

Email Greeting and Farewell Formulas in English and Arabic: A Contrastive Study

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This paper reports on the findings of a contrastive study that investigates email opening and farewell formulas used in two languages, namely, Arabic and English. The sample of the study comprised 100 Arabic and 100 English academic emails. The English data was drawn from the researchers' mail inboxes while the Arabic data was drawn from the mail inbox pertaining to the Ministry of Education. The results showed that 'greeting word only' and 'no opening formula' were the highest in the Arabic emails. For farewell formulas, a 'thanks only' cliché registered the highest among the other formulas followed by 'no closing formula'. As for English email opening formulas, three formulas were used in initiating an email, such as 'greeting and name', 'greeting word only' and 'greeting and title'. Concerning the farewell formulas, the results showed that email users tended to use 'leave-taking, name and last name' and 'leave-taking only'. The results showed that there was a one-to-one correspondence between the farewells of both languages, unlike the greeting formulas, which do not have an exact one-to-one correspondence between the two languages.

Keywords: *Contrastive Analysis, Email Communication, Opening Formulas, Farewell Formulas, English and Arabic.*

Introduction

The Internet has dominated our lives. Rabab'ah, Rabab'ah and Suleiman (2016) state that "E-mail, Instant Messaging and chat are rapidly replacing conventional forms of correspondence" (p.116). Email as a means of communication has been widely used in formal and informal settings for sending out information, instructions, news, job applications, job offers, and purchase orders. Angel and Heslop (1994) state that electronic mail was rapidly becoming the dominant form of written communication in the 1990s. Despite this fact, in examining whether

email use has changed over time or not, Lantz (2003) concludes that managers have little time to handle email messages, indicating that time is a crucial factor in email communication. Shields (2017) asserts that email “becomes the default method of communication for lawyers and other professionals, and it can be quick and effective when used properly” (p. 14). According to the Email Statistics Report (2019), the number of email users in 2019 was 3.93 billion and it was expected to increase and reach 4.037 billion by 2020, and 4.371 billion by 2023.

A plethora of studies has been carried out since the emergence of emails as the most widely used among all other means of communication. Some studies examined the structure of emails and how to write emails while others dealt with the linguistic features (e.g., Gains, 1999; Shields, 2017 & Wilbers, 1994). Other studies investigated the impact email communication may have on language development (e.g., Al-Momani, 2016; Bani Khalaf, 2017; Bou-Franch, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Mckeown and Zhang, 2015 & Waldvogel, 2007). In addressing the main characteristics of emails, Wilbers (1994) suggests that the best e-mail messages are the ones known by their brevity, clarity, natural language and personal tone, whereas the worst ones are marked by their incompleteness, ambiguity, disorganisation, etc. He adds that emails resemble conversation in terms of friendly greetings and being an instantaneous medium. However, they lack other essential features of interpersonal communication, such as facial expression, body language and voice intonation. Furthermore, emails comprise functional elements that look similar in content to those found in memos and traditional letters. In showing the main elements of the email, Crystal (2006), for example, suggests the structural elements of emails, some of which are obligatory and others are optional. Greetings and farewells, for example, are optional elements within the body of emails. However, there is still a need to investigate emails from a different angle. It is thus the aim of the present paper to examine email greeting and farewell formulas used by Arabic speakers in Arabic and English email communication.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-mediated communication (hereafter CMC) is defined as “human communication via computer” (Higgins, 1991), or “any communication patterns mediated through the computer” (Metz, 1992: 3). Walther and Burgoon (1992) argue that CMC is no longer a new invention, it is a means of communication through which business and social interactions happen, and this shift is expected to continue (p. 90). Research has shown that CMC created access to power organisation, decision-making and process creativity (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984), and resulted in a bigger resourceful stream of data across organisations (Rogers, 1986).

In the last two decades, scholars have been interested in highlighting the advantages of CMC. Berry (2004), for example, states four major advantages of CMC over face-to-face

conversation. These include the team member's equal and active participation, its flexibility over time and distance in changing the size of teams fast, the ability of the team members to think and collect data before responding, and the availability of instant and archived discussion records. Similarly, proponents of CMC argue that CMC holds the promise of providing rich information in a short period of time (e.g., Waldvogel, 2005). Accordingly, the creation of rich and meaningful information is, to a large extent, dependent on the existing relationship between sender-receiver and the type of organisation they belong to (ibid). With reference to email writing as an asynchronous means of communication, Walther (1996) holds that writing emails provides individuals with the advent of revising what they wrote. In other words, writing emails provides an opportunity for reviewing, editing and paraphrasing what was written to guarantee the delivery of a well-formed, meaningful message to the receiver.

The most popular and regular users of email are businessmen, educators and students. Businessmen use it as a means of communication between their employees and other companies worldwide. Educators use it in communicating with their students, applying for jobs, sending articles to journals for publications, sending proposals to conferences, etc. Likewise, students make use of emails in contacting their professors and sending assignments and contacting their colleagues and classmates.

Literature Review

Research in the field of email communication has covered a wide spectrum of interests. Some studies have examined email linguistic features and their influence on the teaching-learning process. For example, Gains (1999) examined the textual features of emails to see whether either academic or commercial emails had observable new genres of written communication. The data was collected from real emails drawn from two different environments: commercial and academic. In analysing both categories in terms of prevalent headings to find out any patterns pertinent to style and convention, the results showed that commercial email messages followed the normal styles for standard written business communication. Moreover, academic emails indicated that some users might consider "the medium as a pseudo-conversational form of communication, conducted in extended time and with an absent interlocutor" (p.81). Findings suggested that the commercial emails did not include new genres, but that the academic emails might do so. Such results seem to present a more complex picture regarding the use of emails. In fact, it implicitly evinces that workplaces develop unique organisational styles and genres which make them different from each other and consequently highlight the cultural differences underlying the policies of each organisation. Along the same line, Gimenez (2006) analysed the complexity of emerging textual and communicative of business emails, which were taken from the databank. The corpus included 123 emails. The results showed that the complexity found in emails was due to "efforts to accommodate the genre to the new demands of the international business community" (p. 154).

