.2, this sharing of multimedia sources can show consideration for the recipient and their needs.

In Abdessalam’s following email, he asks Liz’s advice on a number of Word’s automatic notations e.g. “field code changed”. She explains these in email [9] adding “I hope that helps!” again her more informal tone, as in email [7], plus usage of a CMC cue, may indicate that she is inviting more relational talk. Abdessalam however, does not engage in such informal writing in email [10], though he intensifies his thanking “thank you **very** much”, indicates he has sent the money, thus fulfilling his final duty as customer, and indicates his enthusiasm in continuing the relationship in the future.

The interactions between Abdessalam and Liz, and between Liz and Ivie show how even email conversations which are short and relatively business-focussed can have reinforcing elements present. This does not mean the tie has become strong functional, as a single exclamatory comment or self-disclosure does not suddenly make two people best friends, but these small phrases can lay the groundwork for later affection, and can build a historical relationship which the participants are then able to refer back to.

Equally, one, or a few, business focussed emails between partners who are developing a stronger functional tie should not cause that tie to decay or destabilise, especially in a work relationship which began with the aim of accomplishing some task. These emails can occur any time throughout the conversation, even after many emails with many reinforcing actions have passed between the dyad, such as this example from Alice:

(287) *61) 07/01/15 A query*

Dear Liz,

I wonder if you will be free to go through the entire final draft with a finer and sharper comb, possibly in the beginning of March 2015?

I am asking because I need someone to check the cross-references, possible typo-errors, and other errors that you may spot (nitty-gritties). The contents of the dissertation should mostly remain the same.

Please give me your charges again if you have the time to do it.

With appreciation,

Alice

Example (287) occurs after the exchange and discussion about Christmas photos [52-56], a highly tie-reinforcing exchange, which is described on pp. 151-152. Yet, no CMC cues and only a small possible use of informal language "nitty-gritties" are present. Contextually, this email makes an entirely new work request, and it may be a perceived break from the current project and establishing of a new project, and potentially a slightly different working relationship, that has caused this change towards greater formality. Similarly, this exchange between Liz and Supaksorn occurs after such reinforcing discussions as talk about Liz's grandfather's interest in TESOL (example (118), p. 140) and Supaksorn's sending of a Southeast Asian film on YouTube to Liz (example (123), p. 149):

(288) *79) 09/04/2013 Short pieces [attachments - three completed documents]*

Hi Ploy,

As requested, here are your short sections/excerpts.

Would you like me to start next on your Chapter 5 conclusion (13 pages) or Chapter 4 (43 pages)?

Best,
Liz

(289) *80) 09/04/2013 Long chapters*
You can start with Chapter 5, then 4.

Thank you very much for the attached files.

Ploy

The exchange is entirely task-focussed and business-like, with no evidence of Supaksorn's frequent self-disclosures and well-wishes. These business-focussed emails are often comparatively short compared to the surrounding emails, and are usually sent close in time to other emails (usually within 48 hours, see Graph 4, p. 84) and are generally replied to quickly (same day or next day). Like Supaksorn's example, they are generally short inquiries and/or work returns which keep the business relationship functioning. This can be alongside an affectionate relationship that the partners are building.

The next section looks at rote writing as a way of writing in an affective manner, but without any tailoring to the recipient. These rote phrases including thanking, wellness inquiries and offers are something like written small-talk, a way to do non-business-related talk, but without the effort of involving the participants' historic relationship (if indeed there is one yet) and without the need to know intimate details about one's recipient. As Janis (1966, in the words of Jenkins & Hinds, 1987, p. 328) states, "ready-made expressions are more efficient in that they reduce uncertainty and the need for time-consuming individual invention". These phrases are the small pleasantries we use every day with weak contacts such as shop assistants, taxi drivers, neighbours and co-workers who we do not know well, which nevertheless go beyond talk that is simply task-driven.

8.3 Writing by rote

Understandably, the largest category of rote writing in the dataset comprises of greetings and sign-offs, these are often cited in the literature as formulaic or routine (see, Saville-Troike, 2003, p. 36; Waldvogel, 2007, p. 465; Cho, 2010, p. 1). However, as these were analysed in some detail in the mimesis section (3.5), they are not mentioned again here. What are analysed briefly, are phrases found through N-gram analysis, which act as the only source of relational talk in an email. Frequently occurring N-grams such as "how are you" are part of routine politeness or politic behaviour, and as O'Driscoll (2007, p. 464) describes ""politic behaviour" (Watts 1992)… most of the time goes unnoticed and thus… is often a matter of routine". These types of "ready-made expressions are more efficient in that they reduce uncertainty and the need for time-consuming individual invention." (Janis, 1966, as described by: Jenkins & Hinds, 1987, p. 328).

Writing by rote is one method which Liz in particular uses to maintain ties. Time is still spent on polite writing, e.g. thanking, offering etc. BUT crucially, it is not at all personalised or unique writing, it is generic. This does not necessarily mean the sentiment behind the words is not present, but it does mean that the writing is done without so much consideration of the addressee in mind and that the writing is habitual. An N-gram search in Antconc (Anthony, 2014)[63] revealed many phrases that Liz used with all clients, which were typically not accompanied by any recipient-tailored writing in emails, meaning they alone preserved the tie with the client without reinforcing it. Such evidence of rote writing was difficult to find for the clients, as the numbers of emails written by each individual client was at most 14% of the number of emails collected for Liz. Even for Liz, such N-grams as "if you have any questions", "I really appreciate" and "very happy to" are repeated at most 17 times across her 515 emails.

It should also be noted that rote phrases do not *always* stand for the entire polite/phatic content of the email, although this is specifically what I was looking for in this chapter. For example, Imran begins 11 of his 34 emails with "Dear [name], how are you?", and while this is clearly a habitual phrase for him, 82% of the time, it is followed by tailored tie reinforcing content such as self-disclosures, textual modification and compliments, as shown in the Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

This section therefore briefly looks at Liz's use of rote phrases as tie maintaining elements. These could be said to occupy a 'grey-zone' between reinforcing ties and maintaining weak functional ties, as Liz does not typically use the same formulations multiple times with the same client, therefore, clients are unlikely to perceive such writing as rote, unlike Imran's example above. In this case, clients could perceive such offers and emphatic thanking as

[63] This search used the body text of Liz's emails, excluding the PhD request emails, because if they were included, these produced many N-grams due to the template used. The search looked for N-grams of 3-10 words in length, occurring at least 5 times.

reinforcing, as they are not privy to the fact that Liz 'says this to everyone'. Nevertheless, it is clear these rote phrases are not tailored in the sense that they contain no specific reference to the client, their work, or other contextual or historic factors.

The rote phrases, which occur multiple times in Liz's emails, and can be seen on occasion to be the only tie-effecting behaviour, are the following, which all either give thanks or make an offer:

> "I really appreciate"
>
> "if you have any questions"
>
> "please don't hesitate to"
>
> "thank you for"

These phrases can all be expanded, or combined, into longer rote phrases such as "**If you have any questions** at all about my comments or edits **please don't hesitate to** email me" [Liz to Hassan: 17]. In total, 18 emails contain one or more of these phrases where the phrase is the *only element* of affective talk, while they occur in 33 emails (containing 44 occurrences of the above N-grams) across all Liz's emails.

Some examples of these phrases acting as the only element of affective talk are the following (bolds added). Please note I have presented shorter examples here for the sake of space, but many examples of longer emails, containing simply functional business and work-related talk also contain these N-grams:

(290) *19) 04/11/14 Chapter 2 [attachment – Chapter 2 completed]*

Dear Alice,
I have finished your second chapter, **if you have any questions** about my edits **please don't hesitate to** email me.
Very best regards,
Liz

(291) *25) 18/01/14 RE: Essay 2*
Dear Victoria,
Thank you so much for such a prompt payment, **I really appreciate** it.
Best regards,
Liz

(292) *24) 11/10/2012 Chapter 2 [attachment - completed chapter]*
Hi Imran,

Here is your second chapter. As always, **if you have any questions**, just ask.
All the best
Liz

(293) *44) 01/05/14 Your Assignment [attachments - completed essay and invoice]*

Hi Victoria,
Here is your assignment and my invoice for the work.
As always, **if you have any questions** please email me.
All the best,
Liz

(294) *5) 29/05/2014 Re: Please help with my PhD project*
Dear Lovemore,
Thank you so much, **I really appreciate** it.
best regards,
Liz

As can be seen above, another N-gram "thank you so much" often co-occurs in the vicinity of "I really appreciate it", and "as always" co-occurs with "if you have any questions", thus showing how these parts of language are used like building blocks to construct polite/affective phrases with minimal effort. These emails are to-the-point, they do the necessary work of offering courtesies or describing what work is being returned without embellishment. Additionally, all but example (294) can stand alone, without context for interpretation. In (294), without the surrounding context, one cannot tell to what "it" refers. This may be due to the wider context of this message – (294) represents Liz's response to Lovemore's agreement to be part of this study, and her replies to some other participants are strikingly similar:

(295) *36) 05/06/2014 Re: Please help with my PhD project*
Dear Dana,
Thank you very much, I really appreciate it.
Best wishes,
Liz

(296) *16) 31/05/2014 Re: Please help with my PhD project*
Dear Ivie,
Thank you so much, I really appreciate your help.
All the best,
Liz

The emails above, plus example (294) show rote phrases, which if the dates are examined, all fall within an eight-day window and occur as results to the same stimuli (client accepting request). This time proximity and contextual similarity may go some way towards explaining the very similar text in (294), (295) & (296), but it does also potentially show the formation of habit and how written idiolectal expressions can become part of someone's rote expressions.

Even in emails which contain other tailored tie reinforcing content, these emails responding to participants' agreement to take part in the study often contain the phrase "thank you (so/very) much, I really appreciate…" (this phrase occurs in 9 emails) with "I really appreciate…" occurring in a slightly different format, e.g. "Thank you for letting me use your emails, I really appreciate it" [Liz to Abdessalam: 14] in 4 further emails. This may illustrate a tendency to react similarly to similar stimuli, even when this stimuli occurs over a significant time period – though the majority of these emails were sent in late May – early June 2014, some were in October 2014 or January 2015 yet still contained similar set phrases.

These rote phrases contribute to maintaining weak functional ties, as the absence of courtesies in these emails may be noticed and interpreted as rude, therefore leading to destabilisation. While weak functional ties are not described as intimate relationships in the way that strong functional ties are, they are nevertheless described as helpful and facilitating of information exchange (Milroy & Milroy, 1992, p. 9; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011, p. 2; McMeekin Sullivan, 2012, p. 346). This assertion that weak ties can help those to whom they are tied indicates how these relationships are not generally conceived in the literature as being characterised by rudeness and unhelpfulness i.e. the weak ties described are functional ones. Therefore, they must be maintained by at least the expected amount of courtesy.

Another way to minimise difficulties in the interaction, e.g. misunderstandings, is through the use of recipient design – considering the reader and how they will interpret and respond to the text. This can be aided by the inclusion of CMC cues to signal important parts of a text, to differentiate and to repeat for clarification. This is explored in the next section.

8.4 Recipient design using CMC cues

As mentioned in the previous chapter, CMC cues can be used to aid interpretation of the text (see section 7.5) to improve comprehensibility. These cues are produced in such a way that they take into account the recipient's possible interpretation (or potential difficulties navigating the text) and seek to help convey the writer's intended message. These CMC cues have disambiguating or clarifying functions, which is one of the usages specified in the literature (Crystal, 2006, p. 41; Whalen et al., 2009, p. 267). This "recipient design" improves the "accessibility of information" (Sacks et al. (1974) as described by Gasiorek, 2016, p. 16), or in other terms, provides the reader with text that is optimally relevant and easy to interpret (Wilson, 2016). Having one's communication correctly interpreted is beneficial to the language producer, and beneficial to the recipient as well; it fosters and enables smooth communication (Incelli, 2013) and thus reduces the chance of tie destabilisation.

This section will provide a brief overview of how CMC cues can contribute towards recipient design by making text easier to understand, and showing the writer's consideration for the reader. These cues all fulfil in slightly different ways the function of aiding interpretation (which can also be accomplished in a tie-reinforcing way, see the previous chapter, section 7.5). The CMC cues will be divided into the same three sub-categories used previously: Clarify, Indicate importance or difference and Give additional information.

8.4.1.1 Clarify

CMC cues used for recipient design here add a clarification to a word or phrase indicating its specific interpretation, thus minimising the chances of misunderstanding:

(297) Just a question...have you also checked my references (if there is any reference missing - in the text and/or if the referencing is consistent, also in the case of direct quotation)? [Dana: 11]

(298) The reason I call it an estimate is because I assume 80,000 is an estimate on your part (it seems unlikely your document will be exactly 80k long, therefore I factor in some contingency) and students' writing quality dramatically and directly affects how long proofreading will take [Liz to Alice: 7]

(299) I met Mike today, he promise to give me his comments next week, so my work will be ready for you next month (NOVEMBER).
I will take 2-3 weeks to correct and let him read one more time for sure.
So in this month(October), you are free from my work. [Supaksorn: 8]

(300) re- second installment at the end of February (28th) as, that is when I'll be paid too. [Ruth: 105]

(301) I am free before 11am or after 3.45pm tomorrow (Friday 28th) or any time Monday next week (1st July) [Liz to Alya: 2]

(302) I am writing it tomorrow and hopefully, will be able to send it to you by Monday, 19 January ([home country] time), next week. [Alice: 75]

For examples (297) & (298), what is clarified is Dana's understanding of what reference checking entails, and Liz's assumption about the length of Alice's work. Both clarifications ensure that the reader does not make unintended inferences about what the writer means and thereby promotes understanding between writer and reader, and may prevent some possible misunderstandings.[64] Examples (299)–(302) disambiguate dates and times giving a specific month or day, or in the case of example (270), time zone, rather than only a temporal adverb which changes its meaning dependant on its time of interpretation, and the geographic location of the reader. This usage, which occurs fairly often, is probably due to the email medium. During dislocated communication, which is occasionally taking place across time zones, one cannot guarantee the recipient's interpretation of "tomorrow" will match the writer's because "interlocutors do not share a common temporal and physical context" (Skovholt & Svennevig, 2013, p. 581).

Another method of using CMC cues to clarify is to use parenthetical comments to restate more simply. This does not give further, tangential information (as seen in section 7.5.3), but rather gives more of an "in other words…" example. Usage here is an example of recipient design – the added comments make it easier for the recipient to interpret what the writer is stating, and lessen the chances of misunderstanding.

(303) The language or languages you first learned to speak as a young child (your 'Mother Tongue') [Liz to all clients (PhD information request)]

(304) Unfortunately, I'm not sure I can help you with this article, I have enough time, but I'm not a certified proofreader (in that I have no specific proofreading

[64] Anecdotally, I can reveal that there was a time with a British client when I (Liz) had checked referencing consistency (i.e., adherence to Harvard standard in format and information given) in text and in the reference list, but had not checked that every reference in the list was in the text and vice versa. The client was very annoyed when her tutor noted that there were missing references, and it was after this incident that I clarified in my terms and conditions what reference checking services I would provide by default, and which would need to be specially requested. Dana's clarification here, had it been used by that British client, or by me in stating what I would do, could have prevented such an incident where both parties understood different things by 'reference checking'.

qualifications and am not a member of any certified body of proofreading professionals). [Liz to Meera: 61]

Each reinterpretation clarifies and precisely states what is meant so that the recipient understands. This exemplifies recipient design, with the writer taking into account the reader's viewpoint. This leads to smoother interactions and shows the writer is making an effort both to ensure an easy continuing relationship, and to help the reader in their interpretation, to the dyad's mutual benefit, thus maintaining the functional tie.

8.4.1.2 Indicate importance or difference

Examples under this heading are used by writers to differentiate part of the text from surrounding text, either showing that the text is authored/altered by a different writer, or that something like a specific example or a list is being introduced. Writers can also highlight key words, such as negatives, time scales, dates etc. to ensure that the reader pays close attention. This usage may be acting as something of a stand-in for prosody or body language devices used to focus the hearer's attention on a specific point when interacting face-to-face (Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2004; Brody & Diakopoulos, 2011). Using extra textual emphasis may also serve to help the reader to scan the received email effectively, picking out key points that have been helpfully highlighted, emboldened or capitalised by the sender:

(305) and I personally would change:

Thereby, the trainee gains the knowledge and skills required for the professional boxer and the [Southeast Asian]-boxing trainer.

to:

Thereby, the trainee **has gained** the knowledge and skills required **as a** professional boxer and [Southeast Asian]-boxing trainer. [Liz to Supaksorn: 135]

(306) <u>Answers</u>
Nationality: [South Asian]

Mother tongue: [minority language] [Imran: 72]

(307) Do I have your permission to linguistically analyse our emails to each other? **yes**
If yes, some additional information would be really useful:
2) Your nationality [**SOUTH ASIAN]**
3) The language or languages you first learned to speak as a young child (your 'Mother Tongue') **[NATIONAL LANGUAGE]**
4) Would you be willing to be contacted for further questioning (either via email, telephone or in person) regarding the content of your emails? i.e. how

you felt about the language I used to address you e.g. did you find my communication polite etc., did you find there were any misunderstandings?
YES I AM WILLING TO PARTICIPATE AND ALLOW THE RESEARCHER TO USE (AND SHARE) THE E CONVERSATIONS FOR HER RESEARCH [Meera: 63]

(308) My deadline (to answer your earlier question) is **early December 2014**. I hope to submit my full "cleaned" thesis at the end of December this year [Alice: 10]

(309) Mike is currently on holiday, he will be back to office at the end of September, but I think he will be very happy to have you as
an important part of our research.
++
I will live in [Southeast Asia] from 20 October-January, my visa is going to expire
++
Otherwise, I will leave my money for you with Mike before my travel. You can present the invoice to him [Supaksorn: 5]

(310) For a peice of work around 40,000 words, I will need AT LEAST eight days [Liz to Imran: 2]

(311) *18) 15/07/2011 DO NOT OPEN last email from me. Think my account was hacked. Just delete it. (it will be one with no subject)*

The technique shown in (307), where Meera has answered Liz's questions by reusing the original text is also used by [Ruth: 27] "does it describe a study which is already complete? **[No]**" and [Supaksorn: 146] "2) Your nationality [**Southeast Asian**]". All three writers chose to use bold font (with Meera adding all caps, and Ruth adding square brackets) to differentiate their answers from text written by Liz in the previously received email. This allows the reader to quickly comprehend which text belongs to which writer. Text is similarly differentiated in example (305), where Liz uses bolds to show where she has altered the text so that Supaksorn is immediately able to see the changes. This is especially important when working with second language speakers, like Supaksorn, as small grammatical changes like these may be more difficult for the reader to spot. This usage emulates the Microsoft Word 'track changes' notation, which Liz uses for proofreading and which her clients are already familiar with, thus presenting the text in a way that is instantly recognisable and understandable. Example (306) also serves to make things easier for the reader by sectioning off Imran's answers to Liz's questions from the main body of his email with an underlined heading. This not only brackets the text off as different, but also emphasises its importance.

