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## Abstract

### The impact of national culture on lingua franca email correspondence

One aspect of today's globalised economy is the internationalisation of higher education. Increasing numbers of students now go abroad for part of or all of their degree. In order to attract foreign students, universities increasingly offer study programmes taught in English, even if this is not the native language of the host culture. This leads to a teaching situation based on English lingua franca communication, as English becomes the main medium of communication. A substantial amount of the communication between the host institution and the international students is via email. This means that the students have to write emails to authority figures, which is different from writing emails to their peers. Both the email format and most business correspondence manuals encourage an informal approach, but students coming from cultures where the student-lecturer relationship is of a formal nature need to find ways to communicate in an appropriate way when writing to their lecturers, including the choice of an appropriate form of address. In my paper I shall present how 110 students from 34 different nations dealt with this issue in the setting of a Norwegian business school. Drawing on Hofstede's concepts of high and low power distance I discuss to what extent a student's cultural background can be said to predict the level of formality concerning forms of address, in addition to discussing some sociopragmatic implications of communicating via English lingua franca email.

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