Kankaanranta (2006) analysed 282 emails written by a group of non-native corporate employees, viz. Finnish and Swedish. Specifically, she examined company-internal email communication and its genres in English as a lingua franca in a multinational company which was formed through a merger of Swedish Store and Finnish Enso in 1998. The findings showed that greetings and closings in such emails were expressing relation and involvement. Additionally, the study showed the frequent use of salutations with first names. In an attempt to provide a straightforward explanation to such results, she argued that such characterisation of emails is attributed to two main factors. Firstly, Swedish and Finnish writers are not familiar with the American internal memo which includes no salutation. As a result, they did not adopt such feature and alternatively included salutations in their emails. Secondly, the use of salutations is regarded to be a strategy to maintain good social relationships with the receiver.

Another group of studies examined email openings and closings. For example, Waldvogel's (2007) study addressed greetings and closings in the emails of two workplaces in New Zealand, namely a manufacturing plant and an educational institution. To help answer the research question, discourse analytic techniques were used to analyse 515 emails to identify the differences. In the educational workplace, results showed that lack of trust and low self-esteem among staff have been evident as a result of restructuring. In addition, greeting and closing formulas were not common, and styles which show social distance were dominant in such emails. Contrary to these findings, positive relationships between staff and management and the friendly and family like workplace culture were reflected in the extensive use of the greetings and closings of emails in the manufacturing plant. In this regard, the study posits that workplace culture was a significant variable that accounts for frequency and greeting and farewell formulas than the status of the email writer, social distance and gender. A principled observation along these lines lends further support to the claim made by Goffman (1967) that greetings and closings are politeness markers whose major role is to maintain social relationships in the workplace. Waldvogel (2007) asserted that greetings and closings are tools which permit email writers to mark distance and status relationships. Alternatively, they may be used to construct friendly relationships. Such justification seems to be in accordance with Jessmer and Anderson's (2001) argument that polite emails are best regarded by receivers than impolite, ungrammatical emails.

Likewise, Bou-Franch (2011) examined a sample of Spanish emails. Specifically, she examined the openings and closings in terms of style, focusing on decisions made by interlocutors involved in a communication task. Bou-Franch studied the various practices that email senders use as opening and closing formulas, the power relationships, and their contribution to the communication task. To achieve the goals of the study, about 240 short emails were collected. The results revealed that the discursive practices under investigation were subject not only to technological but also to social and interactional constraints and thus

highlighted contextual variability. Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the high level of friendliness in the electronic episodes under investigation was understood as reflecting a “people first, business second” communicative style. The study showed that technological, social and interactional constraints influenced the discursive practices examined, and resulted in contextual variation. Moreover, the researcher suggested that the extensive amount of sociability in emails reflects a “people first, business second” communicative style. Generalising further, this study brings forth a different pattern regarding CMC. In fact, it pinpoints that emails are subject to social and discursive constraints that vary from one context to another.

In a similar vein, Félix-Brasdefer (2012) examined the pragma linguistic variation in the opening and closing formulas in email messages. Furthermore, the study focused on analysing variation by gender to investigate the impact of this sociolinguistic variable on language use. The corpus of the study comprised 320 email messages sent from US male and female undergraduate university-level students to their Spanish instructor. About 200 emails were written in Spanish as L2 and 120 in L1 English. The researcher adopted the actional level and the macro-social factor of gender as the units of analysis for his study. The data was analysed with regard to the types of opening and closing moves and their frequency in the 320 email messages. Results indicated the existence of a great deal of variation in the ways to open and close emails sent to the instructor. Opening moves were generally introduced by conversational features such as informal greetings ‘Hi’ followed by other combinations that convey a formal style, whereas closing moves were characterised by a formal style. Moreover, the gender of the email writer influenced the type and frequency of the opening moves. The findings also indicated that learning an L2 required knowledge of the pragmatics of the L2 and sufficient exposure to the input of the target language. In other words, when writing email messages in academic settings, the learner needs to develop his/her ability with respect to both the pragma linguistics (linguistic resources necessary) and the socio pragmatics (knowledge of appropriateness, social status, social power) when negotiating social practices in equal or unequal email encounters. A related observation drawn from thematic consideration of the yielded results in the aforementioned study adduce further support to the conclusion teased out in previous investigations that the role played by greetings and closings has different implications that vary according to the context in which communication takes place.

In an attempt to better understand CMC and its effects on language use, some studies have been conducted. For instance, McKeown and Zhang (2015) investigated the existence of a number of socio-pragmatic factors affecting the formality/informality of opening and closings in the emails of British professionals. The results showed that external communication and social distance between sender-receiver are the two core factors underlying the formality of opening salutations and closing valedictions. Alternatively, the adoption of informality in openings was triggered by the use of politeness markers and conversational progression. By the same token,

informality in closings was driven by conversational progression and time elapsed between successive email turns.

In the Arab world context, some research examined email communication. Al-Momani (2016), for example, studied email communication between the researcher and her MA and PhD students at the University of Jordan to find out its general and linguistic patterns. Moreover, she examined the influence of the sender-receiver relationship on the discursive practices used. Her study highlighted email communication similarities and differences between academicians and students. 750 emails, which the researcher received during her MA and PhD study, were studied and analysed. The findings suggested that academic emails are similar to traditional formal letters and memos due to the fact that the professors and students were academicians. Besides, the study revealed that the linguistic features of the emails were not only guided by the academic setting and the sender-receiver's role. It was also found that the emails sent to professors were uniform in the areas examined, while those sent by students to students showed that the students used nonstandard language, such as emoticons, unconventional spellings, and reduced capitalisation.