Examples (308), (309) & (310) focus on work timelines, outlining times needed to complete tasks, deadlines and other factors. The key parts are helpfully emboldened, capitalised or highlighted so that the reader is less likely to miss or misread the given information. These examples show consideration for the reader, serving to promote easy communication.

Example (311), which contains capitalised text in the subject line, and no text in the email main body, shows another example of highlighting the main important point of the message to the reader. Here the email subject line serves as a warning to the reader, and as the entire email text. This is an effective way to give this warning as subject lines are the first thing the recipient sees and if Liz sent this swiftly enough she may have prevented Meera from opening something potentially malicious. The "DO NOT" also has connotations of typical warning signs ('do not enter', 'do not smoke' etc.) which are often presented capitalised, emboldened or otherwise emphasised. This email therefore uses this same iconography to get its point across.

It may also be important that a message is negated, or contains some negative aspect. In this case, as below, the negatives 'no' or 'not' may be subject to modification so that the message is not misinterpreted:

(312) Do you want me to check your bibliography as well (just checking each reference to make sure all the needed information is included and formatted, **not** checking the whole PhD to make sure every reference appears in the bibliography and vice versa)? [Liz to Alice: 66]

(313) *37) 14/01/2013 Ch 1 Part 4 In NO RUSH [attachment - work for proofreading]*

Your work's arrived, please find the attached file, but don't worry I don't need it NOW. [Supaksorn: 37]

In (312) Liz does not want Alice to assume she will provide some service that she will not provide. Therefore, in order to prevent scan-reading from missing the negative, it is emboldened. It occurs to me that this kind of negation may be more common when a service provider has in the past been faced with a client who was not correctly informed about the service they would receive – as had in fact happened in this instance with a separate client (not part of the dataset) six months before. For (313) Supaksorn doubly emphasises that Liz does not need to worry about returning her work quickly. In the subject line "NO RUSH" is emphasised, while again in the main body a reference to time (as in examples (308), (309) & (310)) is modified "NOW". As mentioned, these emphatics help to ensure that there is no miscommunication between reader and writer, by the writer making their point as clear as possible.

8.4.1.3 Give additional information

In many of the following cases, the CMC cue, usually a parenthetical comment or postscript, may signal an importance 'downgrade' indicating the main sentence or paragraph as the primary and most important information, and that information sectioned off as supplementary and therefore less important. In this way, writers show consideration for their recipient, deliberately taking the time to add helpful details and to give a potential indication of importance hierarchy. Additionally, this allows writers to protect themselves from potential misunderstandings, which could be seen to be their fault if they had not provided enough information.

In the following cases, the parentheses cue that the comment contained within is not the main information that the writer wishes to convey, but is some kind of helpful added extra, as can be seen in the following examples:

(314) I would like to submit my thesis in December...

It's about 75000 words atm (still need introduction/conclusion and one more chapter to write) but, I have lots of tables so cannot really tell how long the thesis is. [Dana: 3]

(315) I have attached my terms and conditions for both my proofreading and copy editing services (this is a slight change since I worked with Meera). [Liz to Ruth: 2]

(316) The total words will not exceed 90,000 words (including my 10,000-word transcribed conversation added in appendix). [Supaksorn: 119]

(317) Or, you could send the files via Skydrive (if you have a Hotmail account) or Dropbox. [Liz to Ruth: 54]

There are a huge number of such examples in the data, all along similar lines. These are business-related and topic-relevant; by giving extra detail, confusion is avoided and congenial relations are maintained. Similarly to examples (297)–(304), the writer's text is supplemented with clarifying or helpful information, which seems to primarily serve, in examples (314)–(316), to avoid surprises and set up the reader's expectations. Again, this is related to establishing and following a line; by giving the reader appropriate expectations, the writer allows them to appropriately prepare for the future.

Additional information can also relate to a subject separate from the main body of the email, but mentioned several emails prior, as shown in the postscripts below:

(318) PS: I would like to pay for each chapter separately if it's ok for you. [Dana: 8]

(319) P.S I will be out of the house from 11am-8pm today. [Liz to Ruth: 93]

(320) P.S. My conclusion is still not ready. I think I need a day more to think over it. Thank you for your patience! [Alice: 70]

(321) P.S. Although Prof Zétény has given me the green light, it is me --the fussy one-- who is getting reviewers outside school. So I am still not submitting it until a bit later. [Alice: 93]

These four examples all refer to subjects not mentioned in the same email, or the email before that, but one several 'turns' ago (Example (318) refers back to [Liz to Dana: 4], (319) to [Liz to Ruth: 89], (320) to [Liz to Alice: 66] and (321) to [Liz to Alice: 88]). While for these emails the main body text is linked to the email preceding it, the writers have separated references to earlier messages away from this text. This may be in order to avoid reader confusion by showing that the body and postscript texts are not only spatially, but also temporally, distinct within the conversation, with present issues addressed in the main body, and past issues in the postscript. This may be an example of recipient design as writers are attempting to make their train-of-thought more comprehensible, and separate more dislocated intertextual references from the main body text.

The CMC cues mentioned under these three subheadings all serve to avoid misunderstanding, misreading and misinterpretation, either by presenting text in an easily-comprehensible manner, or by stating meanings and details clearly. In this way, the relationship is maintained and destabilisation may be prevented.

8.5 Conclusion

While conventionally polite emails are found throughout the dataset, even between Liz and clients with whom she has built a significantly reinforced tie, as shown earlier, it is difficult to find long stretches of emails with no affective elements at all, which are business-related only. This seems to confirm my assertion, shared by many in the literature (see: Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003; Planken, 2005; Gremler & Gwinner, 2008), that relationship management is a crucial part of business, and any other relationship where participants share a joint goal. This maintenance, as explored in this chapter, may be accomplished by politic behaviour, appropriate to the genre and context, meaning the culturally and socially accepted way of behaving (Daikuhara, 1986; Watts, 1989; Jandt, 2004; Leech, 2008).

As such, some clients use few tie reinforcing CMC cues, make few or no self-disclosures, pay few compliments etc. yet the relationship does not decay or destabilise. In this case, participants are crucially doing three things: 1. Engaging in 'polite' politic behaviour to the contextually and culturally expected degree (though there may be some mismatch here as communication is intercultural) (Locher & Watts, 2005). 2. Adhering to their expected line in the relationship (Goffman, 1967), in this case as either client or sole trader, by fulfilling that role in the expected way according to what was negotiated and agreed between the partners. 3. Actively working to prevent misunderstandings by employing recipient design in their text. In this way, weak functional ties can be maintained indefinitely, so long as the relationship is still useful to both parties; when business is concluded, it is likely that the tie will slowly decay. As Burt (2001, p. 622) states, "People "disengage" from these relationships if they find they are not useful/ have nothing in common", although the relationship can be re-established at a later date should the partners have use of it again. At this point, it is possible the tie will remain weak and functional for the duration of the new project, or it may undergo a transformation.

Having over the course of the last four chapters established how relationships can start, and become strong functional, or remain weak functional, the following and final analysis chapter looks at how relationships can be destabilised by negative or misunderstood interactions and how relationships end.

Chapter 9 Tie Decay, Destabilisation, Repair and Reinitiation

"Change is the only Eternal"
– Okakura (2016 [1906], p. 93)

9.1 Introduction

Tie decay is acknowledged in the literature as somewhat tricky to define – which is understandable as it is possible to imagine many scenarios, from reconciliation to chance encounters, where a relationship which was assumed to have ceased entirely, becomes active once more. As Goffman observes, "once two individuals have been… bonded, their relationship can change drastically but never revert to non-acquaintanceship" (1971, p. 189). So, a drastic change, from a maintained relationship to a long-lasting lack of contact, or a formally acknowledged ending, is what can be discussed here. When the literature in general considers tie decay, what is generally considered is tie cessation over time, or formal breaking. What is not considered is tie destabilising – a tie may recover from this, or it may not – what I refer to here are behaviours which serve the opposite function to reinforcing (e.g. bullying, impoliteness, intimidating, emphasising difference etc.). These can: lead to decay, result in a severely dysfunctional tie, or result in tie repair (see glossary, section 2.4, p. 17). It is useful here to consider Hafner-Burton et al.'s definition of tie strength, which deviates from the rest of the literature where strength is generally conceptualised in purely positive terms. Again, Hafner-Burton et al. consider "the magnitude and frequency of interactions between two nodes" as indicative of tie strength, but note that "Network ties need not imply positive or cooperative relations; they can also be negative, such as the enmity between two states in an enduring rivalry" (Hafner-Burton et al., 2009).

As shown in Figure 1 (p. 37), this thesis does consider that dysfunctional relationships can be both weak and strong, the same as functional ones. This is not a distinction officially made in the network analysis literature (though it can be inferred from such sources as that cited above, and sources such as Watts, 1991). However, this distinction is a useful one when defining ties based on relationality and allows for a greater degree of differentiation when assessing how two persons are tied.

The literature when considering decay generally states that this is an understudied area, and that measurement of the phenomena is difficult, with McPherson et al. stating that dissolution “may be somewhat more idiosyncratic than the highly structured world of tie formation. But, given the paucity of evidence on tie dissolution, this conclusion may be premature.” (2001, pp. 436–437). However, there have been several major longitudinal studies on tie breaking, both online (see Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011; Shen et al., 2014) and in relationships established face-to-face (Burt, 2001; Martin & Yeung, 2006). Online, there is more ability to formally break a tie, for example by “de-friending” (Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011, p. 1) “unfollowing” or even blocking. Ties can also be quickly and numerously established over a short period of time (Shen et al., 2014) with incompatible ties decaying and being replaced. For example, in Shen et al.’s investigation of an MMO,[65] they found that “novice players will tend to form a large number of weak ties to experiment with connections with different sets of partners.” (2014, p. 2129). These ties then decreased at later stages.

Burt (2001) and Martin and Yeung (2006) both conducted studies which looked at tie decay which had occurred over significant periods, for Burt (2001) the maximum was 20 years (he used a mixed group of college alumna from multiple graduation years), while Martin and Yeung examined members of a former co-housing community 12 years later. This contrasts with the comparatively shorter studies of Kivran-Swaine et al. (9 months) and Shen et al. (3 months). However, while the online researchers were able to study their subjects over the entire period and watch tie creation and decay in action, Martin and Yeung contacted members of a past community to see how their relationships stood in the present. Burt’s study somewhat bridged this knowledge gap by contacting female MBA graduates of the Chicago Graduate School of Business, both recent and past, and asking them which and how many other graduates remained part of their networks. By this method, Burt was able to compare the networks of recent graduates with those who graduated up to 20 years previously.

These real-world and online studies came to the following broad conclusions about what factors affect whether a tie will decay or remain:

[65] Massively Multiplayer Online game – a game in which players, represented by avatars, inhabit a virtual world in which they can interact and collaborate with each other, or compete with each other, either for purely relational purposes, or to complete the goals of the game.

- When a tie is strong, it is less likely to decay, and will decay more slowly (Burt, 2001; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011; Shen et al., 2014). Likewise, those who spent a lot of time together in the past are likely to have a stronger tie which is less likely to decay (Martin & Yeung, 2006, p. 359).

- Embeddedness is key. If a person is connected to multiple others within a network, ties to those others are likely to remain, even more so if a person marries another network member, or has a relative who is/becomes a member of that network (Burt, 2001; Martin & Yeung, 2006; Shen et al., 2014).

- Factors that increase the rate of decay are those such as not having a contact opportunity (e.g. sharing a place of work or study) (Burt, 2001), being geographically distant (Martin & Yeung, 2006, p. 359), and being non-similar (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415; Shen et al., 2014, p. 2130).

This chapter looks at decay through the passing of time, as outlined in the literature discussed above, and also at tie destabilising (i.e. relationally negative behaviours), and repair or reinitiation techniques used to either re-establish a tie after some decay has occurred, or to repair damage done to a relationship in order to reinforce it again.

The emails analysed in this chapter fall roughly into three groups: those that destabilise the relationship, those that occur near a long break in contact, and final emails sent in each conversation (before contact was re-established to ask for permission to use the emails in this project). These latter two categories provide a way of looking at decay; decay itself is characterised by sporadic contact followed by a total lack of contact. In this data a lack of contact can be identified as a significant gap of time between emails, therefore, the emails which precede this gap may be analysed for clues that the relationship may decay, or is being put on hold for some specified reason. There is some overlap between categories, as destabilisation may occur just before, or potentially cause, a long break in contact. These rough categories are each analysed in turn, starting with destabilisation. None of the four studies mentioned above use interactional data to analyse tie breakage; all these studies use interview/survey responses, or as with Kivran-Swaine et al. (2011), quantitative data to assess tie absence/presence and strength/weakness. This study therefore presents an original analysis of this phenomenon by using emails to evidence or hypothesise the reason for tie decay or destabilisation.

9.2 Destabilisation

Destabilisation of a relationship generally happens in this data when expectations are not met; an assumption is made about what the email partner will or should do, and when this is confounded it effects the relationship. This is almost the opposite of what was discussed in section 8.2 of the previous chapter, which described tie maintenance in terms of adhering to one's expected line given the communicative context. There are cases where a participant confounds expectations in a positive way, as shown in Chapter 6, section 6.2.2, especially when regarding the sending of cultural artefacts such as photos and music, by going "above and beyond". However, what this section analyses are the negative, disappointing or unexpected ways that participants confound their conversational partner's expectations leading to relationship destabilisation. What causes the trouble, and how/if any repair is attempted, is also analysed.

In addition to Goffman's (1967, p. 5) description of adhering to a line, which has been previously mentioned in this thesis, and is explored in detail in an example later in this chapter, the literature has the following to say about relational destabilisation. It may be attributed to a surprising act that violates the usual 'interactional order' as Kádár describes in his analysis of heckling (Kádár, 2017a). Another potential source of conflict resulting in relational decay is cultural mismatch in terms of how to do acts such as apologising in a sincere and appropriate manner. Chang and Haugh (2011) analysed an Australian man's apology to a Taiwanese woman, and then had the apology assessed by natives of both backgrounds. While the Australians valued friendliness and personal attention in an apology, the Taiwanese stressed the importance of repeating the apology to show sincerity. As Fraser and Nolan (cited in Culpeper, 1996, p. 351) make clear "it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determines the judgment of politeness". This certainly holds true for my data where it is the surrounding context, including the backgrounds of the participants, which affects misinterpretations and judgements of writing as inappropriate; as Culpeper states, "Situated behaviours are viewed negatively when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be" (Culpeper, 2010, p. 3233). Judgement of behaviour as (im)polite is also influenced by how intentional the behaviour is perceived to be.

There are actually few troublesome sequences across the email conversations, which may reflect a possible bias in the data, as discussed in Table 4, p. 63. Nevertheless, those troublesome interactions that are present illuminate some of the potential misunderstandings which can happen in intercultural communication, and issues which could potentially occur in any business transaction, or indeed in any relationship.

> Kaur (2011) identifies four main sources of misunderstanding when using English as Lingua Franca in social interactions: pragmatic ambiguity, performance-related misunderstanding (mishearings or slips of tongue), language-related misunderstanding (non-standard use of lexical items) and gaps in world knowledge. (Kaur (2011) described in Zummo, 2018b)

Although Kaur is referring to spoken communication, a 'mishearing' can be parsed for email as 'misreading' (I have shown ways of mitigating this potential problem in sections 7.5 and 8.4). The three email sequences presented in the following pages, show communicative difficulties or misunderstandings between Liz and clients Ruth, Alya and Sofia. The sequences are too long to be presented in full, so the emails leading up to the trouble source are summarised. As each sequence requires a more lengthy discussion, these analyses are presented directly below the examples.

(323) *[emails 9-11 – Liz asks Alya if she is free to send work (07/07/13), Alya replies that it is Ramadan "so i have not checked mu mail for a week now" [10] and she is also having some family issues (15/07/13). Liz emails again exactly one month later, enquiring "I was wondering if you had an update on when you might be sending me something" she clarifies that a delay is not a problem, and she just wants to know for scheduling purposes (07/08/13). Then the following sequence occurs:]*

`12) 07/08/2013 Re: Proofreading`

hi liz
I am really sorry about this but as you know we are fasting in this month which ends t
tomorrow and after that and next week I will come back to my study and I will send you something next week
thank you

`13) 07/08/2013 Re: Proofreading`

Hi Alya,

> Sorry to bother you - I don't have a great deal of knowledge about your faith and didn't realise Ramadan lasted so long, had I realised, I certainly wouldn't have bothered you in a holiday period.
>
> All the best, and please excuse my ignorance,
>
> Liz

A culture clash is evident in example (323); Liz has already in email [9] written to Alya during the month of Ramadan, as Alya informs her in [10] "because it is Ramadan as you know and we are fasting the whole day and praying so i have not checked mu mail for a week now". In this previous email Alya does not make it clear how long Ramadan lasts[66] and relies on Liz's assumed knowledge "as you know". Liz clearly does not possess this knowledge, nor make an effort to discover the length of Ramadan, emailing right at the end of Ramadan (the day of Eid) again asking Alya to update her on the work timeline. Alya then informs her that Ramadan ends "tomorrow", prompting Liz's apology and self-disclosure of ignorance. As Jandt (2004, p. 46) notes, in intercultural communication, "despite the best intentions, serious misunderstanding and even conflicts can occur" even where speakers are aware of potential trouble sources and actively seek to avoid them!

It is clear from this apology that Liz believes she has damaged the relationship and attempts to mitigate this and construct herself as a considerate person. Alya's email does not indicate that this interaction has been so damaging that the relationship is effectively finished, and she still commits to sending something "next week". However, contact is not resumed until Liz sends her PhD permission request email nine months later. Interestingly, Alya's reply to this email states "i an still want to send you a chapter" [Alya: 18], so what may at first appear to be a relationship that has become destabilised and decayed, may not in fact be so damaged. It should be noted however, that as of the time of writing this section, four years and three months have passed since Alya's last email, and no work has been forthcoming. The next example is with Sofia:

(324) *[emails 11-13 – previously to these emails, Sofia said that she has a very limited time to get her dissertation proofread (email [3]) and understood if the time given was too short. Liz replied "You're right, I would struggle to read 20,000 words in 36 hours! I could probably manage 6,000 words". In email 11, Liz asks if Sofia has considered asking her tutor for an extension, Sofia replies that she has not and asks why. Then the following sequence occurs:]*

---

66 In 2013, the dates of Ramadan were 08/07/13-07/08/13, with Eid ending the evening of 08/08/13.

13) 11/09/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading

I just wondered. It's just a shame that I won't be able to read the whole thing. But I'll certainly do my best on the bit you've given me.

Liz

14) 11/09/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading

Elizabeth[67], so what you propose me because I need to act quickly, because I not have time and I ask you under this not easy conditions. What chapter you can help me to get before 4pm, or what part of the work you can handled to try to correct the rest by myself in this short time and if the price is 27.

15) 11/09/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading

Hi Sofia,

I only asked you about your tutor because I didn't know if you had considered asking him/her already. The amount I can do in the time you have given me still stands at 6000 words. Hopefully you can look at my corrections and try to spot the same mistakes in the rest of your work.

I understand this is a worrying time for you and I will try to get this chapter back to you as soon as possible. Since you have sent it I have managed to get about half way through, but I won't be able to finish it this evening as I still need to have dinner.

Best regards,

Liz

16) 11/09/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading

Dont worry, thank you I know that you help me with good mod. I misunderstood your previous email that was the reason that I get a little worry and I wrote you the previous mail. The other worry was I only have internet until 8:30 pm today and tomorrow since I arrive at Uni. that I hope will be early than 8 am. My appologies if I not understand you when you write me the previous message.

Kind regards,
Sofia

Example (324) from Sofia shows a genuine misunderstanding of communicational intent. Sofia appears to understand from Liz's email [13], which states "It's just a shame that I won't

[67] Note that Sofia switches between addressing Liz as 'Liz', 'Elizabeth' and not using a name at all seemingly at random, sometimes even using a different term in a string email to the one it follows.

be able to read the whole thing. But I'll certainly do my best on the bit you've given me.", that Liz is proposing different conditions for the work to be carried out. Her distress is clearly shown in her emphasis of the time "I not have time", "before 4pm", "this short time" and her need to "act quickly", her description of the situation as "not easy conditions" and the fact that the email is entirely composed of questions to Liz. At this point, the task at hand, if not the entire relationship, is destabilised by Sofia's misunderstanding; it seems that Sofia considers Liz to have wilfully deviated from the line (Goffman, 1967, p. 306) Sofia expected Liz to take. By this I mean that Sofia thought Liz had agreed to help her with a certain amount of work, and now this agreement is thrown into doubt. Sweeny and Hua note that:

> native speakers of English can often be the cause of miscommunication and misunderstanding in intercultural interactions. It is argued that native speakers, when interacting with lingua franca speakers, continue to speak idiomatically, using complicated or obscure vocabulary, and bringing with them their cultural communication norms. (Sweeney & Hua, 2010, p. 480)

It is probably this type of problem that has caused this misunderstanding, although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what in Liz's email may have caused the trouble. One suggestion might be that "won't be able to read the whole thing" may have been interpreted as not having time to read ANY of it.[68] It may also be that Sofia misread the message. Liz however quickly repairs the damage, clarifying her intent and showing that she had not in fact deviated from the line Sofia had assumed, and was working as quickly as possible. Sofia in turn takes steps to clarify her last email as a misunderstanding, and to show her faith in Liz "I know that you help me with good mod". This email has a further indication that Sofia has taken time to write it; it includes a sign-off. While Liz and Sofia were engaging in rapid emails back and forth, Sofia did not include a sign-off for her five emails between emails [4]-[15]. Email [16] is a marked departure, by spending more time on this email and taking the effort to sign-off more formally, Sofia may be acting to reinforce ties with Liz and repair any damage caused by the misunderstanding. The final example is between Liz and Ruth:

(325) *[emails 108 & 109 – Ruth states that she has paid £75 of the £76 owed, but due to the long queue at the bank could not pay the final £1. She promises to pay this on the day of the email. Liz replies saying she has received the money but that Ruth should not worry about paying the final £1. Then the following sequence occurs:]*

[68] I am grateful to my supervisor for this suggestion.

110) 04/03/2014 RE: Payment Reminder

Thanks for your understanding but will still pay the £1 Liz. It's business, and it wasn't deliberate, if I had the coin yesterday, I would have paid it in so will still do so. Maybe next time you will give me a more discounted price, what do you say to that?
Have a great day!

VBW,
Ruth

111) 04/03/2014 RE: Payment Reminder

Sorry Ruth, that's absolutely my base-line price, I won't work for less than £8 per hour, if I am going to start doing that I may as well just take more hours at the cafe and earn the same for easier work! I charge what I do because it's a skilled job which I have accrued £20k of debt to be able to do. And you're right, it is business, but I most certainly don't want to rip anyone off, and I know the non-payment of the £1 wasn't deliberate on your part, I just don't want you to make a trip into town just to pay me £1, it doesn't seem worth it!

Liz

[Contact is not resumed until around 6 weeks later when Liz sends her PhD permission request email. It should be noted that when Ruth and Liz met in person before email 80, Ruth tried to negotiate a lower price.]

In example (325) Liz's reaction to Ruth's asking for a discount, in what appears to be a joking, or at least flippant manner may appear disproportionately serious. However, Ruth has asked seriously for a discount before, prompting the following footnote in email [Liz to Ruth: 80]: "P.S. at our agreed rate, the price for this transcript works out at £14.50 - I think you can see you're getting a really good deal here.". On the other hand, in emails [21] and [42] Ruth has expressed satisfaction with the charges calling them "quite reasonable" and "quite competitive" – though the use of 'quite' may imply the possibility for improvement in this area. This background prompts Liz to interpret Ruth as seriously asking for a reduction in the future, leading to her strong rejection.

This rejection in itself is interesting as it contains a lot of intimate self-disclosure about Liz's financial situation, which can be information a person might find it difficult to reveal frankly and honestly (Charmaz, 2006, p. 37). The honesty of Liz's disclosure and her reasoning may go some way to repairing the potential damage caused by her rejection, along with her assertion of moral goodness (Kádár & Márquez-Reiter, 2015, p. 241) "I most certainly don't want to rip anyone off" and her emphatically telling Ruth to ignore the outstanding charge of £1. Liz in this email positions herself on the moral high ground, asserting that she charges as little as possible for her proofreading work, but that it is kept just above her café earnings. As Kádár (2017a, p. 5) explains, there may be a conflict in human behaviour between following "higher-order moral values" based on universal cultural knowledge of right and wrong behaviour, and "social goals" such as being aligned with peers, or being approved of. In Liz's reply, she treads such a delicate line asserting her right to charge for skilled work, but also her wish to be seen as fair by her clients. Liz's reply could be interpreted by Ruth to imply that she, Ruth, does not adequately appreciate the skilled work Liz does. The effect of this assertion on Ruth cannot be known, as there is then a contact break of nearly three months. However, one can hypothesise that it may go two ways: either engendering sympathy and empathy from Ruth by being so candid, *or* making Ruth feel her custom is unappreciated and that her, possibly joking, request has been responded to unnecessarily harshly. Like example (323), this sequence is followed by a gap, broken by Liz's PhD permission request email.

As shown in these examples, clues that destabilisation may be in progress can be clearly seen in the text, but the participants intentions, reactions and emotions cannot always be so easily grasped. This is especially the case where there is no follow-up data to evaluate and it is hard to determine whether destabilisation has led to this break in contact, or whether a break would have naturally occurred at this point, no matter what state the relationship was in. Many breaks of this kind – which occur *without* perceptible destabilisation – can be seen in the following section.

Other sequences of destabilisation do not seem to have roots in any cultural difference between the participants, but rather are just the products of misunderstanding or forgetting. One such sequence is between Liz and Avin. Mention has been made to this sequence already (example (244) and the following analysis, p. 219), so I do not give a long background here. In brief, having not met face-to-face for around 15 months, Liz and Avin failed to recognise each other. In [Avin: 31], Avin emails to arrange a new meeting to discuss a new project using a transcript Liz had done for her around the time they last met. In this email she includes:

(326) But Liz, let me tell you something:
Did we meet few weeks before now, when I am writing this email I felt something and I think I met you few weeks earlier in the research room.
Am I right?

As neither Liz nor Avin recognised the other, and Avin is clearly not sure, but rather only suspects a potential faux pas has been committed, she leaves it to Liz to confirm or deny her suspicion. “[F]orgetting another’s name or face can be excusable but calls for an excuse” (Goffman, 1971, p. 189), and Liz provides one “I may well have met you again recently, I'm re-connecting with a lot of people who I previously worked for or studied with! Sadly I have a terrible memory for faces so I'm not good at remembering people.” [Liz to Avin: 33]. This excuse contains much self-disclosure including a disclosure of a personal weakness, her “terrible memory for faces”. While excusing herself, Liz also does not blame Avin for the incident, which may help to repair this potentially damaged tie. However, she also takes steps to ensure this does not happen again at their next meeting, including a picture and stating “So that you can definitely spot me, I've attached a photo!”. This statement, though made somewhat less serious by the inclusion of the exclamation mark, nevertheless could be interpreted as potentially blaming Avin for not ‘spotting’ her previously – she could have asked Avin for a picture, but rather she places the onus of recognition at the next meeting on Avin. The next two emails in sequence are worth presenting in full:

(327) *33) 18/11/2014 Re: Hi Liz*
Dear Liz,

Yes, we met - and I am sorry if I did not remember you when I met you but you lost weight and I don't know what else is changed in you!!
It was you who asked me how to have a box[69] and I told you to go to Emily in IT room.
I am not like that , I mean to know somebody and work with then to not talk to warmly after meeting them again.
We will meet on Thursday.

Best Regards

34) 18/11/2014 Re: Hi Liz
Hi Avin,

Good remembering! I'm so sorry I didn't realise it was you who told me how to get my locker :) I have one now thanks to you.

[69] locker

> Don't get me wrong, I remember you and I remember working with you, I literally just have a problem with visual memory (I can't remember what places look like either, but I can remember the experiences I had there).
>
> I look forward to seeing you,
>
> Liz

These two emails do a huge amount to repair any damage done or offence caused. Avin cleverly combines an apology with a compliment of Liz and a double exclamation mark for emphasis, making the message more positive (Filik et al., 2016, p. 2144). Avin then clarifies for Liz the content of their interaction when they met, perhaps realising from Liz's prior email that she really had no idea it was Avin she met. Avin also includes a self-construction, describing the kind of person she is not i.e. someone who is not warm and friendly when they meet someone they know. This self-construction may help to reassure Liz that Avin's non-recognition was not only unintentional but also uncharacteristic. She thus sets up an expectation (or 'line' (Goffman, 1967, pp. 5–12)) for Liz of how Liz will be treated by her when next they meet. This contrasts with Liz's prior email [32] and her following email [34], which both indicate that for her, non-recognition is a possibly a more frequent occurrence. These two lines are interesting; Avin does not permit herself or Liz the possibility that she will fail to recognise Liz again. She could be interpreted to imply that the value she gives their relationship is enacted through this recognising. Liz on the other hand, while stating her distress at the non-recognition "so sorry", and her gratefulness at Avin's help, again emphasises her poor visual memory but clarifies that their relational historicity is preserved "I remember you and I remember working with you". Thus, Avin and Liz halt this potential destabilisation through compliments, honest self-disclosure and self-construction, and the use of CMC cues (see section 7.4) to clarify tone.

The final sequence examined in this section is a repeated request for one piece of information and brilliantly illustrates the effect of time on email communication, which is a recurring theme throughout this chapter. This email spans both of the categories examined in this chapter, as it shows destabilisation of a relationship and a break in contact (albeit one of a few hours rather than months or days). This short time gap that results in this destabilisation contrasts with many of the emails examined at the end of the following section, many of which show little or no effect of a much longer time gap on the relationship. This shows that time is profoundly subjective and context dependant (also illustrated where I examine apologies for 'late' emails p. 277). A break of several months after a project is completed causes no issues, while a break of a few hours when an answer is desperately needed has the power to destabilise. Arstila and Lloyd (2014, p. xi) state that "time estimations in many experiments differ from objective time, and are readily manipulated to produce a variety of temporal illusions." which is an effect we can perceive in many of the emails in this chapter.

This sequence between Ruth and Liz is presented in full below and colour-coded for ease of writer identification. Additional time data has also been included to better illustrate the sequence of events.

(328) *85) 20/01/14 (1:49pm) Re: Consultant 1*

Hi Ruth,

The report you said you'd send to me you described as being 6000 words long - this is 9,700 (or 8000 without the reference list) - I can't proofread that quantity that fast, not with my cafe job as well. I can do as much as possible and then send it if you like, but I'm very unlikely to be able to read the whole document (especially if you want me to proofread the reference list as well) at such short notice.

Regards,

Liz

86) 20/01/14 (2:48pm) Re: Consultant 1

Can you leave out the ref then, I'll do that myself. If you can manage please?

Regards,

87) 20/01/14 (4:04pm) Re: Consultant 1

Just to ask when you'll be able to finish - I can discuss with my supervisor to give me more time.

Regards,

Ruth

88) 20/01/14 (7:19pm) Re: Consultant 1

Hi Liz,

You know I'm in a very difficult position right now and need your understanding. Let me know if you can do a through job with the first 6,000. then I'll do the rest. Could you give me your mobile number to call you please, as I've found myself in a situation whereby I need to speak with you. It would be better to discuss some of these on the phone instead of waiting for your email. As is the case now, you have not responded to the mail I sent to you, discussing the possibility of proof-reading without the references? So that puts me in the dark, not knowing what you'll do in the end. Get back to me please.

Regards,
Ruth

89) 20/01/14 (7:42pm) Re: Consultant 1

Hi Ruth,

I do appreciate your concern, but the only time I do not respond quickly to emails is when I'm at work at the cafe, as I was today from 3pm-7:30pm, at which time I would not have been able to answer my phone anyway.

I have literally just got in from work and I checked my emails straight away, anticipating that you would have emailed me.

I can do the first 6000 words of the essay for you.

Regards,

Ruth [sic]

In hindsight, the first signs that something may be amiss occur in [Ruth: 83, bolds added]: "Could you do all you do in proof reading, editing and all **as well as trying to shrink it please**", the emboldened section does not represent a typical part of the service and is the first indicator that the length of the assignment is not the length previously discussed. Interestingly, Ruth does have a historical precedent for getting this type of request approved, as in [Ruth: 31] where she made the request "I have 6,342 instead of 6,000. Can you read and edit this to be within 6,000 word limit please, please, please, please.". Liz agreed on this occasion, however, this was 19 months previously, and it could certainly be argued that both participants may have forgotten this event.

In the emails above, Ruth does not explicitly state that the word count is longer than previously agreed. Therefore in [85], Liz makes a "challenge"(Goffman, 1999, p. 312) calling attention to the misrepresentation "The report you said you'd send to me **you described as being 6000 words long - this is 9,700**" (bolds added), adding an addendum to clarify the repercussions of this misrepresentation – that the work cannot be done in time. Liz then offers a solution to the problem "I can do as much as possible and then send it if you like".

Ruth then has the chance to accept the offer, which is done implicitly “Can you leave out the ref then, I'll do that myself. If you can manage please?”. This is where the medium of email, confounded by the passing of time, derails the process, as no confirmation is forthcoming; Liz has left for work at her other job. Her lack of response is not wilful or malicious, simply circumstantial, but Ruth does not know this, as Liz has given no indication of her imminent departure other than a vague reference to her “café job” in [85]. Ruth initially does not treat this lack of response as an offence, she waits for just over an hour then asks for clarification “Just to ask when you'll be able to finish” and clarifies her desire for an answer “I can discuss with my supervisor to give me more time” [Ruth: 87]. After waiting a further three hours it is clear that Ruth is unhappy with the lack of response. Ruth’s emails begin with missing features (no greeting, sign-off with no sender name), while the final email is foregrounded by its structural completeness. This indicates that as well as being associated with politeness, these structural elements may be associated with formality or ‘proper’ construction as given in letter writing manuals (Collins, 2001).

Here Ruth may be drawing some ‘power’ from the formal language. By setting out her problem line-by-line, trying to elicit sympathy and understanding from Liz, emphatically stating how Liz’s (perceived) mistreatment has hurt her, and setting out clearly what she wants Liz to do, she creates distance between them, destabilising their tie. This destabilisation seems deliberate and purposeful; Ruth perhaps considers that Liz will be motivated not only to repair the situation, but to go out of her way to make sure it does not happen again and perhaps offer some kind of compensation. However, this email is softened by Ruth emphasising her wish for togetherness and harmony “need your understanding”, and using the conventional politeness marker “please”.

Liz’s response in [89] is unapologetic – and again the issue of time may be in some part to blame. From Liz’s perspective, she arrives home after work and reads each of Ruth’s three emails in succession. Where Ruth has experienced a conversation punctuated by multiple-hour delays, Liz experiences a bombardment of questions and criticism; this ‘time mismatch’ effect may make it harder for participants to empathise with each other’s situation. This leads to Liz’s rather frosty response, which displays minimum empathy and uses no conventional apology markers such as ‘I apologise’ or ‘I’m sorry’. Liz attempts to defend her actions citing extenuating circumstances “the only time I do not respond quickly to emails is when I'm at work at the cafe, as I was today from 3pm-7:30pm" and providing evidence which corroborates her story "I have literally just got in from work and I checked my emails straight away" (the time stamp on her email: 7:42pm supports this story). A possible indicator of Liz's stress/hurry in writing email [89] is the fact she has signed off as 'Ruth', clearly not having double-checked! This phenomenon of misspelling (or indeed, entirely replacing) the writer's own name, can be seen in a few examples from the data, e.g. (17), p. 99 and has been described in footnote 33, p. 101. Liz then reiterates her earlier offer "I can do the first 6000 words of the essay for you".[70]

The three following emails are also interesting, emails [Ruth: 90] and [Liz to Ruth: 91] show business being conducted and details being confirmed (both include greeting and sign-off). What is interesting is [Ruth: 92], a very brief email simply expressing thanks:

(329) *92) 21/01/2014 Re: Consultant 1*

Thank you.