In another study, Bani Khalaf (2017) conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the influence of an e-mail and WhatsApp based instructional program on Jordanian tenth-graders' skimming and scan reading skills. The data was collected from a pre-test and a post-test. The sample of the study comprised 60 female Jordanian tenth graders as learners of English as a foreign language and who were selected purposefully from four sections. Students were divided into two groups, viz., the control group and the experimental group. The former comprised 15 while the latter included 45. The results indicated that there were 'significant differences (at 0.05) in the students' mean scores on the post-test, in favour of the students in the WhatsApp group, the e-mail and WhatsApp combination group and the e-mail group respectively' (ibid, 228). The results also showed a significant effect of the instructional program on scanning than on skimming. As may be seen, a drastic oversimplification that can be stated along these lines is that being acquainted with CMC mediums (emails and WhatsApp being the case in this study) has a significant impact on the development of learning skills such as reading.

In a comparative study, Devecia and Ben Hmidaa (2017) investigated the realisation of the speech act of request by both native speakers of English and Arab university students at UAE university. They also examined the effect of formal email writing instruction on improving the pragmatic competence of the participants. The data was collected using a DCT in which the participants were asked to write an email to their professors requesting feedback. The study concluded that there were some significant differences between the data sets from the two groups of participants in terms of discourse structure, strategy type, and modifiers employed. Moreover, the results indicated that teaching emails in an academic environment plays a major role in improving students' pragmatic competence.

The review of related literature has shown that email opening and closing formulas in business communication have been examined in various languages and contexts. These studies covered email communication in a variety of languages and cultures: US commercial and academic emails (Gains, 1999), Finnish and Swedish (Kankaanranta, 2006), British business emails (Gimenez, 2006), New Zealand English workplaces (Waldvogel, 2007), Spanish (Bou-Franch (2011), and American English and Spanish (Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). Previous research on Arabic language has been rare and it has addressed issues, such as general patterns of email communication in higher education (Al-Momani, 2016), the influence of email writing on students reading skills (Bani Khalaf, 2017), and the speech act of request in email communication of both native English speakers and Arab university students in an English medium university (Devecia and Ben Hmidaa, 2017). As far as the literature review is concerned, no previous studies have examined the opening and farewell formulas in academic emails in the two languages under investigation. The present study takes another direction of inquiry by throwing light on the use of greeting and farewell formulas of email communication in Arabic and English produced in an academic context. The authors hypothesise that there are differences due to the nature of each language.

Research Questions

The researchers hypothesise that a reflection of the social diversity and some social and discursive constraints may come to the fore. Therefore, the importance of the current study stems from the fact that it analyses email greeting and farewell formulas written by Arabic speakers in two languages, viz. Arabic and English. One of the limitations of the present study is that gender differences were not studied though as AbuSeileek and Rabab'ah (2013:55) suggest "sociolinguistic patterns including gender linguistic differences may differ from one community to another." Therefore, future research may focus on gender differences in email greetings and farewell formulas. The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the most frequently used greeting and farewell formulas in Arabic and English academic emails?
2. To what extent do we have a one-to-one correspondence between email greetings and farewell formulas in both languages?

Corpus

To answer the two research questions, a corpus of 200 short individual academic emails was gathered. It included 100 Arabic, and 100 English formal academic emails. The Arabic emails were collected from the official website of the Ministry of Education in Jordan, which covered a wide range of topics, such as requests, suggestions, queries, etc. The English corpus was also

formal emails, which the researchers received in their mail inbox. The corpus was collected in November 2019. For data analysis, the researchers adopted Bou-Franch's (2011) classification of opening and closing formulas with some categories added based on the data collected. The greetings formula includes:

1. *No opening formula*: The email starts without any kind of salutation.
2. *Greeting word only*: The email starts with 'Hi', 'Hello' and 'Salam' in Arabic.
3. *First name only*: The email user starts the email with the name of the addressee directly such as 'John'.
4. *Greeting and name*: The email starts with a greeting formula in addition to the first name of the addressee (e.g., Hi John).
5. *Greeting and title*: This refers to the use of greeting word(s) in addition to the title without mentioning the name (e.g., Hello Professor).
6. *Greeting, title and name* in which the three components are combined together in one line (e.g., Hello Professor John).
7. *Greeting, title and last name* (e.g., Hello Professor Smith.)
8. *Title only* refers to the use of title without referring to the name such as 'Professor' and 'Doctor'.
9. *Title and name* in which the title and the first name appear together as in 'Dr. John'.
10. *Title and last name* which refers to a combination of the title and the last name as it appears in 'Professor Smith'.
11. *Title, name and last name* (e.g., Professor John Smith)
(Bou-Franch., 2011)

Based on the corpus, the researchers added 'others' to the opening formulas. Statements that cannot be categorised according to Bou-Franch's classification (2011) were categorised as 'Others'. For instance, in Arabic *'ammabaʿd'* literally means 'what follows' and falls under this category.

The Farewell Formulas Include

1. *No closing formula* in which the email is left without any expression to close the email.
2. *Signature name only* where the first name only appears like 'John'.
3. *Signature name and last name* in which the email ends with the first name plus the last name, such as 'John Smith'.
4. *Leave-taking and name* which refers to the use of 'Regards', 'Warm regards' or 'Sincerely' plus the first name of the sender, such as 'Regards, John'.
5. *Leave-taking, name and last name* refers to the use of 'Regards', 'Warm regards' or 'Sincerely' plus the first name and last name, such as 'Regards, John Smith'.