It is very hard to interpret the intended tone of this message as there are no multimodal elements present as a guide. On the one hand, it may show a move back to Ruth's former style used before the complaint, which omitted some structural elements and could be seen as a positive tie-reinforcing move towards a more informal style. On the other hand, if inclusion of structural elements is a way of showing time commitment to a conversational partner, this brief email could indicate that relations have not been entirely repaired.

Interestingly, this conversation thread then ends; there is no confirmation of a successful hand-in by Ruth and no further thanking. However, the next email sent two days later (regarding another project with Ruth, which was ongoing) is convivial and humorous:

(330) *94) 23/01/2014 Agnes's Transcript [attachment – transcript]*

Hi Ruth,

Here is Agnes's transcript, the end of her interview made me laugh - I don't think she wanted you to stop!

[70] I recall this conversation being a stressful experience, and I am sure Ruth feels the same! From my perspective, email [85] was a reasonable end to the conversation as I had confirmed I would do as much as possible in the time – and who could say fairer than that? However, from Ruth's perspective she understandably wanted to iron out the details and wanted to make an attempt to secure extra time from her supervisor.

Best regards,

Liz

Liz’s comment indicates her enjoyment at completing the work and adds a comment about the interview participant’s behaviour. The use of the exclamation mark and explicit description of Liz’s feelings serve to make this a potentially tie-reinforcing email. Ruth aids in this tie-reinforcing behaviour by agreeing with Liz’s comment in her reply and adding extra detail about the interviewee. By committing this time to conversing with Liz in a way that does not accomplish anything business-related, Ruth reinforces their tie:

(331) *95) 23/01/2014 Re: Agnes’s Transcript*

I know, and I had ran out of questions for her... Guess what she never wanted to take initially - as didn't know I wasn't interested in personal details, and it turned out that she never wanted it to stop.

Thanks again Liz.

Ruth

The troubles in the string messages [86, 87 & 88] are not mentioned by either participant again. The ability of a time mismatch between participants to cause trouble (especially in international communication), is something seen frequently in emails. Bordogna in her study of trans-national educational partnerships between the UK and China, found that:

> A simple delay in email correspondence can be enough to trigger Eastern partners to question commitment levels. This highlights the fragility of overseas partnerships, whereby two culturally different partner groups try to interpret each other’s actions. (Bordogna, 2016, p. 86)

Bordogna (2016) identified ‘time’ as a significant factor affecting all aspects of her participants’ work in the partnership. She describes how the conditions under which messages are produced, and then decoded eight hours later by a partner in another time zone, means that the online zone is not a collective space and discussions are prolonged with partners likely to disengage or become frustrated (Bordogna, 2016, pp. 167–168). This is an extreme example of what happens between Liz and Ruth above, although in Ruth’s case, she did not anticipate a delay, and it was this assessment of Liz’s actions as intentional which caused Ruth to believe she was being deliberately ignored.

Again looking at time as a factor influencing email construction and relationship management, the following section examines emails referring to time gaps, and occurring after significant contact breaks to see if any decay or destabilisation is evidenced, and if so, how it is dealt with by the participants.

9.3 Contact break

Time plays a huge and salient role in my data. Despite its non-synchronicity, email, certainly judged by the emails in my dataset, is relatively rapid response. This can be seen in Graph 2, p. 80 and Graph 3, p. 82. The tables show response times as measured by looking at the dates from each email and the email directly following it.[71] One can see from these graphs that gaps of over two months without contact are rare, emails sent after a time gap this large (i.e. the final three time categories listed in the graphs) account for only 3.08% of emails (or 33 total messages). Thirteen of these are emails requesting clients' permission to be included in the PhD project, and a further three are follow-up questions again relating to the PhD. A PhD request email can be seen in Appendix section 11.7. This section looks at the 17 emails which do not fall under the aforementioned descriptions. These 17 messages have several things in common, first, the time gap *may* be explicitly or implicitly acknowledged:

(332) How are you? I am not sure whether you are busy recently, but i need your help. [Victoria: 26, 66 day gap]

(333) How are you. I am Hassan Maziq who dealt with you last may. [Hassan: 26, 70 day gap]

(334) I'm Ruth, the PhD student you did some proof-reading for last summer. [Ruth: 42, 67 day gap]

(335) I am writing this email for the purpose that i am not sure if you do proofreading right now or not? [Victoria: 57, 92 day gap]

(336) I hope both you and your parents are well and that things are progressing the way you want with your PhD.
I have just re-read the email below which you sent in November, to try to remind myself where we are in the process of getting the final proofing done for your PhD [Liz to Supaksorn: 146, 92 day gap]

[71] It should be noted that because of occasional time differences, and the use of dates only, as opposed to specific time stamps (e.g. [08:04] / [23:33] etc.), the same day/next day category boundary is somewhat fuzzy.

(337) I hope you are doing well with your project?
I wanted to ask to help me , do you remember the transcription you did for me?
I need something to be done with the same transcription?? [Avin: 29, 171 day gap]

The examples above show a request for help that mentions the client's uncertainty about Liz's current working status (332), and two examples of clients re-introducing themselves after an extended contact break (333) & (334). The passing of time is very evident in the text of these emails, from references to past events, to enquiries such as Victoria's which implies that she has not been in contact for some time. This shows how ties can weaken over time "such that some observed today are gone tomorrow" (Burt, 2001).

Tie decay through time appears to be highly subjective. Of the 17 emails occurring after a more than 60 day break in contact between the participants, while some such as those examples shown above make reference to the passing of time, or at least imply some uncertainty about Liz's or the client's status or memory, others occur after a long break but resume contact as if little or no time has passed. One of the most striking examples is [Meera: 60] which occurs after a one year and nine months break in contact. While Meera does include a simple wellness inquiry, "How are you", she includes no reintroduction of herself as in examples (333) and (334) above, nor any inquiry as to whether Liz is still doing proofreading work or is free to work as in (332), (335) and potentially implied in (337):

(338) *60) 01/03/2014 Request for proof reading of an article*
Hi Liz,

How are you. I have an article that requires a cirtification of having proof read and you have to email my editors that you (being a certified proof reader) has seen it. It is required for publication.

Can you agree to do this. Unfortuantely from here it is bit hard to pay you[72] for proofing the english. or let me know any alternate. if you agree, i can send you the article

With Regards,

Dr. Meera Khan (MBPsS)

This is the only example in the entire dataset of a client reinitiating contact after such an extended break. All other breaks this large, or longer, are reinitiated by Liz, exclusively for

[72] Meera has returned to South Asia.

seeking permission for inclusion in this project. One explanation for the lack of decay present is that Meera and Liz had repeatedly re-established contact through Facebook, posting birthday well-wishes to each other, and on 03/06/13 Meera shared a blog post written by Liz – this date occurs one year into the one year and nine month break in email contact. Even these small contacts may help to alleviate decay, and whether or not Facebook contacts are “liking” or “posting” to each other, they nevertheless can know, to some extent, what is happening in their contact’s daily life as a ratified observer (Kádár & Márquez-Reiter, 2015). In this way, Meera could have known that Liz was still involved in proofreading.

Another indication that the ‘danger’ of the passing of time to tie health is highly subjective, are emails that make apologies for late replies. As Goffman (1967) states, relationships decay during time apart, so a place may be needed to apologise for extenuating circumstances which may have kept the participants from communicating. “These apologies allow the impression to be maintained that the participants are more warmly related socially than may be the case.” (Goffman, 1967, p. 318). Goffman’s assessment may seem somewhat cynical, but in a sense, I agree, as when a tie has potentially decayed through time, participants may ‘overcompensate’ showing more tie reinforcing behaviours than before the time gap in order to recoup any loss. Goffman here refers to face-to-face contact, but his passage could just as easily be applied to email. There are seven apologies for a ‘late response’ or ‘late reply’ in the data. These are listed below with the time delay following:

(339) Thank you for your email and I am so sorry for my late reply. I was back home ([North Africa]) collecting some data for my research. [Abdessalam: 13, 34 days later]

(340) Sorry for the late reply. I am extremely busy at the moment. [Irma: 36, 9 days later]

(341) Sorry for the late reply and the lack of an edited chapter so far this week, I am hoping to have Chapter 3 with you by Tuesday next week and Chapter 4 shortly after. [Liz to Zétény: 48, 4 days later]

(342) Thank you very much and sorry for the late response, because I was busy on our Eid celebration. [Imran: 29, 2 days later]

(343) sorry for the late response. I have written some comments on a feedback form the one you sent me, Please find the attached file. I will write about your work in detail soon, because you have done an excellent job for me. [Imran: 68, 2 days later]

(344) sorry for late reply. I had a GP appointment today. I hvae been avoiding to use the computer due to being unwell. [Irma: 22, next day]

(345) Sorry to reply you so late, because i was working on my dissertation recently. and I have submitted my dissertation today. [Victoria: 60, same day]

The huge variation in time delay is interesting. In this case, some hypotheses can be drawn from the emails' surrounding context as to why on these occasions the authors felt the need to apologise, when there are plenty of responses following time delays in the data where the authors did not apologise.

Abdessalam's email (339) is a response to a PhD permission request email. His reply was delayed long enough that his apology seems justified. Additionally, he is a PhD student himself, so understands the urgency of the request. (340) is similar, though the time delay is shorter, Irma is also replying in response to a PhD permission request email and like Abdessalam is a doctoral student herself.

Looking at the surrounding context, the apologies in (339) and (345) both came after a string email from Liz, in these cases, it is possible that the apology relates not only to the most recent email from Liz, but to the historic emails as well. In Imran's case a total of three emails had been sent over sixteen days, while in Victoria's case, two emails had been sent over nine days. In this case, it may be that there is a perceived 'waiting period' for the string sender (as in the Liz/Ruth sequence examined in the previous section) that needs acknowledging, though this does not occur enough in the data to make such a claim with certainty. (341) again apologises for lateness in response to a string of three emails from Zétény, though unlike the prior examples, these were all sent on the same day (see Table 6, p. 81). They did however, all give different information, one set up a work time schedule, the following email asked a specific question about the usage of a term, and finally the third gave Liz a piece of work. Each of these could be seen as warranting a response and perhaps the cumulative nature of these emails, plus the fact that responses falling within a two day window are by far the most common, led Liz to give an apology.

For (342), the reason for the apology is unclear, especially as Liz in her prior email stresses the non-urgency of her request "A feedback from is attached and I'd be very grateful if you could fill it out, but I stress that it is entirely optional, if you don't want to, or don't have time, it's absolutely not a problem." [Liz to Imran: 67]. Example (344) is likely a response to a failure to send a chapter to Liz for proofreading the day before, when they engaged in a conversation comprising three emails in which Irma wrote “I will send another chapter later today”. Her apology email contains an attachment with the chapter, so it is likely this, rather than the response time in and of itself, for which Irma is apologising.

It is notable that examples (339), (342), (344) & (345) all give a significant self-disclosure as part of making their apology to provide an excuse for their lateness. As shown in the reinforcing chapter of this thesis (section 6.2.1), self-disclosure is a fundamental way to form strong functional bonds, both by increasing the reader’s sympathy/empathy and by demonstrating homophily. By including these self-disclosures here, writers make their lateness more acceptable. Example (343) includes a compliment, which serves a similar tie-reinforcing purpose.

Having looked at writer-defined lateness, I now turn to contact breaks where a significant amount of time has passed, i.e. a couple of months or more. Many of these emails are not ‘late’ in the sense that a reply was expected, as they often occur after the end of a project, or during a period where one partner has said they need time to complete a task. Nevertheless, it is possible that tie decay can occur in these breaks, especially if there is no planned resumption of contact.

To observe the effects, if any, of decay over time, I looked at emails that occurred over a gap in contact of two months or more, looking at the features in the final Liz-Client pair of emails before the contact gap, and the first pair following reinitiation. Comparing and contrasting pre-break emails, and post-break emails, can act as something of a barometer for the ‘warmth’ of the relationship. This cannot of course be wholly accurate as life circumstances, mood, stress etc. around the time that the reply was written, can have an impact on the affection shown, either positively or negatively. Confirmation of this effect is shown in Chartrand and van Baaren (2009) who described a study in which participants who were mimicked became more generally prosocial, “they helped the first person they encountered who needed help, even when it was outside the mimicry dyad” (Chartrand & van Baaren, 2009, p. 246). This shows that factors outside the current dyad can nevertheless have profound effects on that dyad’s interactions. The email pairs are shown below. In cases where a PhD permission request email restarted contact, this email is omitted and the following two emails are used. The majority of PhD permission request emails followed a standard template which was tailored to the client only in terms of names and dates (the standard template can be viewed in the Appendix, section 11.7) thus did not provide useful data for examining relational language. The only exception to this was Imran's second permission request email – as he failed to reply to the first email, I found his new institutional email and emailed him there, adding the following passage after the greeting, before reverting to the standard template, and altering the subject line to include "(from Liz, your former proofreader)":

(346) I hope this email gets to you and I hope that you remember me!

I searched online for you in the hope I would find an email address as I wanted your help, and I was thrilled to find out that you had got a post as an assistant lecturer, that's really great news and I hope you're happy in your job. [Liz to Imran: 71]

Everyone else who received 'customised' permission request emails received them without a significant break in contact, it was for this reason that the template was not used, as this formal approach would have been inappropriate for clients with whom there was a current ongoing interaction.

The emails were analysed for CMC cues; compliments; expressions of empathy, concern and well-wishes; thanks and apologies and self-disclosure. All these features have been shown in the previous chapters to be indicative of emotional involvement, affection and tie reinforcing. Generally, there is an increase in these features after the gap in communication. This may indicate that after a communication break participants are attempting to repair any decay that may have occurred by utilising reinforcing features. Compare, for example, these emails from and to Abdessalam before and after a ten-month communication gap, which ended with Liz sending a PhD permission request email:

(347) Dear Liz
Thank you very much for your help and proofreading. I have deposited the money into your account on the 17th July, so please let me know If you did not receive it.
I am looking forward to sending my future work and my final thesis.
kind Regards
Shamekh [10]

(348) Dear Shamekh,
Thank you very much for such prompt payment, which I have received.
I look forward to working with you again,

All the best,
Liz [11]

10 months, 5 days, then PhD permission request email sent. One month later, Abdessalam replies

(349) Dear Liz
Thank you for your email and I am so sorry for my late reply. I was back home ([North Africa]) collecting some data for my research. a responses to your questions are below;
++
If you need any more information, please do not hesitate to ask.
Good luck in your study and wish you the best.
Kind Regards
Abdessalam [13]

(350) Dear Abdessalam,
Thank you so much for getting back to me and please don't apologise, I am really grateful to hear from you.
Thank you for letting me use your emails, I really appreciate it.
All the best,
Liz [14]

It can be seen in the above email pairs that Abdessalam is consistently polite and considerate in both his emails; however, the second email does mark a departure into a more affectionate mode of writing. For example, he includes an emphatic apology for his late reply, despite the fact that he is doing Liz a favour by giving her this information (omitted). He also does the only self-disclosure present in his entire (albeit short) set of emails "I was back home ([North Africa]) collecting some data for my research". It is also notable that in his first pair, his closing sequence contains a wish to work together again, presumably for mutual benefit, whereas his second email contains a well-wish directed at Liz only, showing his care for her and her achievements. His offers in each email "I have deposited the money into your account on the 17th July, please let me know If you did not receive it" and "If you need any more information, please do not hesitate to ask" also differ in the sense of obligation; Abdessalam is obliged to fulfil his end of the working bargain and pay Liz, whereas he is not obliged at all to offer her extra help with her study – this offer is made for purely generous, or indeed tie reinforcing, reasons.

Of course, the context makes a difference, and Abdessalam does not necessarily have the opportunity to make an entirely unselfish offer in his first pair. However, the context may not account for all these differences, and rather it may be the change in Liz's status (from sole trader to student) which has prompted this change – as she is now part of an in-group with Abdessalam – or the influence of time making tie reinforcing techniques more important.

For an example where seemingly the opposite happens, this example between Liz and Dana is presented:

(351) Hi Dana,
I have finished chapter 7 and attached it, and the invoice, to this email.
Just wondering, how many more chapters are there for me to proof-read, and will you want me to double-check your reference list?
Hope you had a good time in Italy,
Best regards,
Liz [32]

(352) Hi Liz,
Thank you a lot, think this was the last one :) maybe one more but it is only a conclusion so not very long.
I'll send you money asap.
Thank you a lot.
Best wishes,
Dana
PS: Italy was amazing and guess what, so so so warm :D [33]

5 month 15 day gap, then PhD permission request email sent, 9 days later, Dana replies

(353) Hi Elizabeth,
Sorry for later reply, I was abroad.
Yes you can use my emails.
Best wishes,
Dana [35]

(354) Dear Dana,
Thank you very much, I really appreciate it.
Best wishes,
Liz [36]

Here, Dana is shown to become markedly less affectionate, there are emoji and self-disclosure in her first pair email, along with informal language "so so so" and emphatics. Her second email greets Liz more formally as 'Elizabeth' (it should be noted, all PhD permission request emails were signed as "Liz Marsden", so this is not a case of mimicry) and notably, does not describe her going "abroad" in any detail. She does however, apologise for the late reply, which, like Abdessalam, is generous given that she is doing Liz a favour. Several factors might explain this change; Dana having been abroad might suggest she has been very busy, explaining the shortness of the reply, or she may be mimicking the formal tone of the PhD request email, which was minimally personalised for each recipient. However, this change may on the other hand be due to decay that has occurred through the passing of time, meaning participants are no longer tied so closely.

For Liz, the involvement also decreases, while the first pair email includes a well-wish for Dana's holiday, her reply to Dana's second pair email is by rote (see section 8.3), as shown by the recurrence of "I really appreciate it" sixteen times and "Thank you very much" six times in Liz's emails to all clients. Liz also uses the more formal greeting "Dear" rather than "Hi" which deviates from her standard (see Chapter 4, section 4.5), and from Dana's usage. This could be seen as divergence, which can be associated with a less positive assessment of the conversational partner (Dragojevic et al., 2016).