6. *Thanks, leave-taking, name and last name* that is embodied by the combination of the four elements, namely, thanks, leave-taking, name and last name (e.g., Thanks, Regards, John Smith’.
7. *Thanks only* in which the email is closed by adding an expression of thanking, such as ‘Thanks’.
8. *Thanks and name* refers to the use of the thanking expression plus the first name as in ‘Thanks, John’.
9. *Thanks, name and last name* as in ‘Thanks, John Smith’.
(Bou-Franch, 2011)

Base on the data collected, four additional farewell formulas were added, viz. ‘*leave-taking and name*’, ‘*signature name only*’, ‘*thanks, leave-taking, name & last name*’, and ‘*thanks and name*’. *Thanks, full name* refers to where the email ends with a thanking expression plus a full four-name, such as ‘Thanks, Muhammad Ahmad Khaleel Abu Tayeh’. *Signature full name* refers to the use of a full four-name, such as ‘Muhammad Ahmad Ali Musleh’. ‘*Leave-taking*’ only such as ‘regards’ is used to mark the end of the email. And when what is used can go under no classification, the ‘*others*’ formula was used. For instance, in Arabic ‘*ʔardʔu ʔirrad*’ which literally means ‘please reply’ and is equivalent to RSVP, i.e., ‘REPONDEZ S’IL VOUS PLAIT’.

Results and Discussion

Results Related to Question One

What are the most frequently used greeting and farewell formulas used in Arabic and English academic emails?

Greeting and Farewell Formulas used in Arabic Academic Emails

Greeting Formulas used in Arabic Academic Emails

Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the greeting formulas used in Arabic emails.

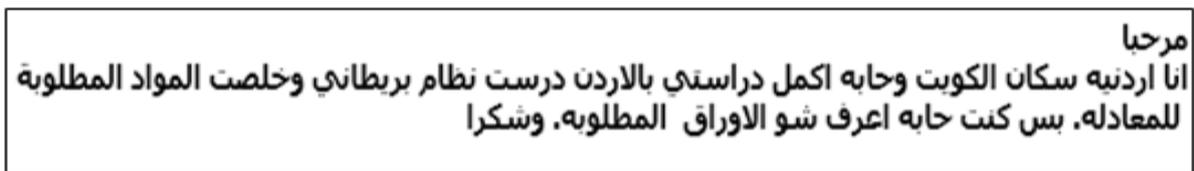
Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of the Arabic greeting formulas

No	Greeting formulas (Arabic)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Greeting word only	74	74%
2	No opening formula	18	18%
3	Greeting, title and name	5	5%
4	Others	2	2%
5	Title and name	1	1%
Total		100	100%

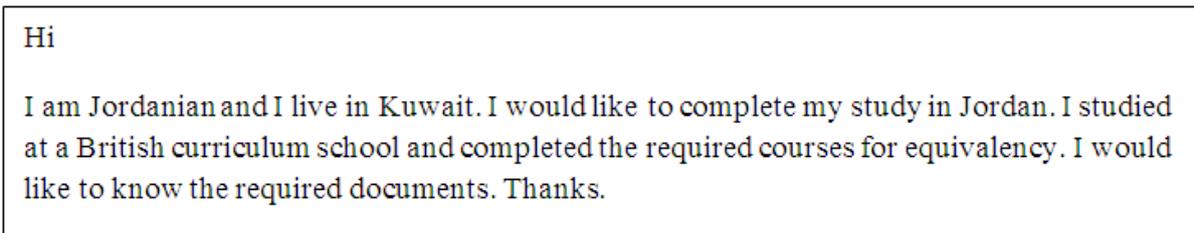
The results presented in Table 1 show that five main greeting formulas were only used in the Arabic corpus, and the other seven formulas did not recorded any instances. Such non-encountered categories include 'first name only', 'greeting and name', 'greeting and title', 'greeting, title and last name', 'title only', 'title and last name', and finally 'title, name and last name'.

The most significant finding in this table is that the 'greeting word only' category recorded 74%. Greeting word only includes examples like *salaam*, *marhaba*, *sabah alkheir*, etc. Screenshot 1 shows that the greeting word '*marhaba*' (Hi) is used.

Screenshot 1

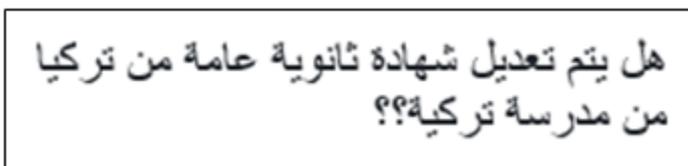


Translation of screenshot 1



The second most used strategy is 'No opening formula' (18%). It was noticed that some email users preferred to start with the body of the email without using any salutation/greeting expression although letter-writing conventions require the writer to initiate the letter with a salutation. This might be attributed to the users' lack of knowledge about writing formal emails in an academic context. As can be seen in screenshot 2, the sender did not use any opening formula. The writer started with a question about equivalency.

Screenshot 2



Translation of screenshot 2

Is there an equivalency for the General School Certificate from Turkey?
From a school in Turkey???

The seven non-occurring categories indicate that there is no variation in Arabic email openings. This finding contradicts with Félix-Brasdefer (2012) who states that there is a great deal of variation in opening formulas of emails sent to the instructor. The corpus also showed that ‘greeting word only’ was subcategorised into four main sub-categories as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Sub-categories of ‘greeting words only’

	Greeting word only	Frequency	Percentage
1	Short form	33	44.6%
2	Elaborated form	31	41.9%
3	One word	6	8.1%
4	Two greeting forms	4	5.4%
	Total	74	100%

Table 2 shows that ‘greeting words only’ was classified into four main categories, namely, short form, elaborated form, one word, and two greeting forms. The highest recorded category in the corpus was ‘short form’ (33 instances), accounting for 44.6%. The use of ‘Salam’ which means ‘hello’ is an example of the use of the short form of ‘*ʔasslamu ʕalaikom wa raḥmatulahi wa barakatuh*’ as seen in screenshot 3, literally means ‘God’s mercy and blessing be upon you’. The elaborated forms were used in the second place; they recorded 31 instances, accounting for 41.9%. For instance, email users started their emails by writing the elaborated form of greeting like ‘*ʔasslamu ʕalaikom waraḥmatulahi wa barakatu*’. The short form ‘Salam’ literally means ‘Peace be upon you!’, and ‘*ʔasslamu ʕalaikom waraḥmatulahi wa barakatu*’ (God’s mercy and blessing be upon you) is shown clearly in screenshots 3 and 4.