In general, there is however much less change than is presented by the examples from Dana and Abdessalam, which represent the outliers in either direction. One feature that can be seen across the board however, is that emails after a tie gap always include a greeting, a feature which was also found by Crystal: "The longer the delay in responding, the more likely the response will contain a greeting, if only an apology for the time-lag." (Crystal, 2006, p. 105). In eight cases (21%), for the emails that occurred before a time gap, a greeting was not included.[73] When contact was resumed, in every case both partners included greetings.

Time also affects some other elements within emails, with wellness enquiries far more prevalent after an extended break. Of the 17 emails looked at in this section, 10 contain a wellness enquiry (such as 'how are you?', 'I hope you are well' etc.). These emails are also 123% the length of the average email in the dataset (see Graph 1, p. 77) and are likely to introduce a new topic or new piece of work rather than referring to something ongoing. The effect of time on email length can be seen in Graph 4 (p. 84) *Email average wordcount variation over time*, which shows a general upward trend.

Generally, even after a long time gap, writing retains the same level of affection (as measured by the features discussed earlier) or alters only slightly in either direction – unlike the aforementioned 'outlier' cases from Abdessalam's and Dana's data above. Although, as shown in the increased level of greeting, longer text and frequent wellness inquiries, participants are dedicating time and effort to their writing partners in other ways which

[73] Out of 38 emails (19 Liz-Client pairs), this includes those emails preceding a PhD information request.

perhaps reflect a more formal and less affectionate way of being polite, as discussed in Chapter 8.

When analysing which features are used more and less after a time gap, the results look very chaotic, perhaps indicating that individual author and context of the message have more influence on writing style and content than time elapsed. In addition, there are only nineteen double pairs of emails in the dataset spanning a significant time gap, and this small dataset is likely to skew results, or make pattern recognition difficult. Usage for Liz and the clients is also significantly different, for example, while for the clients, giving well-wishes and showing concern for the other increases over a time gap, for Liz it decreases. Only a small number of categories showed decrease/increase for both Liz and the clients after a communication break and these were as follows:

- Compliments (increased)
- Emoticon usage (decreased)
- Self-disclosure (increased)

Self-disclosures and compliments are about *what* is written, and not *how* it is written. Tentatively suggesting that it may be the content of the writing, and the intent to show approval of the other i.e. by complimenting them, or by allowing them access to one's personal life through self-disclosure, that is important for re-establishing bonds after some decay through the passing of time has occurred. Or perhaps, this is not a reaction to *decay* as such, but rather a show of happiness at being in contact again. It is extremely hard to generalise exactly what relationships of cause and effect exist here through the text alone, and what changes are based on chance, or personal writing style, and what is related to the break in contact that has occurred. On a case-by-case basis some of these relationships can be determined, but even here some supplementary data such as post-event interviews would help to support the analysis.

This section has shown that while there are some general trends that participants follow after a break in contact, such as greater usage of structural features and more wellness enquiries, it cannot be reliably predicted how a person will communicate after a break in contact as context is an extremely confounding factor. Time does have the ability to slowly decay ties, especially in the sense that after a contact break one's knowledge of the writing partner may be less accurate, meaning that some structures, such as introductions, which are generally employed in creating ties (see section 5.2.2) must be employed again, see examples (333) & (334), p. 275.

In conclusion, this would be a valuable line for further study and would help to show how relationships change over time and how long it takes for decay to begin to occur – but this would need a larger dataset and supplementary information.

Another aspect of decay is how (and why) relationships end. This is explored in the next section, which examines the final emails received from or sent to clients in each email conversation.

9.4 Final emails

The 'final' emails examined in this section are those that fall before contact is re-established by a PhD permission request email (some of which have been analysed in the previous section), or in the case of clients whose work was ongoing when permission was requested, these are the last emails before frequent contact ceased. In some cases, because contact was ongoing when data collection finished, there is no recorded final email. This is the case for four clients: Supaksorn, Alice, Zétény and Avin. For Avin and Zétény the relationship evolved and is still ongoing as of writing this section in early 2018.

For some clients, endings are fuzzy and multiple 'final' emails could be identified as those before long contact breaks. When a client sends their 'final' email, it is often impossible to tell whether they consider this to be the end of the relationship, or whether they intend to send more work at an unspecified time in the future. Likewise, a 'final' email may explicitly state an intent to reinitialise contact in the future, but such contact may never be forthcoming.

This is a complex area as "relationship[s] can change drastically but never revert to non-acquaintanceship" (Goffman, 1971, p. 189), thus these final emails can only really be considered final once one conversational partner ceases to exist. Until that point, any most-recent communication can only be considered final-in-potentia. However, the likelihood and ability to reinitiate contact decreases over time (Burt, 2001), especially as email accounts may be abandoned or unchecked and participants potentially change their geographic location, and lose contact with other network members, resulting in fewer contact opportunities (Burt, 2001).

So, what are examined here are participant final-emails-in-potentia, which may well have become 'final' had Liz not reinitiated contact in order to send her PhD permission request email, or which occurred after a permission request email, but have not been followed by email contact since. To briefly explain the status of each client at the time of writing, the table below is presented.

Client	**Time between 'last' email and PhD request email, (nearest month) & emails sent before collection end date**	**Emails exchanged after data collection ceased?**	**Client in contact through other media?**	**'Final' email explicitly stated more communication would be forthcoming?**
Abdessalam	10 months	Over 60, work related	No	Yes
Alice	5 days, 3 more emails sent before collection end date	Over 30, work and social	No (connected on LinkedIn, but never used to communicate)	N/A – no identifiable 'final' email for this client
Alya	10 months	0	No (connected on LinkedIn, but never used to communicate)	Yes
Avin	9 months, contact then resumed for 28 emails up to collection end date	Over 100, work and social, contact ongoing	Yes (telephone, face-to-face)	N/A – no identifiable 'final' email for this client
Dana	5 months	PhD-related questions only	No	Maybe
Hai	2 weeks, 4 more emails sent before collection end	2	Yes (telephone, Facebook, face-to-face)	No

	date			
Hassan	6 months	PhD-related questions only	No (connected on LinkedIn, but never used to communicate)	No
Imran	12 months	PhD-related questions only	No	No
Irma	10 months	PhD-related questions only	No	Yes
Ivie	2 weeks, contact resumed 1 month later for 11 emails	Over 25, work related	No	No
Lisa	13 months	0	No	Yes
Lovemore	31 months	0	No	Possibly
Meera	3 months	7, plus responses to PhD-related questions	Yes (Facebook, LinkedIn)	No
Miyako	2 months	PhD-related questions only	No	No
Ruth	3 months	2, plus responses to PhD-related questions	No (connected on LinkedIn, but never used to communicate)	No
Sofia	7 months	PhD-related questions only	No	No
Supaksorn	6 weeks (preceded by Facebook conversation)	0 emails, over 100 primarily work-related Facebook messages	Yes (Facebook)	N/A – no identifiable 'final' email for this client
Victoria	1 week, contact resumed 3 months later for 4 emails	PhD-related questions only	No	Yes
Zétény	N/A permission obtained face-to-face	Over 100, primarily work-related, some social, contact ongoing	Yes (telephone, face-to-face)	N/A – no identifiable 'final' email for this client

Table 28: Client final email status

The column in Table 28 showing emails exchanged after data collection ceased is perhaps the best metric by which to measure if the 'final' email was indeed final; this is a fairer measure for each client, as data collection end dates were staggered to take account of projects which were ongoing. Generally, it can be seen in the table that where clients explicitly stated that there would be more communication (five certain cases, shown in the final column), e.g. by using such lines as “I will send you something next week” [Alya: 12], there *was not* more communication, following these emails, only Abdessalam continued the relationship. Of eight that did not hint at future communication, four sent at least a couple more emails at a later date, and/or remained in contact through other means.

The final column ‘No’ results are perhaps less surprising than the ‘Yes’ results; repeat custom is fairly frequent and clients may not need to explicitly state that the relationship will be ongoing once it is established, or they may not know what work they may have for Liz in the future. The ‘Yes’ results which resulted in no further communication on the other hand, show an abrupt end to what appeared to be ongoing relationships. These four emails are shown below:

(355) *12) 07/08/2013 Re: Proofreading*
hi liz
I am really sorry about this but as you know we are fasting in this month which ends t
tomorrow and after that and next week I will come back to my study and I will send you something next week
thank you [Alya]

(356) *32) 10/07/2013 Re: Chapter 4 and abstract*
Hi Elizabeth,
Yes I still intend to send the rest of my thesis as previously agreed. My supervisor is back at work on the 16/7/13. Hopefully I'll get until end July! However, I'll keep u informed not withstanding.
Kind regards
Irma

(357) *7) 09/04/2013 Re: Proofreading*
Hi Liz,

The length of the document will be no more than 30,000.

Kind regards

Lisa

(358) *60) 08/09/2014 Re: Are you still working on proofreading?*
Dear Elizabeth

> Sorry to reply you so late, because i was working on my dissertation recently. and I have submitted my dissertation today. I really thanks for your help on my work. The friends around me i can recommend to you if they have proofreading work to do. And for me, i have some other work need proofreading such as cover letter and CV. I need you help then.
>
> Thanks a lot
>
> Victoria

All four of the above emails state that the work being discussed is going to take place in the future. For examples (355) and (357) these discussions are taking place in the negotiating phase of the transaction (see Table 27, p. 238) where client and business are still agreeing terms and times. For Alya and Lisa then, it may be that they simply reconsidered something about the business proposal, e.g. their available time, finances, or ability to complete/send work when they had stated, and decided that using Liz's service was not right for them. Neither of these clients ever had paid work done for them (see Table 3, p. 61), and these ties decayed in the very early stages of relationship formation. A contributor to Alya's tie decay may have been any offence caused in the immediately preceding emails, which were examined in section 9.2. Alya may have decided that the tie had become dysfunctional, or that Liz's lack of knowledge about her cultural background made her an unsuitable proofreader. These types of customer decisions not to do business would be best analysed using post-event interview, and this may be an interesting avenue for future work.

Victoria's email (358) occurs after Liz has failed to be able to help her with her dissertation due to other commitments which were clearly explained to the client. This sequence did not lead to destabilisation as both parties clearly explained their situations. Thus this final email represents an amicable end-in-potentia, with the potential for reinitiation of the relationship should Victoria need work done in the future.

Irma (356) is the most unusual example here, as this email occurs neither at the end of a completed project as an expression of desire to work together again, nor in the negotiation phase where the work schedule has not been established. This email occurs midway through a project in which there have been some previous small signs of trouble. Although Liz initially said she could not read the entire thesis in the time allowed, Irma proposed a new deadline four days later, which Liz agreed to, and work commenced. Irma agreed to the stated price, and said she would prefer to pay a large invoice at the end rather than chapter by chapter. In [Liz to Irma: 26] Liz voiced this trouble:

(359) Here is chapter 5. I have now proofread around 33,000 words of your thesis - which is everything you have given me - therefore given the date of 7/7/13 you listed as the final deadline I don't think I can complete the entire thesis by then.

However, Irma responded “Don't worry about the date (7th/7/13). That might change because I have still got some completions RE: chapters to do.” [Irma: 27] Liz contacted her five days later for an update, stating:

(360) I am just emailing for an update on your work, possible deadlines etc. I realise we have now reached the 7th July, your original deadline date, so I wanted to know if I am continuing with your proofreading, and if so when I can expect to receive more work from you. If you do not wish me to do any more proofreading for you, please let me know and I will invoice you directly for the work I have completed.

If I don't hear from you by Friday either way, I will send an invoice then.

At this point, Irma sent chapter 6. Liz then asked if Irma still intended to send the rest of her thesis, prompting the email (356) shown above. There are two further emails before the PhD permission request, both from Liz, first thanking Irma for her update, then returning another chapter stating the following “Here is chapter six, send another whenever you're ready, but it would be really helpful if you could let me know in advance approximately when you'll be sending something.”. These back-and-forth confirmations around dates and work schedules are not uncommon and usually do not result in destabilisation of the relationship – they are simply a normal part of conducting business. In Irma’s case, there is no sign from either her of Liz that the relationship has become dysfunctional or that the partnership would be unable to continue. Indeed, in Irma’s final email, her use of informal spelling and an exclamation mark plus her positive assertion that she intends to continue working with Liz all indicate a relationship that is reinforcing, not decaying. Therefore, this outcome of no further communication, and no payment, is surprising.

For Liz, her lack of follow-up with Irma can be explained (but not excused) by general business at the time (July 2013). Going back to my email archives, life was busy: work for Irma, Zétény, Abdessalam and Aditya (AFref) was ongoing, Avin was referred at the end of the month, another client proposed a huge transcription project and in my personal life, my living room ceiling had just been completely replastered following a leak! Unfortunately, such information about Irma's personal circumstances at this time is not accessible, so one can only speculate about why she did not get in touch again. It seems unlikely this was a calculated move to acquire free services as Irma agreed to have her emails be part of this study "Regarding your PhD project, you can use our emails to each other as long as there is no reference to my name or the specific nature of my work." [Irma: 36]. Irma faced multiple problems during her proofreading, including illness [Irma: 22], extra revisions [Irma: 27] and supervisor absence [Irma: 32]. One can speculate on a number of circumstances which may have led Irma to abandon the current round of proofreading, maybe completely restarting the process with someone else months or maybe years later, perhaps forgetting she owed money for Liz's previous work.

Now to look to those final emails which do not hint at future work. These emails were in fact followed by more work around half the time, indicating perhaps that these were 'final' in the sense that the current project had been completed, but the relationship itself was not over. This is likely, as 'project-final' emails can be found in many of the dataset email conversations, usually occurring before a significant break in contact, as shown in the previous section.

It is clear in these emails that both the clients and Liz take steps to alleviate decay. Relationships decay during time apart, so farewells and greetings reinforce bonds across these periods of no contact (Goffman, 1967, p. 318). In Goffman's assessment, it is probable he was considering the entire leave-taking sequence including wishes to meet again, wishes that the other be happy and healthy, and then the final goodbye. In these business emails however, as these are not emails simply for friendship purposes, business must be concluded as part of a project completion, this includes returning work and receiving payment (as shown in Table 27). Thanks are also often in evidence, showing both parties are happy with the state of play at the conclusion of business:

(361) I have handed it in :) Thanks for all the help! [Hai: 46]
Well done :) I was very happy to help [Liz to Hai: 47]

(362) Payment made this morning.
Thanks [Ivie: 26, entire email]

Thanks Ivie,
I appreciate you paying so quickly :)

Liz [Liz to Ivie: 27]

(363) Here is your dissertation fully proofread - it was an absolute joy to read ++
If you have any questions about my edits, please don't hesitate to contact me
[Liz to Miyako: 4]

I will check your corrections and get back to you if there is any question.
Million thanks for your help, I much appreciate this! [Miyako: 5]

The examples above show use of CMC cues and intensifiers “very happy”, “so quickly”, “much appreciate” etc., all features explored in the tie reinforcing chapter, showing that these relationships are reinforced up until the point at which there is a break in contact, which is anticipated by both parties, then the slow process of decay over time begins.

In two instances, for Hai and Sofia (who shared a difficult start in terms of work deadline, see example (81), p. 117 and example (108) p. 128)(108), their final email was a reinitiation of contact after a project closing email, in order to tell of their successes in their hand-ins:

(364) *54) 22/04/15 RE: Thesis Formatting*
Hi Liz,

I am very happy to let you know that I have passed my viva and I am a doctor now:)

Best wishes,

Hai

55) 22/04/15 RE: Thesis formatting
BRILLIANT NEWS!!!

CONGRATULATIONS DR CHEN :D
xx

(365) *25) 21/10/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading*
Elizabeth, I write you to say thank you again. With your help in the proof reading, I get a good grade which give me the Distintion in the MSc, thank you very much.
Sofia

26) 21/10/13 RE: I am student of [university] and i need proof reading
Well done Sofia, that's fantastic news :D, really really well done, you certainly deserve it, and thanks so much for letting me know.

All the best in your future endeavors,

Liz

The above examples are in some ways the ultimate successful close of a business relationship; while some clients are repeat customers even after they have received their qualifications, this is not the norm, and Liz’s response to Sofia shows that understanding “All the best in your future endeavors”. These emails end the relationship (potentially) in a state of strength; the clients have taken time and effort to inform Liz of their success, and Liz has taken time to offer sincere congratulations. These self-disclosures from the clients, and enthusiastic response from Liz, including well-wishes, CMC cues, and intensifiers show that the relationship is strong at the point at which it ceases. Any decay that occurs after this will be the slow process of decay or ‘drifting apart’ over time, as participants no longer have contact opportunities (Burt, 2001).

Not all final emails come at the end of a successful project however, and even when the project has been successfully completed, there can be problems at the end. Meera’s final email came as she initiated contact to begin a new project – the proofreading of an article for publication – in which she stated she needed a certified proofreader. Liz replied “Unfortunately, I'm not sure I can help ++ I'm not a certified proofreader (in that I have no specific proofreading qualifications and am not a member of any certified body of proofreading professionals)” [Liz to Meera: 61]. The contact ended here. This example does not show a problem in the sense of one that causes decay through destabilisation, however, Liz’s self-disclosure could have damaged her business interests here, as Meera may now consider her under-qualified for her proofreading needs. In this way, this email may have precipitated decay through time, again by reducing the number of contact opportunities.

Ruth’s final email sequence takes place between her and Liz over four emails. As usual, she states that payment has been made, but then she states the trouble that she has had paying the final £1 owed. These emails are also analysed in the destabilisation section of this chapter (example (325), p. 265). However, this does not seem to have caused lasting damage to the relationship, if any, as in April 2016 Ruth got back in touch to ask for proofreading of her completed thesis.

9.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, tie decay appears to be highly chaotic. This contrasts with the findings of McPherson et al. who describe that "In general… the patterns of tie dissolution mimic those of tie formation" but then continue to say that tie dissolution "may be somewhat more idiosyncratic than the highly structured world of tie formation" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 436). Although they state their conclusion may be "premature", this nevertheless demonstrates what may be a misapprehension about the way in which relationships slide into a state of decay. Rather, unless a tie has a specific break point, e.g. a death or a spoken or written contract of no further contact, then the process seems rather messy. Contact may be broken without warning, or may discontinue despite assertions that it will be reinitiated at some point in the future. It can end strongly where an activity-bound relationship reaches completion, but both parties are content with the other's involvement, or a relationship can mutate outside the bounds of such an activity-bound relationship and become something different.