Screenshot 3 – Short greeting form

Salaam,
Cloud you please take into account paying salaries for newly appointed teachers as they have been appointed since 1st November, 2014 and they have not been paid until 1st of February, 2015. This means that have been serving for three months.
Thanks

Translation of screenshot 3

سلام
ارجو النظر في موضوع صرف مستحقات التعيينات الجديدة 1/11/2014
حيث من 1/2/2015 أصبح لهم ثلاثة أشهر، مضى على تعيينهم ثلاثة أشهر
مع الشكر ...

Screenshot 4 – Elaborated greeting form

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
انا طالب في الصف الأول ثانوي صناعي .
من فضلكم اريد معرفة ما اذا كان هناك تغييرات في منهاج مادتي الفيزياء الاساسية والفيزياء الاضافية وما هي التغييرات ان وجدت
وهل هناك تغييرات في مادة الثقافة العامة.
ولكم متي جزيل الشكر

Translation of screenshot 4

God's mercy and blessing be upon you

I am a student in the first secondary class in the industrial stream.

Please, I would like to ask if there are changes in the curricula related to both Basic Physics and Extra Physics. And what are these changes, if any.

Are there changes in the Cultural Studies?

Thank you

The results also show that one-word form was used six times as in the use of 'marhaba', which means 'Hi' (Screenshot 1). It was also found that email users tended to utilise 'two greeting forms' consecutively as can be seen in screenshot 5. As can be seen, the first form is 'bismillah ?irrahman ?irraheem', which means 'In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate', and the second form is '?asslamu ?alaikom warahmatulahi wabarakatu', which means 'Peace be upon you.'. The use of such Islamic expressions shows the Islamic identity of the email sender.

Screenshot 5 - Two greeting forms

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
أود الاستفسار هل صدرت أرقام الجلوس؟
شكرا

Translation of screenshot 5

**In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate
God's mercy and blessing be upon you**
I would like to ask if the seat numbers for Tawjihi exams are ready.
Thank you

Farewell Formulas used in Arabic Academic Emails

Table 3 below presents the results related to the farewell formulas found in the Arabic data.

Table 3: Frequencies and percentages of farewell formulas in Arabic language

No	Farewell formulas (Arabic)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Thanks only	29	29%
2	No closing formula	22	22%
3	Leave-taking only	13	13%
4	Thanks, name and last name	10	10%
5	Others	7	7%
6	Thanks, full name	6	6%
7	Signature name and last name	5	5%
8	Leave-taking, name and last name	4	4%
9	Signature full name	2	2%
10	Leave-taking and name	2	2%
Total		100	100%

Table 3 shows that the 'thanks only' cliché recorded the highest percentage (29%). Forms used were like 'walakom minni džazeel iššukur', which literally means 'Thank you!' The use of 'walakom', which refers to the second person plural 'you' is used in Arabic in closing formal letters/emails to show respect to the addressee. The data showed that the participants tended to finish their emails without any farewell/closing formula (22%), indicating that they might not be aware of the importance of closing emails in formal communication. Additionally, there is no automatic message, such as the one appearing when the subject of the email is empty, which reminds the email user of writing something in the subject line. Screenshot 6 shows one of the emails without a closing formula with its translation.

Screenshot 6 – No closing formula

السلام عليكم
بدنا نستفسر اذا كتاب اللغة الانجليزية رح يتغير العام المقبل لطلاب التوجيهي

Translation of screenshot 6

Peace be upon you
We would like to ask if the English Language textbook will be changed for the next year
Tawjihi students.

'Leave-taking only' is also used among email users (13%), such as the use of the well-known Arabic formal cliché '*watafaḍḍalo biqabool faḍiq ḍilhtiram wattaqdeer*', which means 'Please accept my highest respect and appreciation' or '*waqbalou minni khališ iššukur wal ḥirfan*', which is translated as 'Please accept my sincere gratitude and appreciation'. Screenshot 7 is an illustrative example of leave-taking only formula.

Screenshot 7 Leave-taking only formula

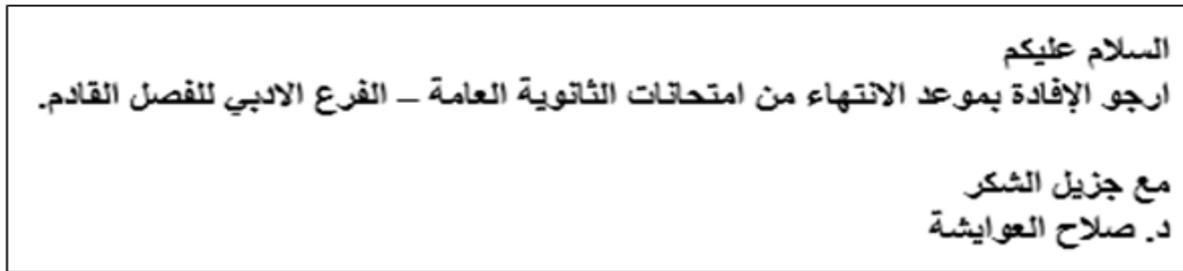
أما بعد
فإنه يشرفني أنا مديرة مدرسة الرحمانية الأساسية المختلطة بطلب تخصيص مكان ووقت مناسب الصلاة
أثناء الدوام
واقبلوا مني خالص الشكر والعرفان