Even behaviours at reinitiation do not follow the standard patterns seen in Chapter 5, Tie Creation, where similarities across all nineteen first-contact emails were striking. Here, the break in contact may be acknowledged, or not, tie reinforcing behaviours may be increased, decreased or remain at the same level as before the break. There seems to be no clear pattern for when this happens, and only by looking into the wider context, and making inferences, can the reasons even be hypothesised. This may be because, as shown in Figure 1, p. 37, all trajectories lead eventually to decay whether this is sudden or gradual. With so many potential paths leading to the same destination, it is unsurprising that the process is both complex and haphazard. This is one area, more than any other previously examined, which would benefit from post-event participant interviews, only then could personal situation during periods of non-contact be examined or reasons for ending contact be ascertained. Ultimately, this chapter has focussed on something almost impossible to examine – what is happening when participants are not in contact, something for which there is of course, no evidence and the only available avenue is to look at what occurs before the void (and after, if applicable).

However, one area examined in this chapter, which does seem to have a more predictable structure, and can be fully examined, is destabilisation and repair. Goffman (1967) explains how conversational partners take a 'line' with their listener/reader, this line consists of making themselves and their partner look good, e.g. by adhering to basic rules of politeness (see also maintenance chapter), sticking to agreements, and generally behaving in a way that is congruent with the historic relationship and the partner's expectations. When these expectations are confounded, destabilisation can arise. For example, Ruth expressing satisfaction with a given price in the past, but asking for a lower one in the future, Sofia believing Liz is making a different business proposal to the one she had agreed upon, or Alya assuming that Liz understood the manner of celebrating and duration of Ramadan. All these examples illustrate how a small misunderstanding or deviation from expected behaviour (or knowledge) can bring a relationship to a tipping point, whereby it can be repaired, or become dysfunctional. Repair actions included making genuine apologies and excuses using self-disclosure to stimulate the conversational partner's sympathy, and offering clarifications and reassurance if a misunderstanding had occurred.

The next chapter of this thesis is the final conclusion, which takes all insights gained from the Exploratory data analysis, plus those analyses presented in the Creation; Reinforcing; CMC Cues; Maintenance; and Decay, Destabilisation, Repair and Reinitiation chapters, and summarises them to present the major and original findings of this thesis, and make suggestions regarding future research.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

"But ye readers of posterity, forgive us our ignorances, as we forgive those who were ignorant before us."
– Guy Deutscher (2011, p. 239)

To summarise the achievements of the thesis and the arguments put forward, I begin by addressing the research aims and showing in what ways these were met, whilst considering the value and key findings of the study as a whole. This is followed by the study limitations and suggestions for further research. The chapter concludes with some final remarks on further uses for the thesis' dataset.

10.1 Achievement of aims, and key findings

The study provides a comprehensive look at relationship formation through its trajectory to possible decay. A study of this longitudinal length, and covering all aspects of tie formation, reinforcing and decaying has to the best of my knowledge, not been attempted before with any datatype. Due to the breadth of the study, the findings may be useful to researchers looking at any stage of relational tie management/transformation, or indeed studying an entire relational history. The discussion on non-salient politeness would also be beneficial to pragmatics and politeness research in general, as it expands the discussion of what may be considered under the heading of (im)politeness. This is achieved principally through the discussion of self-disclosure as a crucial factor in relational work (section 6.2), but also covers such practices as mimesis (section 4.5). Contact duration is also shown as an important contextual factor in assessing the type of relational work that takes place and the persistence of a tie between two people (see Table 4, p. 63 and discussions of certain CMC cues typically occurring later in the email conversation, Figure 21, p. 179).

The six analysis chapters were chiefly dedicated to answering the primary research question *"How are relationships managed via business email?"*. Having covered the broad theoretical background of the study, the thesis then presented the different trajectories that could be followed after initial contact is established. As participants cannot return to a state of not knowing each other at all (Goffman, 1971, p. 189), the thesis proposed a dynamic model of relational ties stemming from first contact (see Figure 1, p. 37). Ties could be functional or dysfunctional and either strong or weak; the only other option was decay, thus giving five possible designations of a relationship. The thesis also crucially proposes *movement* between these five relational tie types and the ability to designate a given relationship as being in some *transitionary state*, e.g. moving from functional weak to functional strong. This model more accurately reflects the ambiguity of relationships that people regularly experience, without taking away the usefulness of the weak/strong dichotomy, especially for investigations looking at, for example, information flow through multiple network connections, bridges between networks, reciprocity etc. The model should allow researchers to take a more nuanced, less binary, approach to network connections, if and when it is appropriate to do so.

Having provided a model, relationship management was first approached by illuminating some of the recurrent patterns in the data and linking this recurrence to theories of mimesis, as outlined in Marsden and Kádár (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017). Mimesis was put forward as a potential way in which email writers could accommodate towards their writing partner in order to show interpersonal involvement, friendliness, and improve intelligibility (Dragojevic et al., 2016, p. 48). This combination of pragmatics and mimesis represents one of the unique approaches taken in this thesis, and may provide a useful starting point for those looking at the development of localised conventional practices. Following this, the exploratory data analysis considered the formation of ties in the relational network of Liz and the clients as a whole, building a basic structural model to show links between clients. These links may not have been obvious if only a qualitative analysis was used, due to the necessary limit on number of examples presented. These network diagrams illuminated such practices as making referrals, and showed how clients disappeared from the active network as their ties decayed (see Figure 5—Figure 9, pp. 67-69). This all contributed to giving an impression of what 'relational networks' might look like if visualised diagrammatically.

Following the exploratory data analysis, the thesis took a roughly chronological approach to relationship formation, starting with tie creation. This chapter showed that clients are likely to try to legitimise their business request by stating their academic credentials and showing their relationships with mutual acquaintances. This linking to mutually-known others has been shown in some studies to increase the likelihood of a tie forming (Granovetter, 1973,

p. 1363), and to increase generosity ("the friend of my friend is my friend" mentality, see Leider et al. (2007)). This is a crucial chapter in the thesis as there are no studies, to the best of my knowledge, which use non-elicited language data to examine how ties are formed in real-world interaction (i.e., they use another form of measurement, or use elicited data).

Having presented in Figure 1 the possible relational trajectories, the thesis considered those relationships represented in the dataset. The largest discussion was devoted to behaviours that reinforce ties (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7), as this is a behaviour highly represented in the data. The focus was relational transformation; as all relationships in the data started afresh, to become both strong and functional there needed to be a period of reinforcing through time commitment, sharing of interests, teamwork etc. Chapter 6 considered many methods that writers could use to reinforce ties, and investigated the idea of 'non-salient' politeness, such as self-disclosures. These self-disclosures were often a result of some minor trouble in the business arrangements e.g. illness or family circumstances preventing work being done. Overcoming troubles together was shown to be potentially beneficial for relationship development, as it was often through troubles-tellings (and apologies) that participants could make self-disclosures, while their email partners could express sympathy, understanding, and could work together. Thus, together, participants built a rich shared relational history, which they could refer back to, to further reinforce ties in the future.

Chapter 7 considered CMC cues in great detail, assessing the usage of each cue separately to determine its relational functions. This was in response to a huge gap found in prior studies (see discussion in sections 7.1 and 7.2), many of which had grouped cues together and not considered that they may each have different functions. While emoticons and emoji have often been considered in isolation (see Skovholt et al., 2014; Dürscheid & Siever, 2017), and some studies have looked at exclamation marks (e.g. Teh et al., 2015), or ellipsis marks (Ong, 2011), cues such as parentheses and all caps have not received such attention. Additionally, with the exception of emoticons/emoji, the research on all cues is limited. These cues were seen as an important part of relationship building as their usage often increased the informality of the language used and/or introduced humour, blurring the line between business and relational emailing.

The discussion of CMC cues illuminated another gap in the CMC literature, where previously, only capitalisation (as a method of changing the appearance of letters) had been investigated as a CMC cue, while **bolds**, *italics*, underlines, coloured text and highlights were unmentioned in all but a tiny number of studies. In my data, though there were only a small number of these features, they were found to fulfil many of the same functions as other CMC cues (see section 7.2.8). This is an area which would benefit from further research.

Additionally, the category of postscripts was introduced as a potential CMC cue for email, which has received no previous attention. Postscripts were found to frequently signal a topic and/or tone change from the email body text, marking this extra information as distinct. While forum discussions indicated a lay understanding of this usage, there has been no academic interest in postscripts excepting those used in sales emails *specifically*, which fulfil different functions. This is an area where a large corpus of emails could be used to great effect to investigate postscript usage.

Regarding the analysis of CMC cues, valuable statistics were also presented on how frequent and widespread usage was over the 19 email conversations, enabling the proposal of a tentative cline for CMC cue intimacy (Figure 21, p. 179) i.e. a rough indication of which cues were more likely to be used once a higher degree of relational closeness was reached. This was a completely new attempt at making the study of CMC cues more systematic, and it would be interesting to see how this cline differed over different CMC datasets.

Following this, Chapter 8, on weak functional tie maintenance, focussed on a more static relational trajectory, where participants conducted business smoothly and politely, but without introducing relational aspects beyond those that were expected. By positioning this discussion next to the chapters on 'reinforcing' and 'destabilisation and decay', this method of maintaining an essentially static relationship can be directly compared and contrasted. Crucially here, participants used the expected or 'politic' levels of politeness in their communication, additionally adhering to their expected line in the business transaction (Goffman, 1967), for example sending work at the agreed times and paying the expected amount promptly. These behaviours prevented ties from destabilising or reinforcing as no troubles were introduced, and there was either no attempt to instigate relational talk, or no reciprocation if one partner did make this attempt. The line between reinforcing ties and simply maintaining them is, of course, fuzzy, and there are choices even within maintenance. For example, where in the examples below does a 'politic' thanking turn into a 'marked' thanking? Is the furthest left example actually below the politic and thus somewhat rude or at least brusque? Is the furthest right example excessive and therefore sarcastic? Are the examples even in the 'correct' order? I would argue only the context and the historical relationship between the participants involved could begin to make this clear:

Thanks. [Zétény: 53]	Thank you very much. [Hassan: 56]	Thanks! [Hai: 6]	Thank you very much!!! [Alice: 54]	I'd just like to say a really heartfelt thank you [Liz to Zétény: 87]

These examples illustrate the difficulty the analyst has in making such judgements, especially when intercultural data from participants with mixed backgrounds is involved.

The thesis then went on to investigate relational destabilisation and relationship ending in Chapter 9. Destabilisation was seen as another potential point of relationship transformation, which could either be repaired, or result in a consistently dysfunctional relationship. Episodes causing destabilisation were infrequent in the dataset, with problems mainly arising due to cultural ignorance, cultural mismatch, or English fluency issues; these were either rapidly repaired or potentially resulted in relationship decay. Decay seems highly chaotic, and one of the unique elements of the thesis is the approach to relational decay through time. Only two prior studies on time-based decay could be identified (Burt, 2001; Martin & Yeung, 2006). Both worked on the basis of identifying prior members of a community and interviewing those members to see who had maintained a relationship, or lost touch, over time. These studies identified that staying in touch was often related to network embeddedness (e.g. having other family members who were part of that network, or marrying another network member). However, the analysts did not have data from when participants were still in touch, which they could have used to try to identify reasons for future decay. This was a limitation of those studies, which this thesis tried to at least partially address.

Decay over time was investigated (albeit with difficulty), from a linguistic perspective, using those emails that occurred before (and after, if applicable) a long contact break. The passing of time appeared to be highly subjective as far as participants' perceptions were concerned, with very varied results regarding how writers resumed contact after significantly long gaps with no communication. Some participants reintroduced themselves in similar ways to how they formed the initial tie, some expressed uncertainty about Liz's work status, and others wrote as if the break in contact had no impact on their perceived relationship with Liz. Decay was also mapped structurally with the network diagrams (pp. 67-69), which showed when contact with each client ended.

Decay appeared somewhat unstructured; contact could be broken without warning, or despite assertions of future contact or contact re-initiation. It could also end when an activity-bound relationship reached completion. When these breaks would occur was also often unpredictable. Some writers suddenly ceased to communicate with little or no warning – or even assertions of the opposite, i.e. that more communication would be forthcoming. This finding may presumably be rather different to face-to-face relationships, whether business or otherwise, where serendipitous meetings might be more likely and it would be more difficult to have such an absolute break in contact (if both participants regularly inhabited the same physical spaces). In general, decay is an area that would benefit from further investigation with a large dataset, as there are few studies that measure, or engage with, decay at all (with the exception of Burt, 2001; Martin & Yeung, 2006; Kivran-Swaine et al., 2011; Shen et al., 2014).

Thus, unsurprisingly, there was no single answer to how participants formed relationships via email. In some cases, politic behaviour including the use of formulaic polite expressions was preferred for this type of business relationship (see also, for example, O'Driscoll, 2013). In other cases, clients valued introducing friendly and informal language, either from the very first email, or much later in the relationship, for stronger relationship building. However, it is not clear in all cases whether this strong relationship building was seen as a necessary part of business communication, or whether it was undertaken to try to transform the relationship beyond a business one. All interactions thus contained interpersonal elements, from the politic to the marked 'above-and-beyond' expectations. In this area, post-event interviews could supplement the written data, giving insight into client motivations and how much of this relational work is consciously mediated versus unconscious.

The study of course, looked not only at the building of relationships, but also the maintaining and breaking of them. It was proposed that once a relationship was strong functional, consistently using reinforcing techniques such as emoticons, personal disclosures, humour etc. would keep that relationship functional without it destabilising. On the other hand, a weak functional relationship could be maintained with politic behaviour only. The parameters for maintenance are of course different depending on the categorisation of the tie between two persons – different behaviour is needed to maintain a dysfunctional relationship versus a functional one, and the same for weak versus strong. A sudden deviation from expected behaviour may be a change signal (Goffman, 1971, p. 203); for the entire relationship; interactants essentially establish a 'line' (Goffman, 1967, pp. 5–11) which they must stick to, for the relationship to remain static. Of course, all relationships can ultimately decay through periods of no contact – whether you have lost contact with a playground bully, or a close friend or relative.[74] The data showed that evidence of decay having occurred over periods of no contact, was very difficult to obtain from the written data, with some minor changes occurring over time gaps, such as participants using both greeting and sign-off after a break had occurred, and using increased numbers of compliments and self-disclosures. While there has been little study of relationships ending, it may be that CMC allows for a more sudden break than face-to-face. Alternatively, it may be the business context, as opposed to a purely relational one, which means interactants do not actively seek out those with whom they have lost contact unless they have some direct need for that relationship to be resumed.

10.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research

Many of the limitations of this study derive from the relatively small number of participants, meaning that for certain features (especially those only used by a few participants) it is difficult to tell if usage is generalizable, structured, or some kind of personal idiosyncrasy. However, these shortcomings are outweighed by the benefits of the highly detailed analysis. Nevertheless, as noted previously, several features, including but not limited to CMC cues,

[74] Although perhaps in our era of social media, decay for many relationships is a less definite concept.

textual modification, rote writing and tie decay would benefit from further investigation with a much larger corpus of emails.

At several points within the thesis, post-event interviews were identified as a potential source of useful supplementary data. The idea of conducting these was abandoned in the early stages due to time constraints and the age of some of the earlier data making specific recall difficult (see discussions in sections 1.4 and 3.4). Additionally, if interviews had been conducted alongside email production, the observer's paradox may have been much more in evidence as the clients and Liz would have known their emails would be under scrutiny, which may have affected their writing behaviour. As such, one of the strengths of this data is that the majority of it is completely divorced from the conception of this thesis (see Table 1: *Possible influence of observer's* paradox, p. 43).

Nevertheless, in some areas, specifically in identifying perlocutionary intent and reasons for contact break, these hypothetical interviews could have clarified and usefully supplemented what was observed in the data. Similar future research should consider conducting interviews alongside data collection, or shortly after. While the omission of interviews has somewhat limited the study, this is mediated however by the inclusion of enough metadata and genuine email excerpts to allow readers to draw their own conclusions.

Another area which presents a limitation is the fact that this is a study where emails were gathered from a single email donor (see Crystal, 2006; Goldstein & Evans Sabin, 2006; McKeown & Zhang, 2015 for comparable datasets) who is also the principal researcher. While I have tried to remain impartial, it is clear that interpretations and suggestions are more detailed for Liz's emails overall, than for the clients. This is of course partly due to knowledge of my own psychology and the wider contextual background of my email production. *However*, I would suggest that had Liz's emails been written by another British sole trader (let's call this fictional email donor 'Pippa'), I would still have had greater insight into her emails than the clients' for the following reasons: 1) I would have had comparatively many more of Pippa's emails to analyse than even the most prolific single client (515 versus Zétény's 82) thus allowing me to more easily determine habits and idiosyncrasies. 2) Pippa and I would be insiders of the same national culture; her use of certain features, such as 'x' to mean 'kisses', would be instantly comprehensible to me due to our shared language and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, although this method undoubtedly biases the analysis towards the donor, I do not think undue prescience has been applied to the analysis.

Another limitation (as mentioned in section 3.2 and Table 1) is that fact that some emails were collected after clients had agreed to take part in the study, and around 24% of Liz's emails were produced in the knowledge that they might/would be included in the study. In effect, therefore, the conditions of the experiment had changed, yet I chose to treat all emails as a single dataset. My justification for this was due to several factors: 1) as this is a study based on clearly task-based language produced in a real-world context (i.e. not in lab conditions, and with language produced having genuine consequences), I judged that the desire to complete these tasks would mitigate the observer's paradox, as task-completion would be at the forefront of participants' minds. 2) For Liz especially, who may have been motivated to be even more accommodating to study participants and potential participants to gain their cooperation, this observer's paradox concern was more prominent. However, looking at her workload at the time, as evidenced by her emails sent and received, one can see that from the period of asking the first batch of participants to join the study (27/05/14) to the date of final email collection ([Ruth: 121] on 01/05/15) Liz was working with many clients who were British, alongside her existing international clients, and receiving many new requests from other international potential clients, see Table 29 below. This is an important point as British clients, and international clients whose work was started late in this period, or who sent few emails, were never considered for inclusion in the study. Therefore, Liz was doing a lot of 'ordinary' communication alongside those emails with potential for inclusion in this study. During this period of nearly one year, only one third of the emails sent and received were collected for use in this thesis, and for many of these emails their inclusion at the time of production was uncertain. Therefore, unless Liz changed the way she wrote her emails across the board in response to this project being in her mind (a possibility which cannot be completely ruled out) there should be a minimal influence of the observer's paradox in those emails included in the study. It is likely that this project was a less salient and less foregrounded factor influencing her writing than more urgent/salient contextual factors such as deadlines, interpersonal history, mimetic behaviours, shared goals, dyadic rituals etc. If Liz had been communicating only, or even *primarily*, with Hai, Alice and Miyako, it is likely the effect of the observer's paradox would have been more pronounced as Liz would be more 'primed' to consider the study, but this was not the case, as shown below. It is for these myriad reasons that all emails are treated in this thesis as one dataset.