Translation of screenshot 7

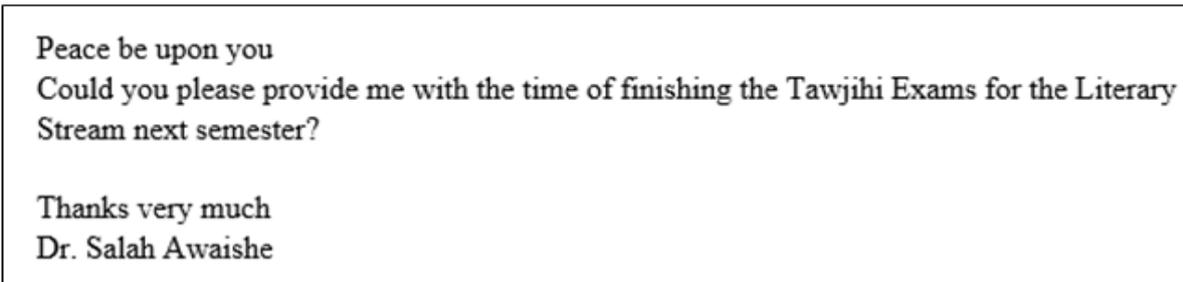
What follows,
I, the school principal of Al-Rahmaniyya Basic Mixed School, would like to allocate
a place and time for prayers during the working hours.
Please accept my sincere gratitude and appreciation.

The use of '*Thanks, name and last name*' as a closing formula registered 10% as shown in '*Thanks very much, Dr. Salah Awaishe*' as can be illustrated in screenshot 8.

Screenshot 8 – 'Thanks, name and last name' formula



Translation of screenshot 8



The data also revealed that 'Signature full name' and 'Leave-taking and name' recorded the lowest percentages (2%). Another significant finding is that three types of farewell formulas in Arabic did not record any instances in the data under investigation, namely 'signature name only', 'thanks, leave-taking, name and first name' and 'thanks and name'. The overall findings in Table 3 show that email users employed a wide range of formulas to close their emails. This result corresponds with the finding of Félix-Brasdefer (2012) who found that there is a great deal of variation in closing formulas of the emails, which the instructor received.

Greeting and farewell formulas used in English academic emails

Greeting formulas used in English academic emails

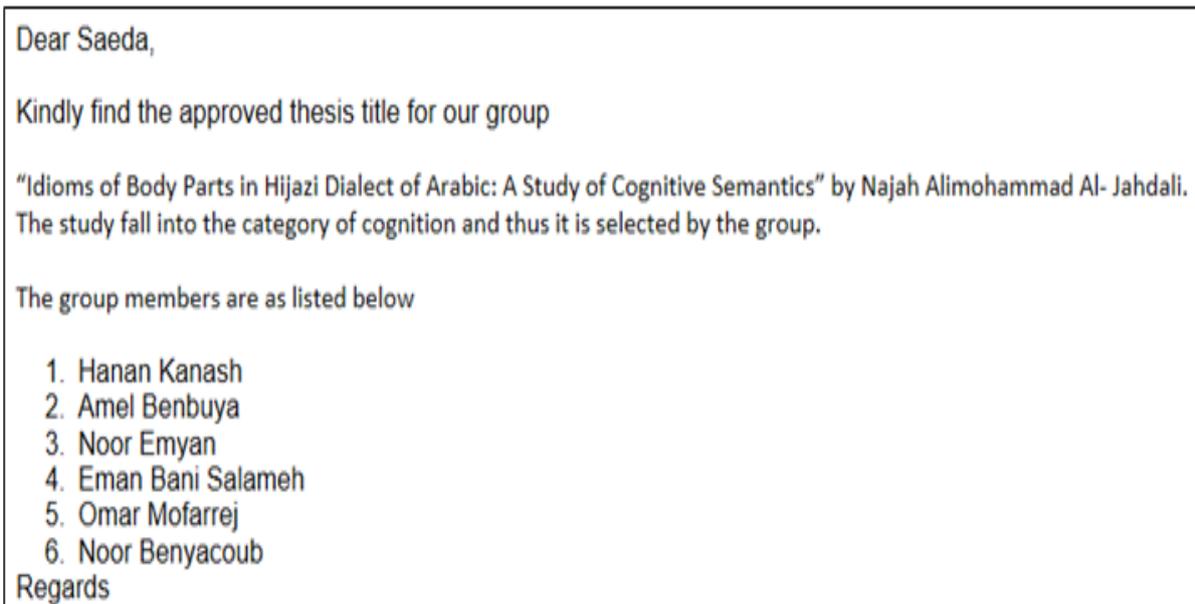
The results related to the greeting formulas in the English data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequencies and percentages of the English greeting formulas

No	Greeting formulas (English)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Greeting and name	37	37%
2	Greeting word only	26	26%
3	Greeting and title	19	19%
4	No opening formula	8	8%
5	Greeting, title and name	7	7%
6	Greeting, name and last name	3	3%
Total		100	100%

The most significant finding in Table 4 is that three closing formulas were the most frequently used among all, viz. ‘*greeting and name*’, ‘*greeting word only*’, and ‘*greeting and title*’ (37%, 26%, and 19%, respectively). The data revealed that ‘*greeting and name*’ were like ‘*Dear Saeda*’, ‘*Hello Saida*’ and ‘*Hi Saida*’. Screenshot (9) is a good example for one of the emails.

Screenshot 9 - Greeting and name formula



Dear Saeda,

Kindly find the approved thesis title for our group

“Idioms of Body Parts in Hijazi Dialect of Arabic: A Study of Cognitive Semantics” by Najah Alimohammad Al- Jahdali. The study fall into the category of cognition and thus it is selected by the group.

The group members are as listed below

1. Hanan Kanash
2. Amel Benbuya
3. Noor Emyan
4. Eman Bani Salameh
5. Omar Mofarrej
6. Noor Benyacoub

Regards

Examples of ‘*greeting word only*’ were ‘*Hi*’, ‘*Hello*’. Also, the email senders used the ‘*greeting and title*’ formula in a number of emails, such as ‘*Dear author*’, ‘*Dear Professor*’, ‘*Dear colleague*’, ‘*Dear Ms.*’, ‘*Dear Dr.*’ and ‘*Dear researcher*’. This indicates a degree of formality when addressing their professors or distant people. This lends support to Al-Momani’s (2016) findings that academic emails very much resembled traditional formal letters and memos since both professors and students were academics. Some email writers did not use any opening formulas and they prefer to write their intention in the email directly without any introductory salutation. Another significant finding is that the data did not record any instance of the closing formulas of Bou-Franch (2011), namely ‘*Title, name and last name*’, ‘*Title only*’, ‘*Title and last name*’, ‘*Title and last name*’, ‘*First name only*’, and ‘*others*’. This indicates that the email users are not acquainted with all opening formulas in academic formal correspondence. Screenshots 10 and 11 are self-explanatory sample emails from the corpus.

Screenshot 10 – Greeting word and title formula

Dear professor,
 Hope this email finds you well. I apologize for not writing and sending you the thesis sooner but I was calculating the numbers manually and it took me longer than I expected. I will show it to a professional user in SPSS to check the numbers as soon as I find one.
 But in the meantime, I added/deleted/fixed few parts. The parts that are colored in red are newly added/fixed after we changed the sample from the University of Jordan to multiple universities in Jordan.

I hope it's good in general and only requires checking the numbers

Regards,
 Haya

Screenshot 11 – Greeting word only

Hello,
 Deeply sorry for such a mistake.
 Bye

Farewell Formulas Used in English Academic Emails

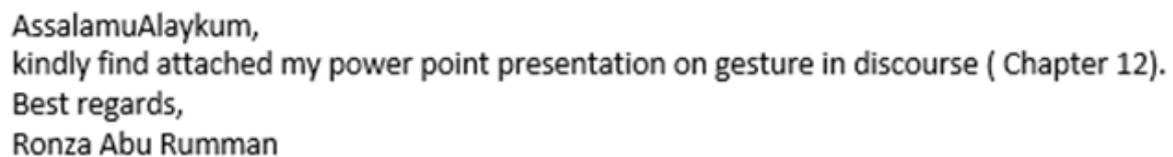
For the farewell formulas, Table 5 shows the results of the farewell formulas in the English emails. Data shown from this table demonstrates that the email users employed a variety of formulas to close their emails.

Table 5: Frequencies and percentages of the English farewell formulas

No	Farewell formulas (English)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Leave-take, name and last name	35	35%
2	Leave-take only	22	22%
3	Thanks, name and last name	11	11%
4	Leave-take and name	8	8%
5	Thanks only	8	8%
6	Signature name and last name	7	7%
7	No closing	4	4%
8	Thanks, leave-take, first name	2	2%
9	Thanks and leave-take	2	2%
10	Thanks, leave-take, name and last name	1	1%
Total		100	100%

In the English emails, the results show that the email senders tended to use ‘*Leave-take, name and last name*’ as the most frequent farewell formula, indicating that 35% of the senders employed a formal style of communication. For instance, ‘*All the best, John Stanton*’, ‘*Best regards, Ronza Abu Rumman*’ and ‘*Best regards, Chris Awe*’ are some of the examples used. This result is in line with that of Félix-Brasdefer (2012) who stated that closing formulas were characterised by a formal style.

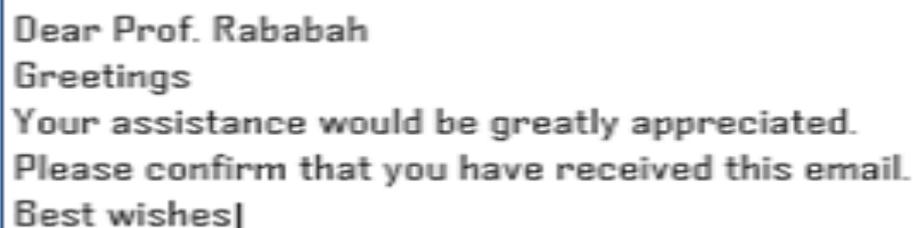
Screenshot 12 – ‘Leave-take, name and last name’ formula



AssalamuAlaykum,
kindly find attached my power point presentation on gesture in discourse (Chapter 12).
Best regards,
Ronza Abu Rumman

The second most frequent farewell formula was ‘Leave-take only’, which recorded 22% of the total number of instances, such as ‘Regards’, ‘Best wishes’ and ‘Kind regards’. Three formulas almost registered the same number of formulas, namely ‘Leave-take and name’, ‘Thanks only’, and ‘Signature name and last name’ (8, 8, and 7, respectively). Another significant finding in Table 5 is that ‘Thanks, leave-take, first name’, ‘Thanks and leave-take’, and ‘Thanks, leave-take, name and last name’ registered the lowest frequency (2, 2, 1, respectively). However, it was noticed that ‘Signature name only’ did not record any instances in the data. This indicates that the senders were aware of some email formats and formalities. The following screenshots (13, 14, 15, 16) are sample emails from the corpus, which are self-explanatory.

Screenshot 13 – Leave-taking only formula



Dear Prof. Rababah
Greetings
Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.
Please confirm that you have received this email.
Best wishes

Screenshot 14 – Leave-taking and name formula

Dear professor,
Hope this email finds you well. I apologize for not writing and sending you the thesis sooner but I was calculating the numbers manually and it took me longer than I expected. I will show it to a professional user in SPSS to check the numbers as soon as I find one.
But in the meantime, I added/deleted/fixed few parts. The parts that are colored in red are newly added/fixed after we changed the sample from the University of Jordan to multiple universities in Jordan.

I hope it's good in general and only requires checking the numbers

Regards,
Haya

Screenshot 15 – Thanks only formula

Thank you very much

Screenshot 16 - Signature name and last name formula

Dear Professor Mark,
I have paid via Mster Card and have received an e-mail from your website but my account is still suspended.
What shall I do?
Sa'ida Al-Sayyed

Results Related to Question Two

To What Extent Do We Have One-to-One Correspondence Between Email Greeting and Farewell Formulas in Both Languages?

Table 6 presents the results of the greeting formulas to see if there are similarities between the two languages, namely Arabic and English.