Emails sent and received 27/05/14-01/05/15 (excluding PhD request and response emails)			
Email partner	**Collected**		**Not Collected for PhD**
Study Participants		**Collection stop date**	
Victoria	4	08/09/2014	
Ivie	11	29/09/2014	2
Zeteny	39	04/10/2014	36
Miyako (new: 06/08/14)	5	17/10/2014	
Avin	28	04/12/2014	31
Hassan	33	05/03/2015	
Alice (new: 20/10/14)	94	31/01/2015	7
Hai (new: 09/12/14)	52	22/04/2015	
British Clients (ongoing and new)			**Emails sent and received**
AFref			93
Mike (MSref)			40
Robyn (RSref)			16
British 1			60
British 2			24
British 3			25
British 4 (new)			49
International Clients (ongoing)			**Emails sent and received**
Non-responder 3			18
New International Clients	**First Contact**		**Emails sent and received**
New International 1	01/07/2014		3
New International 2	30/09/2014		9
New International 3	17/10/2014		4
New International 4	06/12/2014		6
New International 5	11/12/2014		2
New International 6	20/01/2015		4
New International 7	23/02/2015		28
New International 8	27/02/2015		3
New International 9	01/03/2015		2
New International 10	11/03/2015		11
New International 11	18/04/2015		2
New International 12	25/04/2015		3
Proofreaders[75]			**Emails sent and received**
Proofreader 1			22
Proofreader 2 (newly started)			30
Collected emails	266		
Business emails not collected			530

Table 29 Business state-of-play 27th May 2014 –1st May 2015

75 These proofreaders received a lot of referrals from Liz when she was too busy to take on additional work, they are also the proofreaders addressed in [Hai: 2], see example (108), p. 128. Emails to Proofreader 2 also include advice emails helping him establish his business.

Moving on from the study limitations, there is great potential for such an analysis of emails to be taken further. A possible area would be to look for incidences of postscripts in a larger corpus of non-sales emails (sales emails represent the only dataset where postscript analysis has been attempted e.g. Zhu, 2005; Cheung, 2008). Postscripts seem to be a fascinating area, used by writers for relational work, subject changes, humour, and other addenda, often marking a change in tone or subject from the email body text. It would be interesting to find further patterns not discernible with only 18 examples, such as whether postscripts are used more by female writers[76] and what topics tend to be included in them e.g. troubles, jokes, offers etc.

A number of smaller points have also been suggested throughout the thesis as areas for potential future investigation, usually due to inadequate data size, such as:

- Whether when using multiple exclamation marks, triple "!!!" rather than double "!!" is preferred by writers (and if so, why?).
- Why are such textual modifications as bolds, italics and underlines not considered CMC cues, when all caps are designated as such by several authors (see Table 24, p. 173)? Also, whether and why all caps usage may be more prolific in CMC as opposed to other possible text modifications, and whether usage differs across CMC platforms.
- How do email writers use font colour and font choice in email (these features were eliminated from my dataset during cleanup, see section 3.5)?

10.3 Concluding remarks

A huge number of features of my data remain largely unanalysed due to the constraints of the project, and I hope to publish and present on these in the future. Some particularly interesting potential investigations include:

- Investigating very short emails (i.e. those with wordcounts below the lower quartile, Graph 1, p. 77) to see what properties they exhibit in terms of when they are sent (speed of reply), relational language usage, and structural content (e.g. whether they

[76] The only writers in my dataset using postscripts were female, but this could be a coincidence, or because females contributed the vast majority of the data.

include sign-off/greeting). It may also be interesting to compare and contrast these with some of the longest emails in the dataset, such as those categorised as major outliers, see Graph 1.[77]

- Looking at commissives to discover how and when these are used and to what relational effect.

- Analysing string emails (emails following another email by the same author, see Figure 16, p. 79), especially long strings to see how the email content relates between the first email and further emails, and whether they display interesting features such as reduced use of email structural elements, or more/less relational content.

- Examining greetings and sign-offs for their phrasing and their absence in more detail than section 4.5. It would be useful to use more accurate email timestamps for this, as time elapsed seems to effect presence/absence of greeting and sign-off (see Graph 5, p. 241). Additionally, the email content and context could affect their form and whether or not they are used at all.

- Analysing emails that are the opposite of those discussed in section 9.3 *Contact break* (i.e. instead of occurring after a long break in contact, they are sent and replied to very rapidly), for unusual features or patterns. Sofia's dataset is an excellent example of this, with a record (for the thesis) of 19 emails sent within one day (see Table 6, p. 81).

- Investigating the process of referrals in more detail, as these are critical to the creation of network ties and have been subject to significant analysis in business literature (see: Law, 2008; Dobele & Lindgreen, 2011; Shao et al., 2014).

All of these investigations could be undertaken, or at least started, with my existing dataset, and I hope to tackle some of them in the future.

Generally, this thesis has succeeded in its aim of presenting a rich and detailed look at the relational aspects of business email data from creation to decay. I am grateful for the

[77] Preliminary research on this topic was presented at SymPol11 conference, Valencia, July 3-5, 2018.

supervision and support I have received throughout the process and for the constructive criticism I gained from conference audiences and my peers. I hope that this thesis will provide a useful resource for many different types of investigation, whether it is into email communication; relational networks; CMC cues; intercultural communication; business; computer-mediated communication etc.

Best wishes,

Liz

Appendix

11.1 Supplementary quantitative data

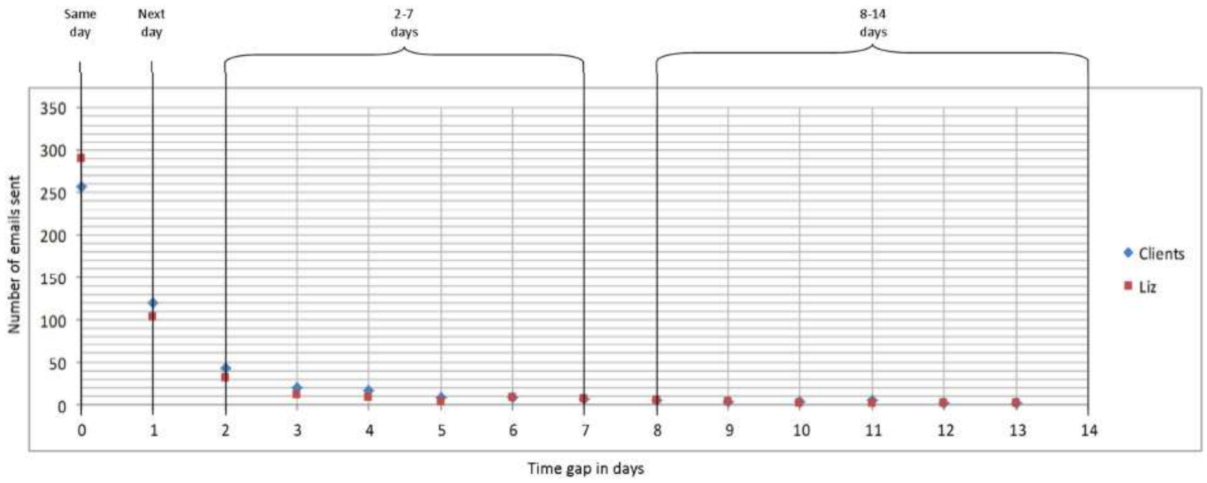
The table below is presented to show the exact length of time between emails in the dataset, and to allow future researchers to accurately compare my categories with their own. Categories with no representative emails (e.g. 14 day gap) have been omitted.

No. of days gap	All email count	Liz count	Clients count	Replies count	Strings count	Cat. bracket	Cat. name	Cat. count	Cat. length (days)
0	548	290	258	472	76	0 days	Same day	548	1
1	223	104	119	187	36	1 day	Next day	223	1
2	75	32	43	49	26	2 - 7 days	2 - 7 days		
3	31	11	20	27	4				
4	25	9	16	16	9				
5	11	3	8	7	4				
6	16	8	8	12	4				
7	14	7	7	8	6			172	6
8	10	5	5	6	4	8 - 14 days	8 - 14 days		
9	7	4	3	3	4				
10	5	1	4	2	3				
11	7	2	5	5	2				
12	3	1	2	2	1				
13	3	2	1	2	1			35	7
15	3	1	2		3	15 days - 31 days	15 days - 1 month		
16	1	1		1					
17	1	1		1					
18	1	1			1				
21	5	1	4	4	1				
22	2	1	1	1	1				
23	2	2		1	1				
24	1	1			1				
25	2		2	2					
26	1	1			1				
27	1		1	1					
28	2		2	1	1				
29	1		1	1					
30	1		1		1				
31	1		1		1			25	17
32	1	1		1		> 32 days - 62 days	>1 month - 2 months		
33	2		2	2					
34	3		3	1	2				
35	1		1		1				
37	1	1		1					
39	1		1	1					

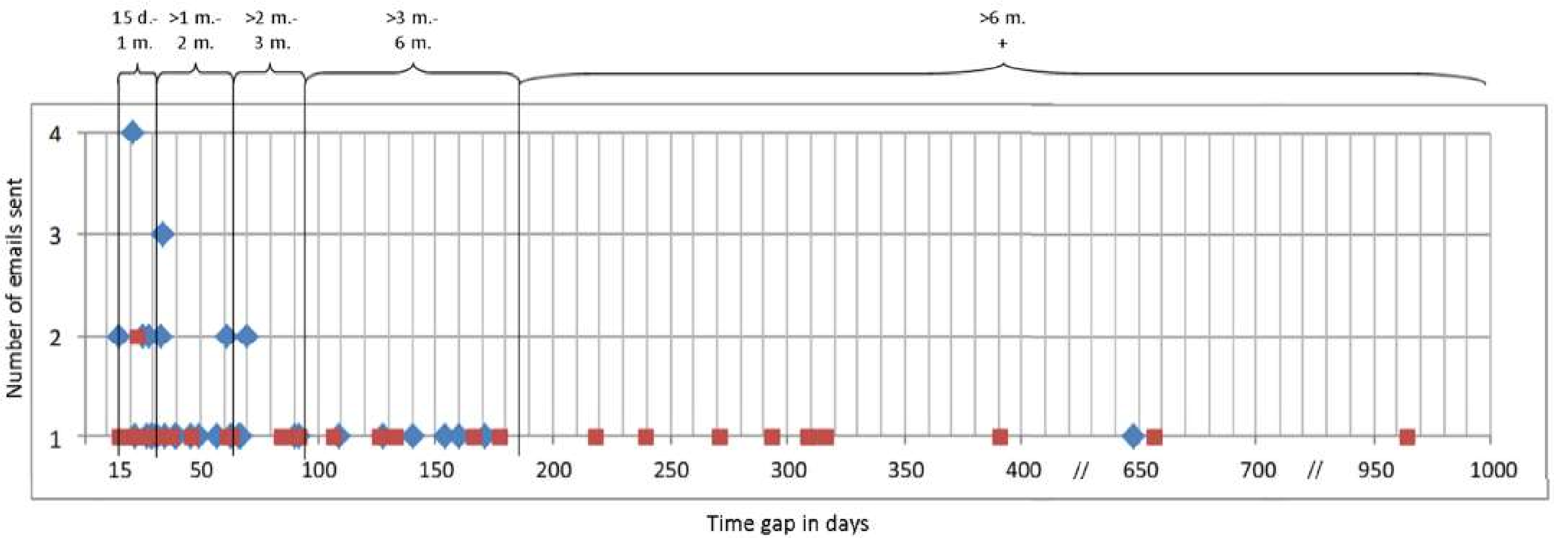
40	1		1		1				
46	2	1	1	1	1				
49	1		1		1				
57	1		1	1					
61	3	1	2	3				17	31
63	2	1	1		2	> 63 days - 93 days	>2 months - 3 months		
66	1		1	1					
67	1		1	1					
70	2		2	2					
84	1	1			1				
86	1	1			1				
90	1		1	1					
92	2	1	1	1	1			11	31
106	1	1		1		> 94 days - 186 days	>3 months - 6 months		
109	1		1		1				
126	1	1			1				
128	1		1	1					
133	1	1		1					
140	1		1		1				
154	1		1	1					
160	1		1	1					
166	1	1		1					
171	1		1		1				
177	1	1			1			11	93
218	1	1			1	187 days+	>6+ months		
239	1	1			1				
271	1	1			1				
293	1	1			1				
308	1	1		1					
309	1	1			1				
316	1	1			1				
390	1	1			1				
648	1		1		1				
656	1	1			1				
964	1	1			1			11	778

Table 30: Raw email response time data, plus created categories

Below are two graphs representing the above data in Table 30. Response times are split into two categories, Liz and Clients. The first graph represents emails sent within 14 days of the prior email, covering the first four time categories, while the second graph represents emails sent after 15 days, representing the next five time categories. Note the hugely reduced number of emails sent per specific time gap in the second graph (max. 4) versus the first graph (max. 290), and note also the broken Y-axis on the second graph.



Graph 6: Same day to two weeks response times



Graph 7: 15 days onwards response times

11.2 Additional mimesis tables and discussion

	Hi (+/- name)		Dear (+/- name)		Thanks (+/- name)		Name only		No address		Other			
	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client total	Liz Total
Abdessalam	33%	**50%**	**67%**	**50%**									6	8
Alice		**50%**	**89%**	48%	7%	3%	2%				2%		56	40
Alya	**56%**	**88%**		13%					33%		11%		9	8
Avin	24%	**81%**	**69%**	15%						4%	7%		29	26
Dana	**80%**	**80%**		15%		5%			20%				20	20
Hai	**65%**	**74%**		4%	13%				26%	17%			31	23
Hassan	6%	39%	**71%**	45%	3%	6%		6%	19%	3%			31	31
Imran	9%	**77%**	**91%**	15%						8%			34	39
Irma	**78%**	**89%**		5%	11%	5%			6%		6%		18	19
Ivie	31%	21%	15%	**50%**		14%			46%		23%		13	14
Lisa	**100%**	43%		29%						14%		14%	6	7
Lovemore	**100%**	33%		**66%**									2	3
Meera	33%	**70%**	6%	10%	17%	10%		3%	14%	7%	31%		36	30
Miyako			**100%**	**100%**									4	4
Ploy	32%	**87%**	13%	3%	4%	5%	13%		33%	1%	6%	4%	72	75
Ruth	31%	**64%**	10%	10%	15%	5%		2%	34%	14%	11%	3%	61	59
Sofia		**69%**	8%	6%	8%		**69%**	6%	15%	13%		6%	13	16
Victoria	10%	45%	**83%**	42%		13%			7%				29	31
Zétény	**83%**	**90%**	10%	5%	5%	3%			1%	2%	1%		82	63
Correlation	0.34		0.60		0.15		0.59		0.13		-0.15			

Table 31: Address terms used by all clients and Liz in the data, percentage figures

	"Best"		"regards"		Sender's name only		"wishes"		"Thank*"		Other		No sign-off		"Kind"		"Look* forward"	
	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz	Client	Liz
Alice	41%	**75%**		25%	14%	5%	39%	25%	41%	3%	9%	15%	4%					3%
Avin	38%	**77%**	**62%**	15%	7%	8%		4%	7%		3%	8%						8%
Dana	45%	**100%**		15%	5%		45%	5%	40%		10%		10%					
Hai	**58%**	35%			32%	39%	**58%**	17%			3%	17%	10%	4%				
Hassan	16%	**94%**		45%	29%	6%	16%	13%	3%		32%		19%					
Imran	**100%**	**77%**	**59%**	18%		8%	41%		21%	13%		5%						
Irma		**100%**	**89%**	**53%**					33%						**89%**			
Meera		33%	19%	17%	36%	13%			11%	33%	17%	13%	14%	3%	11%	3%		
Supaksorn	1%	**65%**	3%	1%	**64%**	21%		1%	10%	3%	18%	8%					3%	7%
Ruth		**63%**	**75%**	17%	2%	14%			10%	17%	7%	3%	8%		7%			
Victoria	**59%**	**84%**	3%	32%		6%	45%	13%	28%	3%	7%		7%				10%	6%
Zétény	**61%**	**73%**	6%	8%	11%	8%	**56%**	5%	28%	8%	1%	5%					1%	5%
Token total	168	324	115	79	99	53	127	28	95	34	45	29	25	2	24	1	6	13
Combined total	492		194		152		155		129		74		27		25		19	
Correlation	0.08		0.32		0.57		0.53		-0.17		-0.09		0.41		0.02		0.50	

Table 32: Sign-off terms used by Liz and 12 Clients

As seen in (L. Marsden & Kádár, 2017)

The data in the table above has been normalised by dividing the raw figures for each category by the total number of emails sent by the person in question. This has been done in order to generate the correlations for each type of address ('Hi', 'Dear', 'Thank*' etc.). Without this kind of normalising (as percentages), all ranges would have returned inaccurate correlations, which would probably have been strongly positive. As a different number of emails was sent between each Liz-Client pair, the equation would have seen large pairs of numbers together and smaller pairs of numbers together and generated a positive result, this however would have answered the question "if a client sends more emails, does Liz in turn send more emails?", not the question I wanted to answer which was "If a client uses more of X address form, does Liz in turn use more of that address from?".

11.3 Enron email corpus

The Enron corpus is a massive collection of freely-available corporate emails from the Enron Corporation, a formerly large and successful American energy company which was investigated for fraud and subsequently filed for bankruptcy in October 2001. In May 2002 the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission released for public access about half a million emails from 158 employees sent before and during the time of corporate crisis "to improve the public understanding of the various reasons for their investigation of Enron." (Diesner et al., 2005, p. 202). The dataset was not made with academic use specifically in mind, and thus the raw data must usually first be cleaned by the researcher wishing to use it, due to various problems. For example, "The Enron email dataset consists of a total of 96.3 million words, but about 63% of these have been determined to be duplications" i.e. emails containing the entire chain of prior emails (Kessler, 2010, p. 263). Various clean versions exist, and different versions have been used by the researchers represented in Table 33, shown in the varying word count and number of emails.