Table 6: Frequencies and percentages of English & Arabic greeting formulas

No	Item	Greetings (Arabic)		Greetings (English)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Greeting word only	74	74%	26	26%
2	No opening formula	18	18%	8	8%
3	Greeting, title and name	5	5%	7	7%
4	Others	2	2%	-	-
5	Title and name	1	1%	0	0%

6	First name only	0	0%	0	0%
7	Greeting and name	0	0%	37	37%
8	Greeting and title	0	0%	19	19%
9	Greeting, title and last name	0	0%	3	3%
Total		100	100%	100	100%

Table 6 shows that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the email opening formulas in the two languages. For example, '*Greeting word only*' recorded the highest frequency in both languages, but it registered 74 instances in the Arabic data, while it registered 26 instances in the English data. As for the second highly registered opening formula, '*No opening formula*' registered 18 instances in the Arabic data, while it recorded only 8 in the English data. '*Greeting, Title and name*' recorded almost the same number of instances in Arabic and English, 5 and 7, respectively. However, some greeting formulas are language specific, i.e., they are employed in one language rather than the other. For instance, '*Greeting and name*', '*Greeting and title*', and '*Greeting, title and last name*' recorded 37, 19 and 3 instances in English, respectively. However, they did not register any instances in the Arabic data. This finding is in line with that of Devecia and Ben Hmidaa (2017) who concluded that there were some significant differences between the data sets from native and non-native in terms of discourse structure, strategy type, and modifiers employed. It is noteworthy that '*First name only*' did not record any instances in both languages. Another finding is that the Arabic data recorded 18% 'not using opening/greeting' formulas, which is more than those recorded in the English data. This result is consistent with those of Waldvogel (2007) who found that of the emails produced in the educational organisation she examined, 41% did not contain greetings at all.

Table 7 shows a combination of farewell formulas used in both languages. It illustrates the similarities and differences between the two languages.

Table 7: Frequencies and percentages of English & Arabic farewell formulas

No	Item	Farewell/Arabic		Farewell/English	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Thanks only	29	29%	8	8%
2	No closing formula	22	22%	4	4%
3	Leave-taking only	13	13%	22	22%
4	Thanks, name and last name	10	10%	11	11%
5	Others	7	7%	0	0%
6	Thanks, full name	6	6%	0	0%
7	Signature name and last name	5	5%	7	7%
8	Leave-taking, name and last name	4	4%	35	35%

9	Signature full name	2	2%	0	0%
10	Leave-taking and name	2	2%	8	8%
11	Thanks, leave-taking, name & last name	0	0%	1	1%
12	Thanks and leave-taking	0	0%	2	2%
13	Thanks, leave-taking, first name	0	0%	2	2%
Total		100	100%	100	100%

The results in Table 7 show that there is no one-to-one correspondence in the email farewell formulas between the two languages. For example, ‘*Thanks only*’ recorded the highest frequency in Arabic (29%), while ‘*Leave-taking, name and last name*’ had the highest frequency in the English emails (35%). This result agrees with those of Waldvogel (2007) who asserted that greetings and closings are tools, which permit email writers to mark distance and status relationships. It also shows that ‘*Thanks only*’, and ‘*No closing formula*’ were used more in Arabic than in English. However, it was found that ‘*Leave-taking only*’ was used in the English data more than in the Arabic data, 22% and 13%, respectively. As mentioned earlier, the results showed that some formulas were language specific. For example, some farewell strategies like ‘*Thanks, leave-taking, name & last name*’, ‘*Thanks and leave-taking*’, and ‘*Thanks, leave-taking, first name*’ were used in English, but none in Arabic. Another finding was that 22% of the email senders did not close their emails contrary to the English data. This result lends support to that of Waldvogel (2007) who found that only 34% had closings in the emails of the educational organisation.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to find similarities and differences in the email greeting and farewell formulas in two languages, namely Arabic and English. Furthermore, it also sought to find if there is one-to-one correspondence between the two email samples. The analysis of the overall results of the study showed that data centred around five main classifications and the rest scored zero percentage. In Arabic, ‘*greeting word only*’ was predominantly used to initiate an email and it had the lion’s share compared with the other formulas. However, data analysis indicated that some email users preferred to start with the body of the email directly without resorting to any salutation and this scored 18% indicating a lack of knowledge about formal communication. For farewell formulas, the use of a ‘*thank only*’ was at the top of other formulas, scoring 29%, followed by abandoning any farewell formulas. For English email opening formulas, the three most frequently used formulas were ‘*greeting and name*’, ‘*greeting word only*’ and ‘*greeting and title*’. As for the farewell formulas, the results showed that email users tended to use ‘*Leave-taking, name and last name*’ and ‘*leave-taking only*’.

The results showed that there is one-to-one correspondence between the farewells of both languages. Unlike the greeting formulas, there is no exact one-to-one correspondence between the two languages. As may be seen, the present study provides a vivid picture of greetings and farewell expressions used by Arabic speakers in Arabic (native language) and English (EFL). As can be seen, Arabic-speaking EFL learners resort to different mechanisms when they decide to write emails in a formal setting. The results indicate that they are more aware of the formalities when writing English emails. This could be due to the fact that the English emails were more formal. To conclude, two pedagogical implications can be suggested to enhance EFL students' email writing skills. In support of Rabab'ah's (2016) suggestion that L2 learners ought to be given an opportunity to practice the target language. First, teachers should pay more attention to business communication (i.e., emails). Second, they should integrate this kinds of writing into their classroom teaching. Curricula designers should include such types of new mediums of communication in the writing components. Finally, Rabab'ah and Fowler Al-Hawamdeh (2020) suggest that EFL learners should be aware of cultural differences, and EFL teachers should raise their Arabic speaking students' awareness about such cultural differences. Thus, this leads the researchers of the present study to conclude that such awareness is very helpful for Arabic EFL learners when writing an email in English.

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