Author	**Study Date**	**Data from**	**People in Data**	**Number of emails**	**Study focus**
Jabbari et al.	(Jabbari et al., 2006)	1999-2002	?	14000	How can business and personal emails be differentiated automatically?
De Felice et al.	(2013)	1999-2002	?	96100	Comparison of business communication with speech acts and development of an automatic speech act tagging tool.
Diesner et al.	(2005)	1999-2002	151	252759	Development of a dynamic social network model of communication in Enron over the crisis years to see how it changed.
Keila and Skillicorn	(2005)	1999-2002	?	494833	How can word usage reveal relationships between people and how can it illuminate key players during a crisis?

Table 33: Example selection of studies using the Enron dataset

11.4 Model of interactional network ties

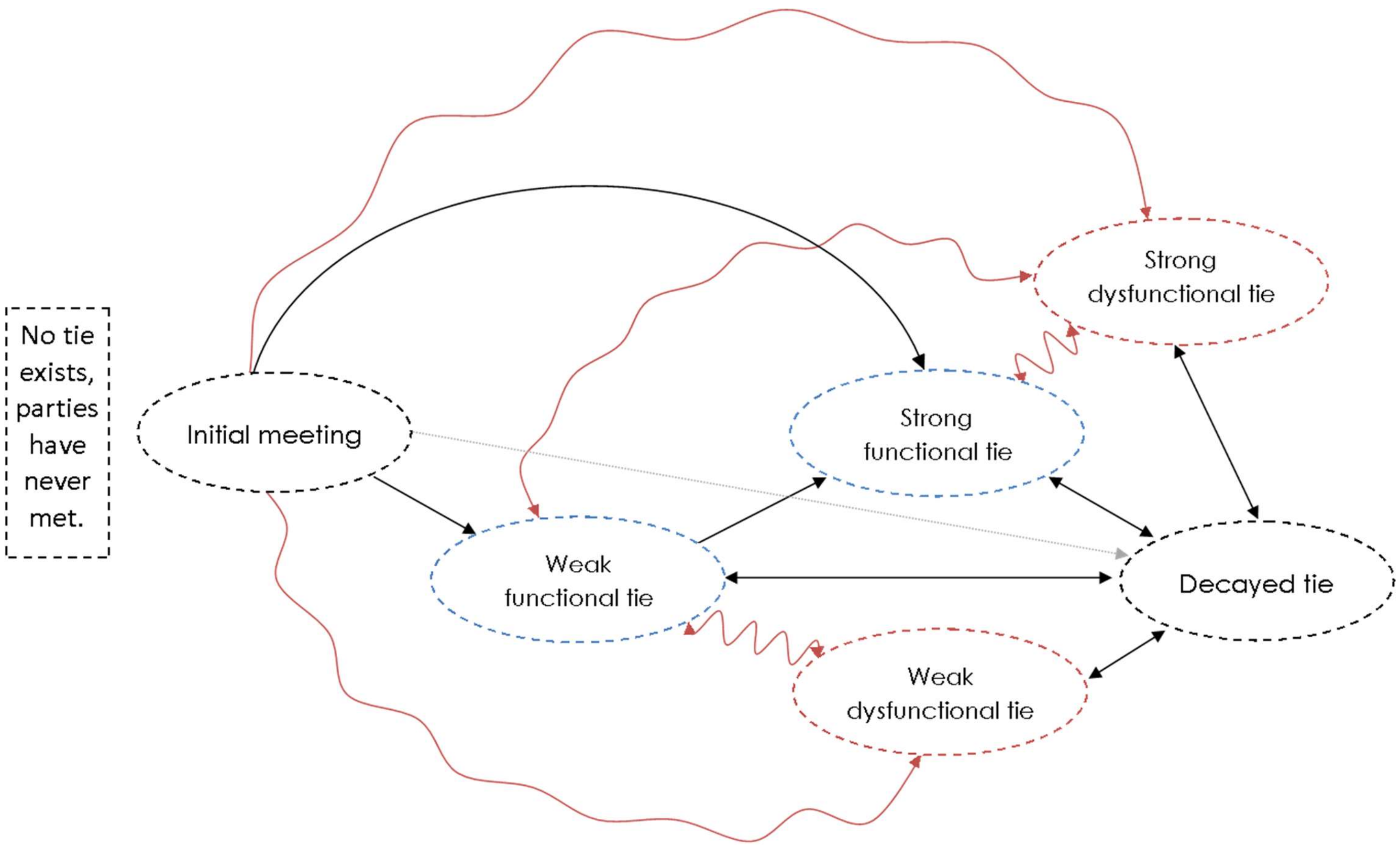


Figure 23: Model of network ties, no annotations

11.5 CMC cue usage

Client	Parenthesis		Exclamation marks		All caps		Emoticons		Repeated punc.		Ellipses		Lexical surrogates		Bold		Postscript		Italic		Underline		Highlight	
	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L
Abdessalam	13	4		7																				
Alice	6	5	10	7	57		46	27	18	55	26		70		10	66	36	37			79			
Alya		5		19																				
Avin		2	33	8	38			24	29				38											
Dana	3	34	38	37			1				3						8							
Hai	5	29	2	9	19	55	13	12	18	55		24								27				
Hassan	14	4		12	9						56													
Imran	21	26		31	1	2									55				19		72			
Irma	4	3	32					20																
Ivie		2	19	24				18	23															
Lisa	3	2		2				8																
Lovemore	4	3				2																		
Meera	1	6	7	14	24	18	24	25	36		7	29			63	29		29						
Miyako	1	6	5	4				8																
Ruth	34	2	44	45	76			6			17		21		21									
Sofia		10		4			19	24																
Supaksorn	1	23		11	8	29	5	100			75	109			5	135	123	56	138	83			1	
Victoria	1	2	49	54				28			29													
Zétény	7	2	13	15	16		88	129	32			124	54					129						
Average	7.9	8.9	22.9	17.8	25	26	28	33	26	55	30.4	71.5	45.8	0	30.8	76.7	55.7	62.8	78.5	55.0	75.5	0	1	0
Median	4	4	19	12	19	23.5	19	24	26	55	26	69	46	0	21	66	36	46.5	78.5	55	75.5	0	1	0
Category Average	8.5		19.8		25.4		31.3		33.3		45.4		45.8		48.0		59.7		66.8		75.5		1.0	
Category median	4		13.5		19		22		30.5		29		46		42		37		55		75.5		1	
count /19	15	19	11	17	7	4	7	13	6	2	7	4	4	0	5	3	3	4	2	2	2	0	1	0

Table 34: Email number (in sequence) in which each CMC cue is used for the first time by the Clients and Liz in each conversation

	Parenthesis		Exclamation marks		Emoji/Emoticons		All caps		Ellipsis marks		Repeated Punct		Postscripts		Bold		Italic		Highlight		Lexical surrogate		Underline		Emails sent	
	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L	C	L
Abdessalam	1	3		2																					6	8
Alice	27	22	30	20	9	12	1		9		11	2	6	1	4	1					1		1		57	40
Alya		2		1																					9	8
Avin		10		5		4	2				3										1				29	26
Dana	3	2	1	1	11				2				2												20	20
Hai	4	4	12	8	14	7	1	1	1	1	1	1						1							32	22
Hassan	2	4		2			4		1																31	31
Imran	4	4		8			2	1						1	1		2						1		34	39
Irma	4	5	1			2																			18	19
Ivie		2	3	2		3					1														13	14
Lisa	1	2		2		1																			6	7
Lovemore	1	1						1																	2	3
Meera	9	10	11	6	7	4	5	1	1	1	2	1		1	1	1									35	31
Miyako	1	1	2	2		1																			4	4
Ruth	6	10	6	8		8	1		6					2	2						2				62	58
Sofia		5		2	1	2																			13	16
Supaksorn	28	12		23	5	6	18	3	3	1			2	1	6	1	1	2	6						72	75
Victoria	5	8	1	1		4			1																29	31
Zétény	11	10	23	14	4	3	4		5	1	4			2							1				82	63
Total	107	117	90	107	51	57	38	7	29	4	22	4	10	8	14	3	3	3	6	0	5		2	0	554	515
Category total	224		197		108		45		33		26		18		17		6		6		5		2		1069	

Table 35: Number of emails by Liz and Clients containing CMC cues

11.6 Example invoice

Business Logo

[Business name]: Invoice

[Business Address]

Please keep in touch!
[Business email address]
[Business website]
[Business Facebook page]

Invoice No: 00000
Date issued: 00/00/0000

To: [Client name and email address]

Fees:

Date:	Service:	Price:
00/00/00	Proofreading/transcription	£00.00

Payment terms

Prompt payment is always appreciated.

Payment is preferred via direct bank transfer to:

[bank account details]

Or by cheque made out to 'Miss Elizabeth Marsden' sent to the following address:

[Home address]

11.7 PhD permission request example email

The email below is a copy of the request email sent to most clients, with the information that was changed for each client being represented by a description in square brackets.

XX) 27/05/014 Please help with my PhD project

Dear [name],

I hope you are well,

I am emailing you to ask your permission to use our email conversations as part of my dataset for a PhD I will be starting in September 2014. I would fully anonymise all emails and would make no reference to your name or the specific nature of your work. I would not be analysing any work you sent me whether this was transcription or proofreading.

My research will look at intercultural email communication in a business setting specifically focussing on negotiations and misunderstandings. Through this research I hope to describe some of the problems that can occur.

You first emailed me on [first-contact date] and have used [services client had used].
Our conversations lasted a total of [number] emails, which I am happy to provide you with copies of.

I would really appreciate a response to the following questions:
1) Do I have your permission to linguistically analyse our emails to each other?

If yes, some additional information would be really useful:
2) Your nationality
3) The language or languages you first learned to speak as a young child (your 'Mother Tongue')
4) Would you be willing to be contacted for further questioning (either via email, telephone or in person) regarding the content of your emails? i.e. how you felt about the language I used to address you e.g. did you find my communication polite etc., did you find there were any misunderstandings?

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and I look forward to your response.

Please feel free to get in touch with any questions before giving your final answer.

Best regards,

Liz Marsden

11.8 Official ethics forms

11.8.1Participant consent form

TITLE OF PROJECT **Intercultural Communication via Business Email**

NAME OF RESEARCHER **Elizabeth Marsden**

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research and consent to taking part in it. ☐

Emails

I give my permission for the emails between myself and Elizabeth Marsden to be included in the research project. ☐

I give permission to be quoted (by use of a pseudonym/code name). ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my data if I wish. ☐

Interviews (you may consent *only* to have your emails used and not partake in an interview if you wish)

I give my permission for an interview to be conducted. ☐

I give my permission for the interview to be recorded. ☐

I understand that the recording will be held in accordance with the University of Huddersfield's data protection policy. ☐

Declaration:

I the Participant, confirm that I consent to have my emails used as part of a database and hereby assign to the University all copyright in my contribution for use in all and any media. ☐

I, the Interviewee (if applicable) confirm that I consent to take part in the recording and hereby assign to the University all copyright in my contribution for use in all and any media. I understand that this will not affect my moral right to be identified as the "performer" in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. ☐

I understand I have the right to request that my identity be protected by the use of pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research. ☐

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of researcher:

Elizabeth Marsden

Signature:

Date:

Please could you also write below your country of origin and your mother tongue(s):

11.8.2 Research Participant Information Sheet

University of Huddersfield

School of Music Humanities and Media

Ethical Review Procedure

for Research and Teaching and Learning

You are invited to take part in a research study as part of a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?

Elizabeth Marsden, PhD Research Student, English Department, School of Music Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield, Queensgate, HD1 3DH

Title of the Research

Intercultural Communication via Business Emails

What is the aim of the research?

The project will look at how a native English speaking businessperson (myself) communicates with her clients (you and others), who are from a diverse range of cultures, via the medium of email.

The project will look at the specifics of client/service provider interaction and attempt to identify pitfalls and communication differences, as well as rapport building strategies, when this contact occurs across different cultures and between speakers of different languages.

The project may also use ethnographic interviews to identify participants' opinions of and reactions to different communicative strategies. Where interesting features have occurred in the emails, these will also be addressed in the interviews to uncover where culture and language fluency have played a part.

Why have I been chosen?

As someone from a non-British background who used either my proofreading or transcription services after February 2011 you have been selected for possible inclusion in my email database.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

First and foremost I am asking for your permission to include your emails to me, and my replies to you in my email database which I will be analysing as part of my project. If you agree to this, I am separately asking for your permission to interview you, either face-to-face, by Skype or by email to get you opinions on intercultural language and email. *You may agree to both email database inclusion and interview, email database inclusion only, or neither.*

What happens to the data collected?

The data from emails and interviews will be used by myself only as part of this project. The interview (if any) will be transcribed into written format, and this and the emails will be put into QDA Miner Lite so that recurring themes and features can be identified and compared with other participants in the database. These themes will then be analysed using various qualitative methods, to show how business relationships are built and maintained and how business transactions are conducted and concluded across cultural boundaries.

How is confidentiality maintained?

You will be anonymised throughout both emails and interviews.

Any personal information will be removed (such as telephone number, address, email address) and replaced with a description e.g. [telephone number] or [participant's address]

Any specific references to the title of your research and excerpts of your writing from your research which could be used to identify you will be removed.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

What is the duration of the research?

Participants may be asked to take part in several short interviews e.g. 3 x 15min, or one longer interview up to, but hopefully not exceeding, one hour.

Where will the research be conducted?

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or remotely in a location convenient to the participant, if possible, on the University of Huddersfield campus.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Yes, this research is the backbone of my PhD thesis, and I am hoping to also publish one or more shorter papers on specific themes found during the analysis.

Contact for further information

lizmarsden@hotmail.co.uk

u0674502@hud.ac.uk

11.9 Liz and Abdessalam total work interaction

1) 14/07/2013 New Form Entry: Contact Form
You've just received a new submission to your Contact Form.

Submitted Information:
Name
Abdel Sham

Email
[email address]

Comment
Dear Liz

I am writing to you with all respect wondering If you could do proof-reading to my first year report. my work is around 5700 words. Could you please let me how long does it take for to finish it and how much does it cost

I look forward to hearing from you soon

Kind Regards

Shamekh

2) 14/07/2013 Re: New Form Entry: Contact Form [attachment - terms and conditions]
Dear Shamekh,

Thank you for getting in touch.

Proofreading of a report of the length you describe would take around five days and the price would be approximately £25.

Both of these figures are estimates and may increase or decrease slightly depending on the quality of the work.

I have attached my terms and conditions to this email, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Liz

3) 14/07/2013 Re: New Form Entry: Contact Form [attachment - report]

Daer Liz

Thank you for your reply. The attached is my first year report. Could you please have a quick look at it from page 2 to page 17 only and confirm the cost and time to finish it. So you will be proof-reading only from page 2 to 17.

I look forward to hearing from you soon

Kind Regards

Shamekh

4) 14/07/2013 Re: New Form Entry: Contact Form

Hi,

I have had a quick look at the report. My final price is £25, and the work would take four days (I have other work to do in addition to yours - but if you really need it faster, I could probably do it in three days minimum).

Best regards,

Liz

5) 15/07/2013 New Form Entry: Contact Form

Hi Liz

I would be grateful If you could do it in three days. Therefore, Please start as soon as you can, and after you finish please send me your bank details for payment.
Will I receive it Wednesday or Thursday?

Kind Regards

Shamekh

6) 15/07/2013 Re: New Form Entry: Contact Form

Hi Shamekh,

I will invoice you when I've finished and all my bank details will be on the invoice. I should get it finished by Wednesday hopefully, but if not, I'll have it to you on Thursday before midday.

Best,

Liz

7) 16/07/2013 Proofreading completed [attachment - completed work and invoice]

Hi,

I have managed to complete your proofreading, your document and my invoice are attached. Please note that due to the formatting I was unable to use comment boxes in your bibliography,so I have written my comment where, for example, I saw missing information, in line with the text - please make sure you don't leave my comments in when you submit!

If you are unsure of how to accept and review changes, there is a tutorial here: https://lizmarsden.wordpress.com/2012/11/08/how-to-accept-reject-and-review-tracked-changes/

If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me.

All the best,

Liz

8) 16/07/2013 Re: Proofreading completed
Hi Liz

Thank you very much for your help. I will make the payment soon. I am just not clear of what you mean by saying (Formatted: No underline, Font color: Auto), (Field code changed), (Script font: 10pt).

Best Regards

Shamekh

9) 16/07/2013 Re: Proofreading completed
Hi,

Formatting, colours and fonts are Microsoft Word automatically notifying you that I have made some changes. E.g., Font colour: 'auto' shows that I've changed some text to black, where it says 'field code changed' I have altered something in one of your references (usually this was just removing double spaces), font: 10pt shows that I've changed the font size.

I hope that helps!

Liz

10) 22/07/2013 Re: Proofreading completed
Dear Liz

Thank you very much for your help and proofreading. I have deposited the money into your account on the 17th July, so please let me know If you did not receive it.

I am looking forward to sending my future work and my final thesis.

kind Regards

Shamekh

11) 22/07/2013 Re: Proofreading completed
Dear Shamekh,

Thank you very much for such prompt payment, which I have received.

I look forward to working with you again,

All the best,

Liz

11.10 Full and raw statistics, email with no greeting/sign-off

Time gap	Total emails	No greeting		No sign-off		Neither greeting nor sign-off		missing greeting, sign-off or both	
First email	19	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	1	5%
Same day	552	61	11.1%	14	2.5%	17	3.1%	92	17%
Next day	226	18	8.0%	2	0.9%	3	1.3%	23	10%
2-7 days	174	5	2.9%	2	1.1%	1	0.6%	8	5%
8-14 days	35	1	2.9%	2	5.7%	0	0.0%	3	9%
15 days – 1 month	27	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.7%	1	4%
>1 month – 2 months	13	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
>2 months – 3 months	8	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	13%
>3 months – 6 months	10	0	0.0%	1	10.0%	0	0.0%	1	10%
6 months+	10	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%

Table 36: Emails in each time category with no greeting, sign-off or both

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